

Leadership Academy impact survey

November 2017



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Summary

Introduction

This online survey of 2016/17 Local Government Association (LGA) Leadership Academy alumni looked at the extent to which participation in this programme has had a lasting impact on those who have participated. The results will help the LGA ensure that our future leadership training best meets councillors' needs.

Methodology

An online survey form was sent via email in November 2017 to the 93 current councillors who attended the Leadership Academy in 2016/17. A total of 49 replied – a response rate of 53 per cent.

Ability to carry out roles

A considerable majority of respondents (46 respondents, 94 per cent) felt that the programme had helped them improve their ability to carry out their role, to either a great or a moderate extent.

Progression to new roles

Twenty-three respondents (47 per cent) reported that since completing the Leadership Academy they have taken on new or additional roles or responsibilities, and a further six (12 per cent) reported that they expected to take on new roles or responsibilities soon. Nineteen respondents (39 per cent) did not have any immediate plans for role progression.

Of the 23 respondents who had progressed in their role or responsibilities since completing the programme, 14 (61 per cent) felt that the Leadership Academy has helped them in this “to a great extent”, and all 23 (100 per cent) felt that the programme had helped their role progression to either a great or a moderate extent.

Open-ended questions

Four main positive themes emerged from the detailed responses submitted by respondents in the two open-ended questions at the end of the survey: the Leadership Academy was valued for its ability to enhance networking and people skills; for its role in building general skills and confidence; for the opportunities which it offers for learning across geographical and political boundaries; and for its development and understanding of knowledge about psychology, organisations, and the local government sector.

Some suggestions for improvement were made from individual councillors, although no themes emerged. These suggestions can be seen in the main body of the report.

Introduction

This online survey looked at the extent to which the Leadership Academy has had a lasting impact on those who have participated. The survey was sent to the councillors who attended the Leadership Academy in 2016/17, which finished with a graduation event in June 2017. The survey was sent out in November 2017, five months after the graduation.

The results will help the Local Government Association (LGA) ensure that our future leadership training best meets councillors' needs.

Methodology

An online survey form was sent via email to the 94 councillors who attended the Leadership Academy in 2016/17, and who were still in post at the time of the survey. The survey was sent out in November 2017, five months after the graduation event. A total of 49 replied – a response rate of 52 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 2016/17 Leadership Academy participants, this level of response means that the results are likely to provide a good indication of the views of the cohort 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.

Leadership Academy impact survey

This section outlines the full set of survey results.

Ability to carry out roles

Respondents were asked to what extent, if at all, they thought that their participation in the Leadership Academy had helped them to improve the way they carry out their role.

As Table 1 shows, a majority of respondents (26 respondents – 53 per cent of the total) felt that the Leadership Academy had helped them to improve their role performance “to a great extent”. A further 20 respondents (41 per cent) felt that this was true “to a moderate extent”. Just three respondents (six per cent) felt that the Leadership Academy had helped “to a small extent”, and no respondents felt that participation in the programme had not helped at all.

Table 1: To what extent, if at all, do you think that participation in the Leadership Academy has helped you improve the way you carry out your role?		
	Number	Per cent
To a great or moderate extent	46	94
To a great extent	26	53
To a moderate extent	20	41
To a small extent	3	6
Not at all	0	0
Don't know	0	0
Total	49	100

Base: all respondents (49 respondents)

Progression to new roles

Respondents were asked whether they had progressed to new role or taken on additional roles or responsibilities following their participation in the Leadership Academy.

As Table 2 shows, 23 respondents (47 per cent) reported that they had progressed in their roles and responsibilities since taking part in the programme. A further six respondents (12 per cent) reported that, whilst they had not yet progressed to a new role or taken on additional responsibilities, they expected to in the near future. As such, the total number of respondents who might be expected to progress in their roles and responsibilities following the Leadership Academy, at 29, is more than half of the total number of respondents (59 per cent). Nineteen respondents (39 per cent) reported that they plan to maintain their current roles and responsibilities for now.

