



Next Generation Impact Survey: 2018/19

October 2019



Acknowledgements

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Summary

Next Generation is a training programme for councillors looking to progress their political careers and champion local government, run by the Local Government Association (LGA). It is developed within party political traditions and with party political experts; and there is also a programme for members of the LGA's Independent Group. To assess the impact of Next Generation, participants were invited to take part in an online survey. The survey took place in October 2019 and included councillors who had completed the programme between six and nine months previously. It contained a small number of questions looking at the extent to which participating in programme had delivered a lasting impact on participants.

Methodology

An online survey was sent to the 59 councillors who had participated in Next Generation in 2018/19. The survey was sent out in October 2019, between six and nine months after the participants attended their final sessions. A total of 35 replied – a response rate of 59 per cent.

Feedback on Next Generation

- **Improving how councillors carry out their role:** Ninety four per cent of respondents (33 councillors) said Next Generation had helped them improve the way they carry out their role, to either a great or moderate extent.
- **Progression in current role:** More than half of respondents (63 per cent, 22 respondents) had progressed to a new role or taken on additional roles or responsibilities. Of these, all said the programme had positively impacted on their ability to do this.
- **Impact of Next Generation on respondents' progress:** Respondents gave various examples of things they had done differently as a result of the programme, including:
 - developing more confidence in their communication skills and abilities
 - a general increase in confidence leading to respondents seeking opportunities, progression and more responsibility in their current roles
 - benefitting from networking opportunities, shared experiences and learning
 - developing better working relationships with local authority officers.

Introduction

Next Generation is a training programme for councillors looking to progress their political careers and champion local government, run by the Local Government Association (LGA). It is developed within party political traditions and with party political experts; and there is also a programme for members of the LGA's Independent Group. To assess the impact of Next Generation, participants were invited to take part in an online survey. The survey took place in October 2019 and included councillors who had completed the programme between six and nine months previously. It contained a small number of questions looking at the extent to which participating in programme had delivered a lasting impact on participants.

Methodology

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This is a good response rate for a survey of this kind. Whilst these results should strictly be taken as a snapshot of the views of this particular group of respondents, rather than representative of all those who participated in Next Generation in 2018/19, this level of response means that the results are likely to provide a good indication of the views of the group more widely. The response rate for each party type is shown in Table 1.

	Number of Participants	Number of Respondents	Response rate Per cent
Labour	19	11	58
Conservative	19	7	37
Liberal Democrat	12	8	67
Independent	9	9	100
Total	59	35	59

Base: all respondents (35 respondents)

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.

Feedback on Next Generation

This section provides full results for each survey question.

All respondents were asked about their current role. Two out of five (six respondents – 41 per cent) were ward councillors. Twenty two per cent (16 respondents) were portfolio holders and three respondents were Leaders. Other roles varied, but included a group leader as well as deputy and shadow cabinet members. See Table 2.

Table 2: What is your current role?		
	Number	Per cent
Ward councillor	6	41
Portfolio holder	16	22
Deputy leader	3	19
Leader	3	3
Other	7	16

Base: all respondents (35 respondents)

Improvements to role

All respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt their participation in Next Generation had helped them improve the way that they carried out their role. Ninety four per cent (33 respondents) said that it had helped them to either a great or moderate extent. One respondent said it had helped him/her to a small extent, and another said it had not helped. See Table 3.

Table 3: To what extent, if at all, do you think that participation in Next Generation has helped you improve the way you carry out your role?		
	Number	Per cent
To a great or moderate extent	33	94
To a great extent	27	77
To a moderate extent	6	17
To a small extent	1	3
Not at all	1	3
Don't know	0	0

Base: all respondents (35 respondents)

Role progression

All respondents were asked whether, since participating in Next Generation, they had progressed to a new role or taken on additional roles or responsibilities. Sixty three per cent (22 respondents) had done so, with a further fourteen per cent expecting to do so soon (five respondents). See Table 4.

Table 4: Since participating in Next Generation have you progressed to a new role or taken on additional roles or responsibilities?

	Number	Per cent
Yes	22	63
No – but I expect to soon	5	14
No – I plan to maintain my current role and responsibilities for now	8	23
Don't know	0	0

Base: all respondents (35 respondents)

The 22 participants who said they had progressed to a new role were asked to indicate the extent to which they thought their participation in Next Generation had positively impacted on their ability to progress or take on additional roles or responsibilities. All 22 respondents said the programme had had a positive impact, to either a great or moderate extent. See Table 5.

Table 5: To what extent, if at all, do you think that participation in Next Generation 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	22	100
To a great extent	17	77
To a moderate extent	5	23
To a small extent	0	0
Not at all	0	0
Don't know	0	0

Base: those who had progressed or taken on new responsibilities (22 respondents)

Participants who said Next Generation had helped to improve the way they carried out their role and/or that it had positively impacted on their ability to progress or take on additional roles and responsibilities were asked an additional question: how had Next Generation helped them improve or progress in their role (e.g. what had they done differently as a result)? Thirty participants responded and their comments are themed below.

