

Corporate peer challenge feedback survey

2018/19



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Summary

This online survey looked at the views of councils in receipt of a corporate peer challenge (CPC) during 2018/19. The results will help the Local Government Association (LGA) improve and develop the peer challenge programme.

An online survey form was sent via email to the leader and chief executive in 42 councils that received a CPC between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019 (a total of 81 surveys in total). The survey was sent to respondents once they had signed off their CPC report, and contained a number of questions looking at views on the process, team and initial outcomes from the CPC.

A total of 66 responses were received (32 leaders and 34 chief executives) – a response rate of 81 per cent. Whilst these results should strictly be taken as a snapshot of the views of this particular group of councils, rather than representative of all councils who had a CPC during 2018/19, this level of response means that the results are likely to provide a good indication of the views of those who had a CPC more widely.

Results

- **Overall satisfaction with the CPC:** All respondents (100 per cent) said that they were either very or fairly satisfied with the Corporate Peer Challenge.
- **Increased confidence in council delivering priorities as a result of the challenge:** Ninety two per cent of respondents said that this was the case to either a great or moderate extent.
- **Objectives:** The highest number of respondents (45 per cent) identified getting an independent view on their current plans and strategies as their main objective.
- **Achieving objectives:** Ninety five per cent of respondents said that their objectives for taking part in the CPC had been either fully or largely achieved.
- **Quality of peer challenge team:** Most respondents (97 per cent), said the quality of the peer challenge team was either excellent or good.
- **Providing advice and ways to improve:** Most respondents (97 per cent) said that the feedback from the peer team provided useful advice and ways to improve, to either a great or moderate extent.
- **Feedback channels:** All the feedback channels were identified as helpful by most respondents. The most helpful was identified as the informal daily catch up by 45 per cent of respondents.
- **Benefits and costs:** All respondents were asked whether overall they would agree or disagree that the benefits of CPC outweigh the costs (for example, staff time). Nearly all (97 per cent) either strongly or tended to agree.
- **Recommending the corporate peer challenge:** All (100 per cent) of respondents said that they would be either very or fairly likely to recommend having a CPC to other councils, if asked about it.

Introduction

This online survey looked at views of corporate peer challenge (CPC) amongst councils that received one during 2018/19. The results will help the Local Government Association (LGA) improve and develop the peer challenge programme.

Methodology

An online survey form was sent via email to the leader and chief executive in 42 councils that received a CPC between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019 (a total of 81 surveys in total). The survey was sent to respondents once they had signed off their CPC report, and contained a number of questions looking at views on the process, team and initial outcomes from the CPC.

A total of 66 responses were received (32 leaders and 34 chief executives) – a response rate of 81 per cent. Whilst these results should strictly be taken as a snapshot of the views of this particular group of councils, rather than representative of all councils who had a CPC during 2018/19, this level of response means that the results are likely to provide a good indication of the views of those who had a CPC 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.

Corporate peer challenge feedback survey

This section outlines the full set of survey results.

All respondents were asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the CPC that their council received. All respondents (100 per cent) said that they were either very or fairly satisfied.

Table 1: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the corporate peer challenge your council received?	
	Per cent
Very or fairly satisfied	100
Very satisfied	82
Fairly satisfied	18
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	0
Fairly dissatisfied	0
Very dissatisfied	0
Don't know	0

Base: all respondents (66 respondents)

Respondents were asked to what extent, if at all, they felt more confident about their council delivering its priorities, having participated in the CPC. Ninety two per cent said that this was the case to either a great or moderate extent.

Table 2: To what extent, if at all, do you feel more confident about your council delivering its priorities, having participated in the corporate peer challenge?	
	Per cent
To a great or moderate extent	92
To a great extent	53
To a moderate extent	39
To a small extent	5
Not at all	2
Don't know	2

Base: all respondents (66 respondents)

All respondents were asked to identify their main objective in taking part in the CPC. The highest number (45 per cent) identified getting an independent view of their current plans and strategies as their main objective. Following that, getting an external challenge on their way of doing things was identified by 29 per cent of respondents and informing their future strategic thinking and direction was identified by 17 per cent of respondents. Six per cent said that they were hoping to get challenge, support or advice on a specific issue.