Respondents who indicated that they had already undergone role progression were also asked the extent to which they thought that their participation in the programme had made a positive impact on their ability to progress.

As Table 3 shows, all 23 respondents (100 per cent of those who had progressed) felt that this was true to either a great (14 respondents – 61 per cent) or a moderate (nine respondents – 39 per cent) extent.

Table 2: Since participating in the Leadership Academy have you progressed to a new role or taken on additional roles or responsibilities?

	Number	Per cent
Yes	23	47
No - but I expect to soon	6	12
No – I plan to maintain my current role and responsibilities for now	19	39
Don't know	0	0
Not applicable	1	2
Total	49	100

Base: all respondents (49 respondents)

Table 3: To what extent, if at all, do you think that participation in the Leadership Academy had a positive impact on your ability to progress and/or take on additional roles or responsibilities?

	Number	Per cent
To a great or moderate extent	23	100
To a great extent	14	61
To a moderate extent	9	39
To a small extent	0	0
Not at all	0	0
Don't know	0	0
Total	23	100

Base: all respondents who reported that they had progressed to a new role or taken on additional roles or responsibilities since taking part in the Leadership Academy (23 respondents)

Open-ended questions

To conclude the survey, respondents were asked two open-ended questions which permitted detailed responses: “Please provide brief details of how the Leadership Academy has helped you improve or progress in your role, including examples of things that you have done differently as a result”, and “If you have any further comments about the Leadership Academy, please use the space below”.

In addition to a number of overarching positive comments, the comments received in response to these questions have been classified into five broad themes. The themes can be described as follows:

- People skills and networking
- Confidence and skills
- Learning across boundaries
- Knowledge and understanding
- Room for improvement

People skills and networking

This theme included a number of comments from respondents who valued the social and professional connections offered by, as well as the people skills gained from, the programme. Feedback included:

- Ten respondents lauded the Leadership Academy's networking and socialising opportunities; for example: "I've always liked the networking side of the courses, mixing with other Cllr colleagues and sharing ideas and experiences".
- Six respondents valued the delegation, motivation and personal approachability skills which they feel they have gained from the Leadership Academy; for example: "it was beneficial to consider how I can get others to engage more rather than doing more myself".
- Two respondents reported that participation in the Leadership Academy had directly helped them to cope with conflicted and confrontational working environments; for example: "essential if one is to not merely survive at Cabinet level but to thrive, particularly in a highly combative and occasionally toxic environment as we have experienced in [respondent's authority] in recent years".
- One respondent felt that taking part in the Leadership Academy had helped them to empower other councillors who had not taken part in the programme.
- One respondent noted the value of the Leadership Academy in encouraging leaders to see not just their own value but the value inherent in their teams and local communities, and to begin to harness that value.

Confidence and skills

This theme included a number of comments from respondents who praised the Leadership Academy for its ability to develop skills and inspire confidence. Feedback included:

- Five respondents mentioned that taking part in the programme had made them more assertive or confident; for example: "more assertive, more confident, better at presenting my case and qualifying it".
- Four respondents noted the particularly beneficial nature of teamwork and team challenges in building confidence; for example: "Was very helpful with learning confidence in working with other members and my approach to the different challenges".
- Four respondents gave concrete examples of how their participation in the programme had directly enabled them to take on extra responsibilities or progress to more senior roles; for example: "Since taking part in the Leadership Academy, I have gone on to undertake training and accreditation to become a Member Peer".
- Four respondents mentioned finding the sessions on public relations and communication skills especially helpful; for example: "I have also significantly improved my public speaking and communication skills".
- Three respondents noted that taking part in the Leadership Academy had increased their introspection and awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses; for example: "It is great to have the time to... think about and reflect on your own leadership style".
- Two respondents felt encouraged because the Leadership Academy had reminded them that they and their authorities are not alone in the problems and challenges they face; for example: "It is important to reflect occasionally when things get tough that one is not alone and that there are others battling for the same causes".
- One respondent reported that participating in the Leadership Academy had given them the confidence to scrutinise and challenge status quo working practices in their home authority.

