

National Graduate Development Programme feedback survey

June 2019



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Summary

In June 2019, the Local Government Association (LGA) conducted a survey of graduates who had just completed the two year National Graduate Development Programme (ngdp) in order to gauge their views of the programme and the effect that participation has had on them. The results will be used to improve and develop the programme.

Methodology

An online survey was sent to the 118 graduates who comprised cohort 19 of the ngdp, which finished in the summer of 2019. The survey was sent out in June 2019, shortly after the graduates attended their final wrap up event. A total of 72 replied – a response rate of 61 per cent.

Key messages

The survey found that respondents were generally satisfied with the ngdp and felt more confident in their ability to gain a management role in local as a result of taking part in the programme. Furthermore, almost all respondents felt that participating in the ngdp had a positive impact on their ability to further their career and if they were asked about it they would recommend the programme.

Results

- **Satisfaction with the ngdp overall:** Ninety-seven per cent were very or fairly satisfied with the ngdp overall. Ninety-two per cent felt that the ngdp had made them more confident in their ability to gain a management role in local government to a great or moderate extent. The most common objective for taking part in the ngdp was to gain experience (mentioned by 85 per cent of respondents); overall, 85 per cent felt that their objectives had been fully or largely achieved.
- **Subsequent employment and future plans:** The majority of respondents either had no time remaining (39 per cent) or 1-3 months remaining (47 per cent) on their ngdp contracts. Among the 61 per cent who have secured a job, 69 per cent (29 respondents) reported having secured it between 16 and 21 months after joining the ngdp. Seventy-nine per cent of graduates who had secured a job reported that their employer will be their host council from the ngdp.
- The three respondents who had obtained a job outside of local government tended to cite the need to gain a greater scope of work, the appearance of a good opportunity and the need to build new skills as a reason for leaving the sector. Ninety two per cent of those searching or planning to search for a job felt very or fairly positive about their chances in the job market.
- **Impact of the ngdp on careers:** Almost all respondents (99 per cent) felt that the ngdp has had a positive impact on their ability to further their careers, to a

great or moderate extent. The same proportion (99 per cent) said they would be very or fairly likely to recommend the ngdp to others if asked about it.

Introduction

In June 2019, the Local Government Association (LGA) conducted a survey of graduates who had just completed the two year National Graduate Development Programme (ngdp) in order to gauge their views of the programme and the effect that participation has had on them. The results will be used to improve and develop the programme.

Methodology

An online survey was sent to the 118 graduates who comprised cohort 19 of the ngdp, which finished in the summer of 2019. The survey was sent out in June 2019, shortly after the graduates attended their final 'wrap up' event. A total of 72 replied giving a response rate of 61 per cent.

Whilst these results should strictly be taken as a snapshot of the views of this particular group of respondents, rather than representative of all 2019 ngdp graduates, this level of response means that the results are likely to provide a good indication of the views of cohort 19 graduates more widely.

Please note the following when reading the report:

- Where tables and figures report the base, the description refers to the group of people who were asked the question. The number provided refers to the number who answered each question. Please note that bases vary throughout the survey.
- Throughout the report, percentages in figures and tables may add to more than 100 per cent due to rounding.
- The following conventions are used in tables: '*' - less than 0.5 per cent; '0' – no observations; '-' – category not applicable/data not available.
- Where the response base is less than 50, care should be taken when interpreting percentages, as small differences can seem magnified. Therefore where this is the case in this report, absolute numbers are reported alongside the percentage values.

National Graduate Development Programme Feedback Survey

This section provides full results for each survey question.