Confidence and career development: The largest proportion of respondents gave examples of how Next Generation had helped them to be more efficient and achieve more within their roles. Many cited increased levels of confidence and a willingness to take on greater challenges. In addition, some attributed career moves to the skills and confidence gained from the course:

- “Next Generation increased my confidence. The 360 survey was invaluable, and gave me constructive feedback that I have been able to work on. The future planning section really gave me the focus that I needed to look ahead to where I wanted to be, and how to get there. Seven months after completing the programme I was appointed as a cabinet member. Next Generation gave me both the confidence and focus I needed.”
- “The biggest help has been the opportunity to work with experienced mentors and other members of the cohort on issues. The programme

increases your confidence and helps you think more strategically as a politician. If anything I have put myself out there more and I know that I can do my role well.”

- “Since completing Next Gen I have become group leader, due to our success at the 2019 local elections growing our group from one (me!!) to four. As a minority opposition group we are now able to submit motions, and amendments to motions, and my Next Gen cohort have been hugely helpful with this. The course also enabled me to submit some alternative budget suggestions.”
- “It gave me context as a councillor i.e. that there were councillors across the UK who were new to the role, it gave me tools for considering how I can be a better councillor, it gave me confidence to progress, to do more, to step up for my residents and electors.”
- “Next Generation has made me understand the need for a strategic vision. It has taught me a great deal about campaigning and has helped me build resilience in the face of attack.”

Communication skills: A quarter of the respondents said that they had grown more confident in their communication skills as a result of Next Generation:

- “Communication skills workshop was very useful. Opportunity to build a network across the country with peers was invaluable. Insight in to the role of LGA and how it is there to support me and how to access opportunities via it was informative. Good to learn that I am not the only person going through some of the challenges that I face in this role!”
- “It gave me a chance to step back and understand local government and my role. I also developed my public speaking skills and confidence. I found the stuff about the ways different people work and different types of leadership skills very interesting. I hadn’t come across leadership approaches before and hadn’t thought about that element at all.”
- “The vocal masterclass was excellent and has helped me develop my public speaking skills. I apply some of the practices learned when delivering presentations and speaking in public.”

Networking: Many respondents said they had benefitted from the networking opportunities both on the course and also afterwards. They were able to share experiences and learn from one another during the programme as well as offer encouragement and support:

- “The Next Generation programme provided an excellent network of colleagues to work with, and we continue to support each other. The confidence it built and the understanding on how to get the most out of your role has been incredibly useful. It has encouraged me to get more involved with the LGA including as a South East regional representative for the LGA. It has helped to understand my approach to leadership and how I can use this to influence change. The tips learnt through the public speaking were incredibly helpful and I seek to use them at every opportunity!”

- “Met and networked with those who have trodden different paths and understood them.”

Greater understanding of local government: Over a quarter of respondents said the course had helped them improve working relationships and partnerships. Most referred to their work with officers:

- “It allowed me to focus on how I could create a positive political narrative around meeting our manifesto commitments such as establishing a Disabled People’s Commission for [Council], which will be launched on 3rd December on the International Day of Disability, rather than be defined by challenging budget decisions concerning services under my portfolio.”
- “Understand the dynamics of scrutiny groups and officers. Helped to identify priorities within my ward.”

Further support needs

All respondents were asked if they felt they had any further development or support needs, and 25 gave feedback. Twenty three respondents felt they did have additional training needs that would be addressed via future events, or they expressed a desire to continue learning. Two respondents said they had no further development or support needs at present. Examples of further development or support needs included:

- Learning themes consisted of: finance training; political leadership; political strategy/communication; and presentation skills.
- Training courses signed up for or being considered: Leadership Academy; and Effective Opposition.

Other comments

Finally, respondents were asked if they had any other comments about Next Generation. Twenty five respondents answered this question, the majority of whom shared their positive experience of the Next Generation course, saying that on the whole they thought it was an excellent programme:

- “This course has been fantastic, please keep it going!”
- “It was great to meet others and I would recommend it to anyone”
- “The Next Generation course is an excellent course that encourages the individual to examine ‘self’ and also gives the individual a better understanding of how councils work and how to become a more effective councillor. The other main benefit from the course was being able to meet other people who are councillors in different areas of the country and to be able to benefit from the shared experience.”
- “I strongly recommend this course to other new councillors.”

Others said that they would recommend it to others, or took the opportunity to say “thank you”.

Annex A: Survey Questions

- What is your current role?

Ward councillor

Portfolio holder

Deputy leader

Leader

Other (please specify)

Prefer not to say

- To what extent, if at all, do you think that participation in Next Generation 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:

- Why do you think that participation in Next Generation 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.

To all:

- Since participating in Next Generation 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

If yes:

- To what extent, if at all, do you think that participation in Next Generation 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:

- Please provide brief details of how Next Generation has helped you improve or

progress in your role, including examples of things that you have done differently as a result.

To all:

- If you feel you have further development or support needs, please use the space below to explain what these are.
- If you have any further comments about Next Generation, 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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