

# Leadership Academy impact survey 2019-20

November 2020



## Acknowledgements

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To view more research from the Local Government Association Research and Information team please visit: <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/research>

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## Summary

In September 2020, the Local Government Association's (LGA) Research and Information team conducted a survey of councillors who had attended the LGA's Leadership Academy in 2019/20 (cohorts 183 to 189), in order to obtain feedback on the lasting impact of the course. The results will be used to develop the programme to ensure that it best meets councillors' needs.

## Methodology

An online survey was sent to the 109 councillors who had completed the Leadership Academy between six and 11 months previously. A total of 43 councillors submitted a completed survey – a response rate of 39 per cent. This level of response means that these results should be taken as a snapshot of the views of this group of respondents, rather than representative of all councillors who attended the Leadership Academy.

## Key messages

The results show that the Leadership Academy had improved the ability of most councillors to carry out their role. While most councillors continued to maintain their current roles and responsibilities since taking part in the Leadership Academy, a third had either progressed to a new role or taken on other duties and tasks.

## Results

- **Improving ability to carry out role:** Most councillors (93 per cent, 40 respondents) said their participation in the Leadership Academy had helped to improve the way they carry out their role, to a great or moderate extent.
- **Career progression:** Twenty one per cent of councillors (nine respondents) said they had progressed to a new role or taken on additional roles or responsibilities, since attending the course, and 12 per cent (five respondents) said they expected to progress soon.
- **Positive impact to progress:** Of the councillors who had progressed or taken on a new role or responsibilities, most (89 per cent, eight respondents) said their participation in the Leadership Academy had positively impacted on their ability to do so, to a great or moderate extent.

## Introduction

In September 2020, the Local Government Association's (LGA) Research and Information team conducted a survey of councillors who had attended the LGA's Leadership Academy in 2019/20 (cohorts 183 to 189), in order to obtain feedback on the lasting impact of the course. The results will be used to develop the programme to ensure that it best meets councillors' needs.

## Methodology

An online survey was sent to the 109 councillors who participated in the LGA's Leadership Academy in 2019/20. The survey was in the field from 23 September to 16 October 2020 – between six and 11 months after councillors had completed their respective programmes. A total of 43 councillors submitted a completed survey – a response rate of 39 per cent.

This level of response means that these results should be taken as a snapshot of the views of this group of respondents, rather than representative of all councillors who attended the Leadership Academy.

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.
- 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 provides full results for each survey question.

All respondents were asked to what extent, if at all, participating in the Leadership Academy had helped them to improve the way they carry out their role. Most respondents (93 per cent, 40 councillors) said the Academy had helped to a great or moderate extent. See Table 1.

**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
<b>To a great or moderate extent</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>93</b>
To a great extent	21	49
To a moderate extent	19	44
To a small extent	3	7
Not at all	0	0
Don't know	0	0

Base: all respondents (43)

All respondents were asked if they had progressed to a new role, or taken on additional roles or responsibilities, since participating in the Leadership Academy. Twenty one per cent, (nine respondents) said this was the case, 12 per cent (five respondents) said they expected to progress soon and 58 per cent (25 respondents) planned to maintain their current role and responsibilities for now.

**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	9	21
No – but I expect to soon	5	12
No – I plan to maintain my current role and responsibilities for now	25	58
Don't know	0	0
Not applicable	4	9

Base: all respondents (43)

Those respondents who had taken on a new role, or had taken on additional roles and responsibilities, were asked to what extent, if at all, their participation in the Leadership Academy had positively impacted on their ability to do so. Most respondents (89 per cent, eight councillors) said this was the case to either a great or moderate extent. See Table 3.