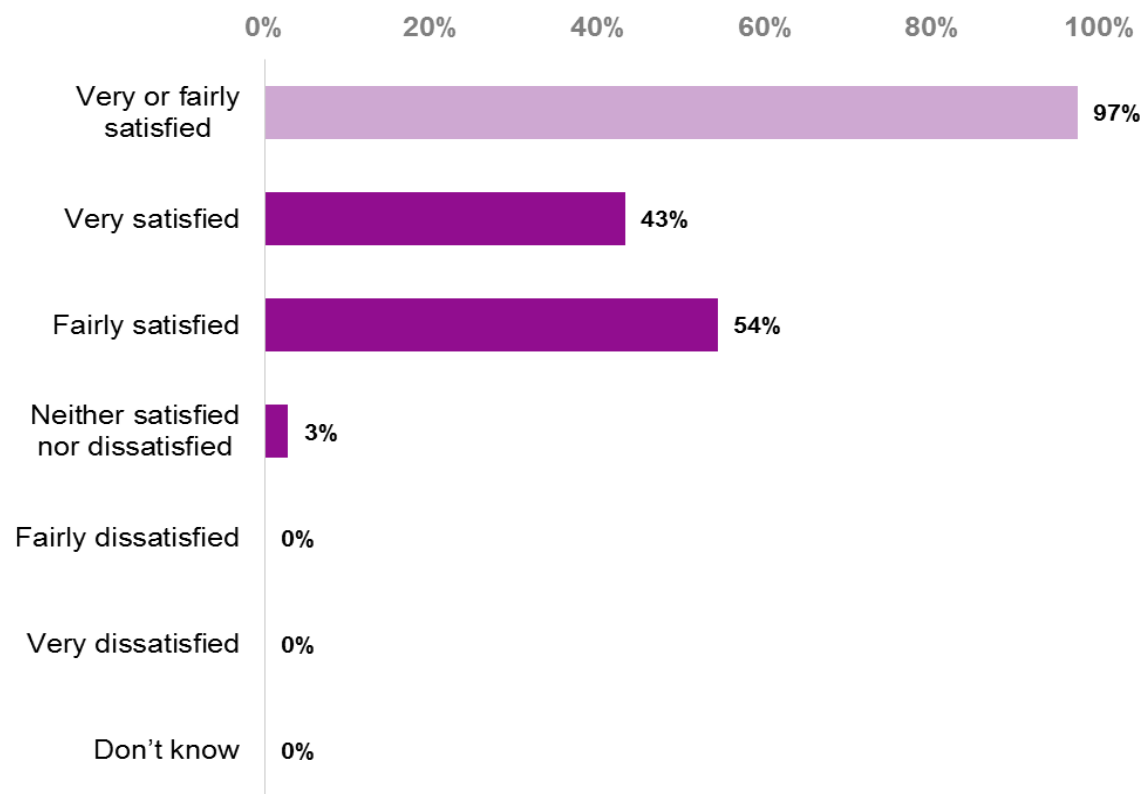
Satisfaction with the ngdp overall

All respondents were asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the ngdp. Almost all (97 per cent) were either very or fairly satisfied. The remaining three per cent were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the ngdp overall. These findings are shown in Table 1 and illustrated in Figure 1.

Table 1: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the ngdp?	
	Per cent
Very or fairly satisfied	97
Very satisfied	43
Fairly satisfied	54
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	3
Fairly dissatisfied	0
Very dissatisfied	0
Don't know	0

Base: all respondents (72)

Figure 1: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the ngdp?



Base: all respondents (72)

All respondents were asked to what extent, if at all, they felt more confident in their ability to gain a management position in local government as a result of participating in the ngdp. Most (92 per cent) said that this was the case to a great or moderate extent. One participant (one per cent) did not feel more confident at all. A breakdown of these findings is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: To what extent, if at all, do you feel more confident in your ability to gain a management position in local government, having participated in the ngdp?

	Per cent
To a great or moderate extent	92
To a great extent	49
To a moderate extent	43
To a small extent	7
Not at all	1
Don't know	0

Base: all respondents (72)

The survey asked respondents to identify their objectives in taking part in the ngdp from a list provided. They were permitted to select multiple objectives, and to specify their own. The most frequently selected objective was 'to gain experience', chosen by 85 per cent, followed by 'to fast-track my career', chosen by 74 per cent. There is a full breakdown of these findings in Table 3.

Table 3: What were your objectives in taking part in the ngdp?