One respondent to this question identified one other objective and this was;

“Three primary issues, corporate capacity, our commissioning of services and corporate priorities.”

Table 3: What was your main objective in taking part in the corporate peer challenge?	
	Per cent
To get an independent view on our current plans and strategies	45
To get an external challenge on our way of doing things	29
To inform our future strategic thinking and direction	17
To get challenge, support or advice on a specific issue	6
Other	2
Don't know	2

Base: all respondents (66 respondents)

All respondents were asked if the objectives that they had for taking part in the CPC had been achieved. Ninety five per cent of respondents said that these had been either fully or largely achieved.

Table 4: Were the objectives that you had for taking part in the corporate peer challenge achieved?	
	Per cent
Fully or largely achieved	95
Fully achieved (met all goals)	52
Largely achieved (met most goals)	43
Partially achieved (met some goals)	5
Not achieved (met none of the goals)	0
Don't know	0

Base: all respondents who answered this question (65 respondents)

Respondents were asked how they would rate the quality of the peer challenge team. Nearly all (97 per cent) said that they would rate the quality of the team as either excellent or good.

Table 5: Overall how would you rate the quality of the peer challenge team? Please consider, for example, the team's knowledge and experience, their conduct, the quality of their judgements, and whether they provided appropriate advice and support	
	Per cent
Excellent or good	97
Excellent	77
Good	20
Not very good	2
Not good at all	2
Don't know	0

Base: all respondents (66 respondents)

All respondents were asked to what extent the feedback from the peer team provided useful advice and suggested ways to improve. Ninety seven per cent said that this was the case to either a great or moderate extent.

Table 6: To what extent did the feedback from the peer team provide useful advice and suggested ways to improve?	
	Per cent
To a great or moderate extent	97
To a great extent	71
To a moderate extent	26
To a small extent	3
Not at all	0
Don't know	0

Base: all respondents (66 respondents)

All respondents were asked which channels of feedback they found helpful. They were able to select multiple feedback types. All the methods of feedback were equally highly rated at 85 per cent.

Table 7: Which channels of feedback did you find helpful?	
	Per cent
Feedback report	85
Feedback presentation on final day	85
Informal daily catch-ups	85
Other	5
Don't know	0

Base: all respondents (66 respondents)

Note: Percentages total to more than 100, since respondents could select a range of channels.

Five per cent of respondents (three people) mentioned other channels of feedback that they found helpful and these are provided below:

- the 1:1 meetings
- contact for future advice, support and networking
- informal and more formal conversations with the team.

Those respondents who said that more than one channel of feedback was helpful were then asked which was the most helpful. Table 8 combines these answers with the answers of those respondents who only said that one channel was helpful, to show overall which was considered the most helpful channel of feedback. As the table shows, respondents most commonly said that informal daily catch-ups were the most helpful channel (44 per cent selected this option).

Table 8: Which of these was the most helpful channel of feedback?	
	Per cent
Informal daily catch ups	44
Feedback presentation on final day	30
Feedback report	26
Other	2
Don't know	0

Base: all respondents (66 respondents)

Respondents were asked whether overall they would agree or disagree that the benefits of CPC outweigh the costs. Ninety seven per cent either strongly or tended to agree.

Table 9: Overall, would you agree or disagree that the benefits of corporate peer challenge outweigh the costs (for example, staff time)?	
	Per cent
Strongly or tend to agree	97
Strongly agree	83
Tend to agree	14
Neither agree nor disagree	2
Tend to disagree	2
Strongly disagree	0
Don't know	0

Base: all respondents (66 respondents)

All respondents were asked, taking everything into consideration, how likely they would be to recommend having a CPC to other councils if asked about it. Nearly all (100 per cent) of respondents said that they would be either very or fairly likely to recommend having a CPC to other councils, if asked about it.

Table 10: Taking everything into consideration, how likely would you be to recommend having a corporate peer challenge to other councils, if asked about it?	
	Per cent
Very or fairly likely	100
Very likely	91
Fairly likely	9
Not very likely	0
Not at all likely	0
Don't know	0

Base: all respondents (66 respondents)

Respondents were asked to provide any comments that could be used to help promote CPC to other councils. Responses included:

“Prior to start of the review, I was not convinced that the process and outcomes would be worth the staff time that had been, and would need to be given to this project. I am pleased to say that I was wrong. The team that came in were knowledgeable and thoughtful - they were searching in their questioning and measured in the advice they gave. It was a thoroughly useful exercise that I would readily commend to other local authorities.”