**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
<b>To a great or moderate extent</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>89</b>
To a great extent	3	33
To a moderate extent	5	56
To a small extent	1	11
Not at all	0	0
Don't know	0	0

Base: all respondents who had progressed to a new role or taken on additional roles or responsibilities (9)

Respondents who said the Leadership Academy had positively impacted on the way they carried out their role, either to a great or moderate extent, were asked to provide examples to illustrate this – as were those who said it had positively impacted on their ability to progress to or take on new roles or responsibilities. Thirty three respondents gave feedback. The themes were:

**Communicating/collaborative working:** Just under half of respondents said, as a result of the programme, they now had a better understanding of how to communicate with others, to work collaboratively and engage more effectively. Respondents mentioned changing their approach, (including adopting a more inclusive approach), and having a better understanding of different management styles. For example:

*“Changed my approach with some stakeholders to engage with them to deliver improved services.”*

*Conservative Councillor*

*“Broadened way of looking at situations and interacting with people.”*

*Labour Councillor*

*“I learnt to present myself and understood that you need to know the other person if you want to achieve changes/goals. We all are different, and we can achieve more if we listen and understand the other person. Communication is the key!”*

*Labour Councillor*

**Confidence:** Around a quarter of respondents reported feeling more confident in their leadership roles as a result of the programme. This included becoming more assertive, taking forward larger projects, taking on more responsibility and becoming more ambitious.

*"I have taken on more responsibility; I have become more assertive but not in an aggressive way."*

Labour Councillor

*"More confident and assertive with officers as I understand more what's normal and where each person fits in in our organisation."*

Conservative Councillor

**Understanding of role:** A few respondents suggested that they had developed a greater understanding of their role or new areas of work as a result of attending the Leadership Academy.

*"As a new councillor moving into a cabinet position, the Leadership Academy provided me with valuable advice..."*

Labour Councillor

One of two respondents commented on the following themes: building a strategic approach; sharing ideas; leadership skills; and self-reflection:

**Strategic approach:** This opinion focused on how the Leadership Academy had enhanced one's ability to think strategically and approach situations in a more pragmatic way.

*"I have changed how I work with officers and become better at setting out a strategic direction."*

Green Councillor

**Sharing ideas:** This theme focused on the benefits gained from sharing knowledge, best practice and talking through issues with others as a result of the Leadership Academy.

*"...it was also good to learn from others and take their ideas to see if they would work back at my council."*

Conservative Councillor

**Leadership skills:** This opinion focused on the impact of the Leadership Academy on one's people skills (e.g. clarifying expectations and effective interaction with cabinet colleagues).

*"Helped me to understand my leadership style and how to interact with members of my cabinet more effectively."*

Liberal Democrat Councillor

**Self-reflection:** This theme focused on the reflective aspect of the Leadership Academy, which had allowed for self-evaluation.

*“I consider that the Leadership Academy has enabled me to improve myself by carrying out self-evaluation.”*

Labour Councillor

## Further comments

Twenty one respondents gave further comments about their experience of the Leadership Academy, as outlined below:

- **General praise:** Comments were given about the programme in general (e.g. it was ‘helpful’, ‘excellent’ or ‘enlightening’) and several respondents said they would recommend it to others.
- **Open learning environment:** Comments were made about the supportive and non-judgemental learning environment which allowed for open discussion with other, including those from other parties.
- **Peer-group mixing:** Comments were given about the value of mixing with one’s peers and learning from each other in a safe environment.
- **Self-reflection:** Comments were made about the opportunity and space that the course gave for self-reflection and to reflect on challenges and roles and responsibilities.
- **Wider Perspective:** A comment was made about the way in which the programme had provided useful advice on wider council operations.

Some comments focused on potential improvements:

- **Feedback:** A comment was made that the course now seemed some time ago and suggested that requesting course feedback more promptly may be more beneficial.
- **Course content:** A comment was made suggesting that ‘adjusting to the new normal’ and learning from what works and doesn’t work will need to be included in modules in future programmes. Another comment was made that some sessions skipped through issues too quickly. A further comment said that sessions at the end of the day were repeated too often.
- **Facilitation:** A comment was made that too much time was allowed by course facilitators for ‘sharing’ which could lead to individuals dominating a session, rather than providing new information.
- **Welfare support:** A comment was made suggesting there were too many people in the room observing and without a clear role.
- **Course materials:** A comment was made that it was helpful to have both hard copy and online materials provided but that it may be useful to ask participants to bring laptops so we could use the online materials throughout the course.

## Annex A: Questionnaire

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?

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 Q1:

2. 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.
3. 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:

4. 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 Q1 or Q4:

5. 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.
6. If you have any further comments about the Leadership Academy, please use the space below.



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