	Per cent
To gain experience	85
To fast-track my career	74
To learn about new subject areas	68
To develop key skills for fast-track management progression	65
To network and learn from other trainees	54
Other	7
Don't know	0

Base: all respondents (72). Respondents were allowed to select more than one option.

Those who selected 'other' were asked to specify what their objectives were. Four respondents provided answers and these are listed below:

- "Gain exposure to a variety of council roles and teams to decide on an area of potential speciality."
- "To find out what areas of work I was interested in and start a career in it."
- "To serve residents and those in the most deprived communities."
- "To start a career in local government."

When asked if their objectives had been achieved 85 per cent said that these had fully or largely been achieved and 15 per cent reported that they had been partially achieved. None of the respondents felt that they had not met any of their goals. These findings are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Were the objectives that you had for taking part in the ngdp achieved?	
	Per cent
Fully or largely achieved	85
Fully achieved (met all goals)	31
Largely achieved (met most goals)	54
Partially achieved (met some goals)	15
Not achieved (met none of the goals)	0
Don't know	0

Base: all respondents (72)

The survey asked respondents if there was anything about the ngdp they felt could be improved. From a list provided the area most frequently selected was 'learning and development' chosen by almost two-thirds (65 per cent) of respondents, this was followed by 'council placements' chosen by 43 per cent. A full breakdown of these findings is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Is there anything about the ngdp you feel could be improved?	
	Per cent
Learning and development	65
Council placements	43
Networking with other National Management Trainees	35
Advertising and promotion of the programme	33
Interviews	14
Wrap up	14
Assessment centres	10
Online applications	6
Other	18
Nothing needs improvement	1
Don't know	3

Base: all respondents (72). Respondents were allowed to select more than one option.

Those who selected 'other' were asked to specify what they felt could be improved, and the answers provided are listed below:

- "Central guidance and support for councils and trainees."
- "Communication of the programme to council managers."
- "Consistency of experience between different councils."
- "Diversity of the National Management Trainees needs to be improved."
- "I think very few people go into operational management and it seems to be very project and policy focused. I think maybe the ngdp could take this into consideration when designing the course."

- “LGA needs more communication with placement coordinators to specify the level we should be working at and provide better suited placements. Also more guidance/information/closer working with placement coordinators to put retention plans in place.”
- “Mental wellbeing of trainees.”
- “More support to link the national programme and qualification with day-to-day work in the council. More face-to-face sessions across the two years would also be good.”
- “Online tutorials need to be re-looked at. Should be a flip classroom model of learning to get the most out of them.”
- “Potential for secondments for other Local Authorities.”
- “The ILM Level 7 qualification.”
- “The ILM Qualification can be structured to be more useful over the two year programme.”
- “The name of the programme is extremely vague - it doesn’t give anyone a sense of what being on the programme entails.”

Future plans and impact

Respondents were asked how long they had remaining on their ngdp contract. Thirty-nine per cent had no time remaining, 47 per cent had 1-3 months while eight per cent had 4-6 months and four per cent had 7-9 months. No respondents had more than nine months remaining on their contracts. Table 6 shows these findings.

Table 6: How long do you have remaining on your ngdp contract?	
	Per cent
No time	39
1 – 3 months	47
4 – 6 months	8
7 – 9 months	4
10 – 12 months	0
Don’t know	1

