



Next Generation impact survey

October 2017



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Summary

During October 2017, the Local Government Association (LGA) conducted a survey of councillors who had completed the Next Generation programme seven months previously. The survey contained a small number of questions looking at the extent to which participating in Next Generation has had a lasting impact on participants. The results will be used to improve and develop the programme.

Methodology

An online survey was sent to the 61 councillors who had participated in Next Generation in 2016/17. The survey was sent out in October 2017, seven months after the participants attended their final session. A total of 39 replied – a response rate of 64 per cent.

Feedback on Next Generation

- **Improving the way participants carry out their role:** Nearly all, (ninety-seven per cent – 38 respondents) said that the Next Generation programme had helped them improve the way they carry out their role, to either a great or moderate extent.
- **Progression in current role:** Over half of all respondents (sixty-seven per cent – 26 respondents) had progressed to a new role or taken on additional roles or responsibilities. Of these respondents, all (100 per cent) said that the programme had had a great or moderate positive impact on their ability to do this.
- **How Next Generation had helped respondents to improve and progress:** Respondents gave various examples of things that they had done differently as a result of the programme. These included:
 - 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, best practice and shared experiences and learning
 - developing wider local government knowledge and learning more about the work of other councils.

Introduction

During October 2017, the Local Government Association (LGA) conducted a survey of councillors who had completed the Next Generation programme seven months previously. The survey contained a small number of questions looking at the extent to which participating in Next Generation has had a lasting impact on participants. The results will be used to improve and develop the programme.

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 2016/17, this level of response means that the results are likely to provide a good indication of the views of the group 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.

Feedback on Next Generation

This section provides full results for each survey question.

A breakdown of the achieved sample by party type is shown in Table 1. As the table shows, the sample was fairly evenly balanced across the four parties.

	Number	Per cent
Labour	11	28
Conservative	10	26
Liberal Democrat	9	23
Independent	9	23
Total	39	100

Base: all respondents (39 respondents)

All respondents were asked about their current role. Nearly half (19 respondents – 49 per cent) were ward councillors. Thirty-three per cent (13 respondents) were portfolio holders and none were Leaders.

Table 2: What is your current role?		
	Number	Per cent
Ward councillor	19	49
Portfolio holder	13	33
Deputy leader	2	5
Leader	0	0
Prefer not to say	0	0
Other	5	13
Total	39	100

Base: all respondents (39 respondents)

All respondents were asked to what extent they felt that participation in Next Generation had helped them improve the way that they carry out their role. Nearly all, ninety-seven per cent (38 respondents), said that it had helped them to either a great or moderate extent.

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	38	97
To a great extent	24	62
To a moderate extent	14	36
To a small extent	1	3
Not at all	0	0
Don't know	0	0
Total	39	100

Base: all respondents (39 respondents)

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-seven per cent (26 respondents) had done so.

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	26	67
No – but I expect to soon	5	13
No – but I plan to maintain my current role and responsibilities for now	7	18
Don't know	1	3
Total	39	100

Base: all respondents (39 respondents)

All participants who answered yes to the previous question were then asked to what extent, if at all, they thought that participation in Next Generation had had a positive impact on their ability to progress or take on additional roles or responsibilities. All respondents to this question, 100 per cent (26 respondents), said that the programme had had a positive impact to either a great or moderate extent.

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	26	100
To a great extent	15	58
To a moderate extent	11	42
To a small extent	0	0
Not at all	0	0
Don't know	0	0
Total	26	100

Base: all respondents who had progressed to a new role or taken on new responsibilities (26 respondents)

In total all but one of the 39 respondents (97 per cent) either said that participation in Next Generation had helped improve the way they carry out their role and/or had a positive impact on their ability to progress and/or take on additional roles or responsibilities, to either a great or a moderate extent. These respondents were asked to provide details of how Next Generation had helped them improve or progress in their role, including examples of things that they had done differently as a result. Thirty-four people responded to this question and their comments are themed below.

Communication skills: Many respondents said that they had grown more confident in their communication skills as a result of Next Generation. The opportunity to learn about communication techniques and the use of language, to undertake media training and to develop public speaking and debating skills were all mentioned. The training had allowed these respondents to develop their ability and understanding in this area and some said that as a result they were better able to challenge, ask questions, present arguments and to be more assertive. For example:

- 'It has helped me understand what I can achieve, better debating skills, public speaking tips. The 360 feedback was very helpful and motivating.'
- "I am more confident in my public speaking and in constructively challenging officers."