Learning across boundaries

This theme included a number of comments from respondents who admired the Leadership Academy for its potential to transcend political and geographical boundaries. Feedback included:

- Eight respondents felt that taking part in the Leadership Academy with members from other authorities had helped them to broaden their insight in the light of context from other authorities; for example: “I found the Leadership Academy a great way to get involved in the 'bigger picture' of local government”.
- Five respondents valued the potential of the Leadership Academy to increase tolerance of contrasting political viewpoints, and to encourage dialogue across party lines; for example: “As a cross party initiative it highlighted that all local Cllrs face similar issues and scenarios, irrespective of their political leanings, are usually working towards the same end goal and that we should all be working towards the same good outcomes”.
- Four respondents highlighted that the scheme enabled them to better understand variations across authorities; for example: “more awareness of other councils’ approach and culture (very useful); greater awareness of different structures and how other councils work (committee vs cabinet for example, unitary, city councils etc).”

Knowledge and understanding

This theme included a number of comments from respondents who valued particular aspects of the knowledge and learning opportunities which the Leadership Academy programme facilitated. Feedback included:

- Four respondents valued the intellectual challenge and stimulation offered by the programme; for example: “the intensity of the course keeps your brain engaged”.
- Four respondents wrote how much they valued the content relating to personality types; for example: “given me greater insight into the behaviours and attitudes of different personality types”.
- Two respondents particularly valued the emphasis on different leadership styles; for example: “made me think about leadership styles and assess my own methods and style”.
- Two respondents noted improved skills in the area of scrutiny; for example: “becoming more effective in carrying out scrutiny work”.
- One respondent noted that the Leadership Academy helped them understand the various components and constituents of leadership.
- One respondent with a history of private sector leadership praised the ability of the Leadership Academy to educate him about the unique characteristics of political leadership.

Room for improvement

This was not strictly a theme, but a diverse range of comments from respondents who wished to suggest areas of possible improvement for the Leadership Academy in future. Its constituent topics, each offered by a single respondent, are as follows:

- More involvement from past attendees, who may be able to encourage present attendees and share their lessons learned, might be valuable.
- One respondent thought that greater dialogue between participants would be valuable.
- One respondent found the first two sessions of the Leadership Academy, on leading through relationships and innovation and change, very helpful, but did not gain as much value from the third session, on leading communities and place.
- One respondent noted that the change of administrators running each session was unhelpful, as they would prefer consistent presenters and facilitators throughout.
- One respondent found the content of the sessions too basic in content and not challenging enough, although this needs to be clarified in light of several comments from other respondents who found the scheme sufficiently challenging.

- One respondent from a Welsh local authority did not appreciate the location of the graduation ceremony in England, suggesting that a Welsh venue would be more appropriate for members from Welsh authorities.
- One respondent highly valued everything they had gained from the Leadership Academy, but felt that they had been offered participation too late in their role for the impact of the programme to be maximised.

Annex A: Questionnaire

1. Please enter your details below:

Name:	
Role:	
Council:	

2. To what extent, if at all, do you think that participation in the Leadership Academy has helped you improve the way you carry out your role?

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

To those who answered not at all to Q2:

3. Why do you think that participation in the Leadership Academy has not helped you improve the way you carry out your role? If you have any suggestions as to how the programme could be improved or developed to help with this, please use the space below.

4. Since participating in the Leadership Academy have you progressed to a new role or taken on additional roles or responsibilities?

- Yes
- No – but I expect to soon
- No – I plan to maintain my current role and responsibilities for now
- Don't know
- Not applicable

If yes:

- 5. To what extent, if at all, do you think that participation in the Leadership Academy had a positive impact on your ability to progress and/or take on additional roles or responsibilities?

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

To those who answered a great or moderate extent to Q2 or Q5:

- 6. Please provide brief details of how the Leadership Academy has helped you improve or progress in your role, including examples of things that you have done differently as a result.

- 7. If you have any further comments about the Leadership Academy, 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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