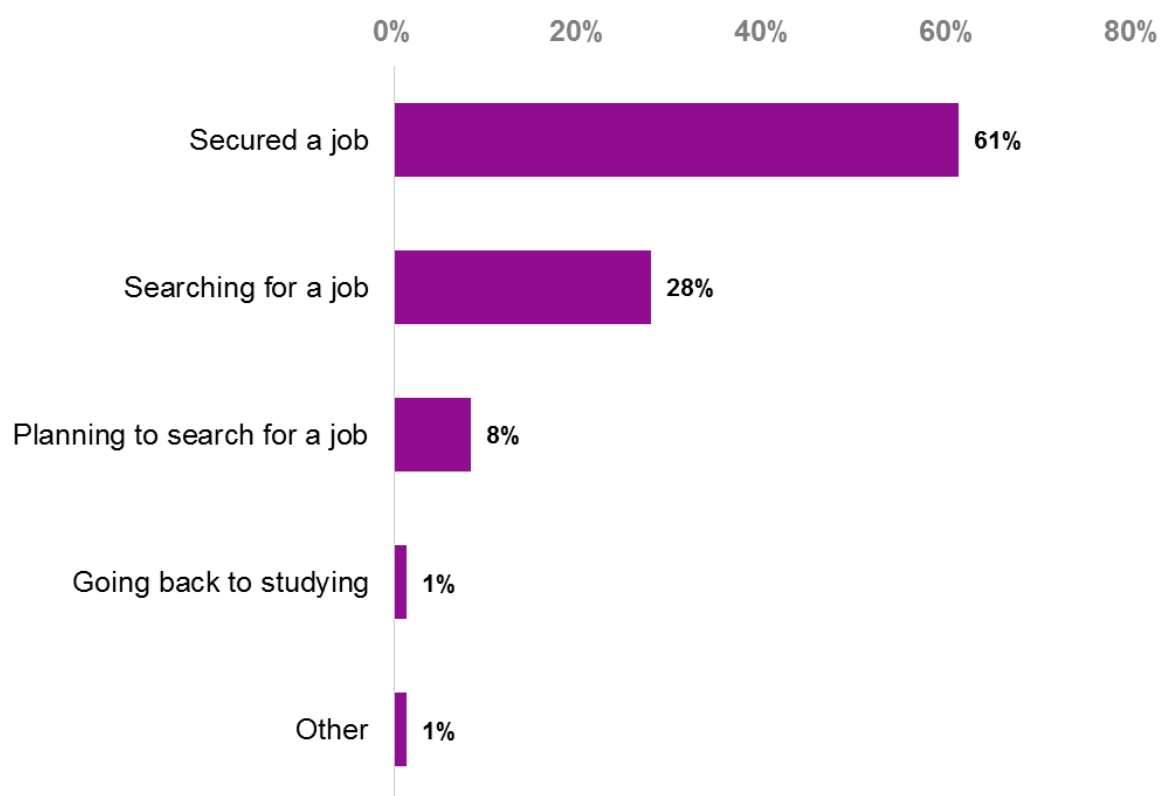
Base: all respondents (72)

Over half of respondents (61 per cent) reported that they had secured a job post ngdp when asked about their current plans for the future. A full breakdown of these findings is shown in Table 7 and they are illustrated in Figure 2.

Table 7: What are your current plans for the future?	
	Per cent
I have secured a job post ngdp	61
I am currently searching for a job post ngdp	28
I plan to search for a job in the coming weeks	8
I plan to go back to/have gone back to studying	1
Other	1
Don’t know	0

Base: all respondents (72).

Figure 2: What are your current plans for the future?



Base: all respondents (72)

Those respondents who said that they had secured a job post ngdp were asked how far into the programme they were when the job was secured. Most (69 per cent – 29 respondents) had secured their new job between 16 and 21 months into the ngdp. This was similar to 2018, when 67 per cent also secured a new job between 16 and 21 months into the programme. Table 8 shows a full breakdown of these findings.

Table 8: How long into the ngdp were you when your new job was secured?

	Per cent	Number
1 – 6 months	2	1
7 – 12 months	5	2
13 – 15 months	21	9
16 – 18 months	33	14
19 – 21 months	36	15
22 – 24 months	2	1
Don't know	0	0

Base: Respondents who had secured a job post ngdp (42)

Those respondents who had secured a job were asked to identify the sector in which their new job was located. A large majority (79 per cent - 39 respondents) were being employed by their host council from the ngdp programme. A full breakdown of these findings is shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Please select the option below that most closely reflects your new job

	Per cent	Number
My host council(s) from the ngdp	79	33
Other local government	14	6
Other public sector	5	2
Private sector	2	1
Third sector	0	0
Self employed	0	0
Other	0	0
Prefer not to say	0	0
Don't know	0	0

Base: Respondents who had secured a job post ngdp (42)

The three graduates who said that their new job was outside local government were asked to choose the reasons for making this choice from a list provided. The reasons most commonly chosen to gain a greater scope of work (chosen by all three), that a good opportunity came up and to build new skills (both chosen by two of the three respondents). One respondent provided their own reason: that they had secured a job as a public sector consultant, which was building on what they had learned and they intended to go back into local government at some point. Table 10 shows a full breakdown of these findings.