Confidence: Aligned with this, many respondents spoke of an increased confidence more generally as a result of attending Next Generation. Some found the course aspirational and felt that it had encouraged them to look for more opportunities, progression and responsibility in their current roles for example in implementing new ideas, managing problems and mentoring others.

- "The training made a lot of things clearer and [gave] me more confidence to progress. I'm now chairing a scrutiny panel."
- "My confidence and ability to both read how other people and get the best from them along with how to implement new ideas and manage problems."

Networking: Many respondents also said that 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 and also now had a trusted group of like-minded individuals with whom to consult for advice and best practice and whom could offer encouragement and support.

- “The greatest benefit has been to be able to network with other course members. Thanks to WhatsApp we continue to stay in touch and support each other.”
- “The greatest benefit of Next Gen has been to build a network of likeminded, forward looking Councillors who all face similar challenges and political pitfalls...”

Local government knowledge: Some spoke of developing wider local government knowledge as a result of the programme. Meeting others from different authorities had helped respondents to expand their experience of local government and to learn about the work of other councils.

- “It was an excellent course and ensured that I was prepared and informed for my next role in politics...”
- “The Next Generation programme has been invaluable in expanding my experience of local government and knowledge of what other councils are doing.”

Other individual comments included:

- dealing with casework more systematically
- the ability to scrutinize decision-making
- developing interpersonal group relationships
- adopting a more successful approach to problem solving
- being prepared to be party political in full council
- working more collaboratively.

All respondents were asked if they felt they had any further development or support needs. Seventeen people answered this question and comments are themed below.

Continued development: Several respondents identified a range of specific areas where they felt their skills could continue to develop given further support. These included; managing staff, political group management, public speaking, scrutiny, leadership and media training.

Phase two Next Generation: Two respondents suggested a phase two Next Generation programme which would help them to further develop their skill sets.

Other individual comments included:

- advice on managing huge volumes of councillor paperwork
- developing informal one to one contact with senior councillors from other authorities
- a supported ‘time out’ to explore career progression and opportunities
- opportunities for next generation networking on matters to do with economic development and encouraging prosperity.

Finally, respondents were asked if they had any other comments about Next Generation. Twenty-eight people answered this question and their responses are themed below:

Positive learning experience: Several respondents said that Next Generation was an excellent programme which had allowed them to progress and develop their skills. For example:

- “It was a worthwhile and enjoyable programme. I found the emphasis on leadership skills very worthwhile from a personal development point of view.”
- “This course is a must to any councillor that wishes to progress within their authority. Also any leader worth their salt should look at their councillors who have the ability to lead, to get them on this course it will be an investment in the future of their authority.”

Networking: Several respondents mentioned the contacts that they had made with others from all over the country through attending the Next Generation They said that this had allowed them to develop a network of like-minded individuals who could offer each other support and friendship in the future.

- “Absolutely incredible! You create bonds with like-minded individuals who will hopefully see each other flourish throughout their respective careers, and Next Generation only lifts the roof of aspiration!”
- “I think it was a great opportunity to both learn but also to meet like-minded people who can offer friendship and support in the future.”

Organisation and delivery team: Some respondents described the programme as being well organised and were positive about the presenters, LGA staff and the modules and venue.

- “The course organisers, mentors and moderators were fantastic.”
- “I thought the programme leaders were fantastic: engaging and inspirational, and keen to ensure the group fostered a healthy camaraderie.”

Suggestions: Five respondents made several suggestions for the future and these were:

- The course could include time discussing the mechanics of being leader.
- A broader range of participants would be better (Wales/Scotland etc) – less London centric.
- Providing the opportunity for participants to share their experience with future Next Generation programme participants would be beneficial.
- A chance to meet the other party cohorts before the very end of the scheme would have been good and could have sparked interesting discussions.
- The scheme had initially been advertised as including more study days and more substantial than was the case in practice, and it would have benefitted from this.
- The smaller parties should not be included within the Independent cohort but should instead have their own course.

Annex A: Questionnaire

1. What is your current role?

Ward councillor
Portfolio holder
Deputy leader
Leader
Other (please specify)
Prefer not to say

2. 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:

3. 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:

4. 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:

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?

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 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:

7. If you feel you have further development or support needs, please use the space below to explain what these are.
8. 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.



Local Government Association

Local Government House
Smith Square
London SW1P 3HZ

Telephone 020 7664 3000
Fax 020 7664 3030
Email info@local.gov.uk
www.local.gov.uk