Leader

“The CPC is a must have ‘MOT’ for all councils. The independent assessment and fresh perspective can help to recalibrate Members and officers for the journey ahead.”

Chief Executive

“The Peer Challenge was very timely for our council and gave us information from our partners and the public as to what their views were of us, and also the direction of travel we have undertaken and are planning to undertake has helped us enormously on the things which we need to focus on in the future.”

Leader

“The peer challenge process was a constructive, positive yet challenging experience. It helped provide focus on some key issues for the Council, and the report and recommendations will be very helpful moving forward. The peer challenge team were professional and approachable and I received very positive feedback from a range of people who had been in contact with them.”

Chief Executive

“The peer challenge provided the council with very useful insights into the views of members, staff, partners and residents. It has been an excellent way of ensuring our plans achieve our strategic ambitions.”

Chief Executive

“The Peer Challenge team were excellent - and used their considerable skills to make every part of the organisation (Members and Officers) feel comfortable and relaxed, meaning we good much more out of the process.”

Leader

Respondents were asked if they had any further comments about CPC. Twenty three responses were received and a summary of key themes are listed below:

Positive experience: Several respondents noted that participating in a CPC was a positive, and useful experience, which had had a beneficial effect on their council.

“The Peer Challenge was a very positive experience for the council and has allowed the authority to take the next step on its improvement journey.”

Chief Executive

“The best decision I have made as leader of this council was to apply to receive the peer challenge. We will benefit from it for many years.”

Leader

The team: Some respondents praised the peer challenge team but one or two raised concerns over difficulties experienced by the LGA in sourcing suitably skilled peers.

“We had a high calibre team; however, getting a suitable candidate list took longer than expected.”

Chief Executive

“Big thanks to the team, they were great.”

Chief Executive

Suggestions: Some respondents made comments which suggested possible improvements for future peer challenges. These were varied but individual comments included; putting less emphasis on risk, making the process more challenging, and introducing a standard report format.

“There was an over emphasis on risk, in a fast moving environment the recording of the risk assessments is sometimes not concurrent but never the less assessments are made.”

Leader

“A standard report format would be helpful as overall key strengths and areas for development were embedded in the report and needed to be drawn out. A template would also provide an opportunity for more context to be given which may help land the report and clarify the rationale behind it.”

Chief Executive

Annex A: Questionnaire

1. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the corporate peer challenge your council received?

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 about your council delivering its priorities, having participated in the corporate peer challenge?

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

3. What was your main objective in taking part in the corporate peer challenge?

To get an independent view on our current plans and strategies
To get an external challenge on our way of doing things
To inform our future strategic thinking and direction
To get challenge, support or advice on a specific issue (please specify)
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 corporate peer challenge 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. Overall, how would you rate the quality of the peer challenge team?

Please consider, for example, the team's knowledge and experience, their conduct, the quality of their judgements, and whether they provided appropriate advice and support

Excellent
Good
Not very good
Not good at all
Don't know

6. To what extent did the feedback from the peer team provide useful advice and suggested ways to improve?

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

7. Which channels of feedback did you find helpful?

Please tick all that apply

Informal daily catch ups
Feedback presentation on final day
Feedback report
Other (please specify)
Don't know

To those who selected more than one feedback channel above:

8. And which of these was the most helpful channel of feedback?

Please tick one

The answer options selected above will be fed through

Don't know

To all:

9. Overall, would you agree or disagree that the benefits of corporate peer challenge outweigh the costs (for example, staff time)?

Strongly agree
Tend to agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Tend to disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know

10. Taking everything in to consideration, how likely would you be to recommend having a corporate peer challenge to other councils if asked about it?

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

11. We would welcome any comments that we could use to help promote corporate peer challenge to other councils. Please use the space below.

12. Finally, if you have any other comments about the corporate peer challenge you received, 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 corporate peer challenge process.



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