Table 10: What was your reason for choosing a job outside of local government?

	Per cent	Number
To gain a greater scope of work	100	3
A good opportunity came up	67	2
To build new skills	67	2
I wanted a higher salary	33	1
Frustration with the structure of local government	33	1
I couldn't find a permanent role in local government	0	0
I was pursuing a management position	0	0
I don't want to work in local government right now	0	0
I don't want to work in local government again	0	0
Change of geographical location	0	0
Other	33	1
Don't know	0	0

Base: Respondents whose job was outside local government (3). Respondents were allowed to select more than one option.

The 26 respondents who were searching or planning to search for a job post ngdp were asked how confident they felt about their chances in the job market. Most (92 per cent - 24 respondents), were very or positive about their chances, this is a similar proportion to the 2018 survey when 91 per cent were very or fairly confident. These findings are shown in Table 11.

Table 11: How do you feel about your chances in the job market?

	Per cent	Number
Very or fairly positive	92	24
Very positive	12	3
Fairly positive	81	21
Not very positive	8	2
Not at all positive	0	0
Don't know	0	0

Base: Respondents who were searching or planning to search for a job post ngdp (26)

All respondents were asked the extent to which they thought that participating in the ngdp had had a positive impact on their ability to further their career. Almost all respondents (99 per cent) said that it had to either a great or moderate extent, this was a very similar finding to 2018 when it was 100 per cent. Table 12 shows these findings.

Table 12: To what extent, if at all, do you think that participation in the ngdp has had a positive impact on your ability to further your career?

	Per cent
To a great or moderate extent	99
To a great extent	78
To a moderate extent	21
To a small extent	1
Not at all	0
Don't know	0

Base: all respondents (72)

The respondents were asked if there anything additional the LGA could do for them that may be of benefit now the programme has formally ceased. The suggestions, which were received from 31 respondents, fell into the following categories:

- **Alumni events and network:** Most respondents identified that alumni events would be of benefit and many of these felt that these should be delivered through an alumni network. Others felt that other modes of staying in touch, such as through the LinkedIn group, would be sufficient.
- **Training and development information:** Several respondents asked that the LGA provide them with information regarding training and development opportunities. Some requested ongoing access to the ILM course materials and a small number wanted opportunities to help out at future ngdp events.
- **Career advice and support:** A number of respondents expressed a wish for the LGA to provide advice and support to help them to progress their career, including information regarding job opportunities.

When asked how likely they would be to recommend the ngdp to others if asked about it almost all (99 per cent), said that they were either fairly or very likely to recommend the programme.

Table 13: Taking everything into consideration, how likely would you be to recommend the ngdp to others if asked about it?

	Per cent	Sample size
Very or fairly likely	99	71
Very likely	76	55
Fairly likely	22	16
Not very likely	0	0
Not at all likely	0	0
Don't know	1	1

Base: all respondents (72)

Respondents were invited to provide any comments that the LGA could use to help promote the ngdp to future participants. A variety of comments were provided, including:

- “A really wide-ranging, intensive exposure to all of the delights and challenges of local government. A great investment for a future career in the public sector.”
- “The ngdp has provided me with valuable insight into multiple local governments services. The experience has allowed me to work in four distinct roles over the course of two years, providing me with a strong level of understanding of local government which will enable me to fast track my career.”
- “A great all rounded scheme that really does fast-track you to management within the public sector!”

Finally, respondents were asked if they had any other comments about the ngdp. A variety of comments were received from the 24 people who responded, these are themed below:

- **Appreciation for the programme:** Several respondents expressed their gratitude for the programme itself and for the support they received from the programme team.
- **Valuable experience:** Many respondents reported that the ngdp had given them a valuable learning opportunity that they would not have otherwise been able to access, and a number of respondents said they had secured their job as a result of their participation in the programme.
- **Issues with the ILM course:** A small number of respondents highlighted issues with the course, these included difficulty attending events, especially when overnight stays were involved, a lack of academic content on leadership and management theories to support the assignments and the need for better alignment between structure of the course and the graduate programme.

Annex A: Questionnaire

End of programme survey questions

To all respondents:

1. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the ngdp?

- Very satisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know

2. To what extent, if at all, do you feel more confident in your ability to gain a management position in local government, having participated in the ngdp?

- To a great extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all
- Don't know

3. What were your objectives in taking part in the ngdp?

Please tick all that apply

- To learn about new subject areas
- To develop key skills for fast-track management progression
- To gain experience
- To fast-track my career
- To network and learn from other trainees
- Other (please specify) _____
- Don't know

To everyone apart from those who selected 'don't know':

4. Were the objectives that you had for taking part in the ngdp achieved?

- Fully achieved (met all goals)
- Largely achieved (met most goals)
- Partially achieved (met some goals)
- Not achieved (met none of the goals)
- Don't know

5. Is there anything about the ngdp you feel could be improved?

Please tick all that apply

- Advertising and promotion of the programme
- Online applications
- Assessment centres
- Interviews
- Council placements
- Learning and development
- Networking with other National Management Trainees
- Wrap up
- Other (please specify below) _____
- Nothing needs improvement
- Don't know

If you have comments on any of the above, please use the space below:

6. How long do you have remaining on your ngdp contract?

- No time
- 1 – 3 months
- 4 – 6 months
- 7 – 9 months
- 10 – 12 months
- Don't know

7. What are your current plans for the future?

- I have secured a job post ngdp
- I am currently searching for a job post ngdp
- I plan to search for a job in the coming weeks
- I plan to go back to/have gone back to studying
- Other (please specify below) _____
- Don't know

To those who answered 'I have secured a job post ngdp':

8. How long into the ngdp were you when your new job was secured?

- 1 – 6 months
- 7 – 12 months
- 13 – 15 months
- 16 – 18 months
- 19 – 21 months
- 22 – 24 months
- Don't know

9. Please select the option below that most closely reflects your new job:

- Private sector
- My host council(s) from the ngdp
- Other local government
- Other public sector
- Third sector
- Self employed
- Other (please specify below) _____
- Prefer not to say
- Don't know

To those who selected private sector, other public sector, third sector, self-employed or other:

10. What was your reason for choosing a job outside of local government?

Please tick all that apply

- I couldn't find a permanent role in local government
- A good opportunity came up
- I wanted a higher salary
- I was pursuing a management position
- I don't want to work in local government right now
- I don't want to work in local government again
- Change of geographical location
- To build new skills
- Frustration with the structure of local government
- To gain a greater scope of work
- Other (please specify below) _____
- Don't know

To those who answered "I am currently searching for a job post ngdp" or "I plan to search for a job in the coming weeks":

11. How do you feel about your chances in the job market?

- Very positive
- Fairly positive
- Not very positive
- Not at all positive
- Don't know

To all:

12. To what extent, if at all, do you think that participation in the ngdp has had a positive impact on your ability to further your career?

- To a great extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all
- Don't know

13. If you have an updated email address for our alumni records, please enter it below.

Work email	
Personal email	

14. Is there anything additional we could do for you that may be of benefit now the programme has formally ceased?

15. If you have a LinkedIn profile, please enter it below.

16. Taking everything in to consideration, how likely would you be to recommend the ngdp to others if asked about it?

- Very likely
- Fairly likely
- Not very likely
- Not at all likely
- Don't know

17. We would welcome any comments that we could use to help promote the ngdp to future participants. Please use the space below.

18. Finally, if you have any further comments about the ngdp, please use the space below.

Many thanks for taking the time to complete this survey. Your feedback will be used to improve and develop the programme.



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