

# NCF Leading Learning Programme Evaluation

Summative report for the second year of the programme,  
2009/10

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	i
Contents.....	1
Index of figures & tables.....	3
Executive Summary.....	4
Achievements.....	4
Learning.....	5
The Leading Learning Programme model.....	5
impact of the programme on participants.....	5
operational management of the programme.....	6
Summary.....	6
Introduction.....	7
Background.....	7
Structure of report.....	7
Methodology.....	8
The participants.....	9
Geographic spread.....	9
Demography.....	9
Participants' experience.....	11
Learning model.....	12
Quality.....	12
Overall ratings.....	12
360° and Personal Development Plans.....	15
Residential learning.....	16
Mentoring programme.....	17
Action learning.....	19
On-line resources.....	21
Embedding culture of learning.....	21
Yr2 cohort.....	21
Time commitment.....	22
Yr1 Cohort, 12 months on.....	23
Learning achieved.....	24
Overview.....	24
Mentoring.....	25
Action learning.....	26
Impact on participants.....	29
Changes to leadership behaviour.....	29
Overview.....	29
Partnerships.....	31
Action learning.....	32
Impact on Yr1 participants.....	33
Impact on career paths.....	34

Action learning .....	37
Impact on Yr1 participants .....	38
Operational Management .....	40
Quality .....	40
Value for money .....	41
Comparing with similarly structured leadership programmes.....	41
Comparing the residency costs .....	43
Profile of programme .....	43
Equality of opportunity .....	44
Conclusions .....	46
Appendices.....	48
Appendix 1: Changes in leadership behaviour as a result of the programme.....	48
Appendix 2: A day in the life of Adele Poppleton .....	50
Appendix 3: 360° Feedback table.....	52

## INDEX OF FIGURES & TABLES

Figure 1: Age of Yr1, Yr2 and Yr3 participants .....	10
Figure 2: Ethnic backgrounds of Yr1, Yr2 and Yr3 participants.....	10
Figure 3: Gender of Yr1, Yr2 and Yr3 participants .....	11
Figure 4: Participants' rating of the quality of learning opportunities (Base: 26) .....	12
Figure 5: Yr1 and Yr2 participant average ratings on the quality of each element of the programme (Base: 26).....	13
Figure 6: Yr1 and Yr2 participant confidence in the programme meeting their learning needs .....	14
Figure 7: Yr1 and Yr2 percentages of learning needs (as identified in PDPs) met by the programme .....	14
Figure 8: Participant agreement with statements about the residential learning component of the programme (Base: 26) .....	16
Figure 9: Yr1 and Yr2 average ratings for the residential element of the programme .....	17
Figure 10: Participants' agreement with statements about programme impact (Base: 26).....	24
Figure 11: Average impact of programme on Yr1 and Yr2 participants (Base: 26) .....	25
Figure 12: Did Yr1 and Yr2 participants feel better equipped to work with key politicians in their authorities? .....	30
Figure 13: Yr1 and Yr2 responses to question about programme giving confidence to foster and develop strategic partnerships .....	31
Figure 14: Number of years participants estimated until they would realise a target role or job (Base: 19).....	35
Figure 15: Yr1 and Yr1 participant confidence in knowing the steps to take to realise target roles	35
Figure 16: Yr2 participants' agreement about impact of programme on career paths (Base: 26) ...	36
Figure 17: Yr1 participants' agreement about impact of programme on career paths in the 12 month on survey (Base: 12) .....	38
Figure 18: Yr1 participants' confidence to foster partnerships (Base: 11) .....	39
Figure 19: Participants' rating of the management of the programme (Base: 26) .....	40
Figure 20: How supportive Yr1 and Yr2 participants felt their organisation to be .....	41
Table 1: Yr2 Cohort survey return rates .....	8
Table 2: Yr1 Cohort 12 month on survey return rates.....	8
Table 3: Location of participants' local authority, Yr1, Yr2 and Yr3 cohorts .....	9
Table 4: Details of action learning sets .....	19
Table 5: Average number of contact days for Yr2 cohort (Base: 28 and 26).....	22
Table 6: Average number of preparation and task days for first cohort (Base: 28 and 26).....	22
Table 7: Average number of days during the first year of the programme (Base: variable).....	23
Table 8: Number of mentoring meetings (Base: 6) .....	26
Table 9: List of new partnerships with public bodies, commercial organisations and Third Sector organisations.....	32
Table 10: List of existing partnerships with public bodies, commercial organisations and Third Sector organisations.....	32
Table 11: Activity undertaken by Yr2 cohort to progress along career paths (Base: 25).....	36
Table 12: Average impact of programme on Yr2 and Yr1 cohorts' career paths .....	36
Table 13: Average rating for management of programme by Yr1 and Yr2 participants (Base: 26) ..	40

Table 14: Participants' access and cultural requirements .....	44
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Culture Forum's Leading Learning Programme supported 32 senior cultural managers in its second year of operation compared to 29 in its first year.

The second year of the programme started in October 2009 and ended in July 2010 (with many mentoring partnerships continuing until December 2010) and comprised: 360° assessment, culminating in personal development plans, 6.5 days of residential learning (led by City University), mentoring programme (led by Business in the Arts: North West) and action learning (led by Action Learning Associates).

## ACHIEVEMENTS

32 people were recruited to the second year of the programme and for 6 people the Leading Learning Programme was the first specifically leadership focussed training they had undertaken since 2004.

Overall participants rated the programme management and quality of learning components highly. In most cases with ratings that were higher than the first year of the programme.

By the end of the programme, 4 people reported that their participation had addressed 100% of the learning needs identified in their personal development plans, 18 people felt that it had met 80% and 4 people that it had met 60% of their learning needs.

On average, Yr2 participants committed 36.8 days to the programme, compared to 33.8 days in Yr1. The 36.8 days in Yr2 comprised: 16.6 contact days (residencies, action learning and mentoring), 9.6 preparation or tasked based activities arising from the contact days and 10.6 days of independent learning (research and reading).

All participants agreed that the programme had enabled them to reflect constructively on their leadership behaviour. The majority agreed that the programme had opened up new networks and enabled them to develop their leadership skills. Again there were increases in the average ratings given by participants between Yr1 and Yr2, with Yr2 participants showing much higher levels of agreement that the programme had enabled the development of new leadership skills.

The programme had an impact on participants' leadership behaviour resulting in increased confidence, deeper understanding of leadership, the application of practical leadership tools and leadership in a political context.

Two thirds of participants (18 people) felt that the programme had equipped them to work better with key politicians in their authorities, with a further five people finding that it had had a partial impact. The majority of participants also felt that the programme had given them confidence to foster and develop strategic partnerships.

Of the 19 people that responded, 16 had identified a target role or job that was achievable within 5 years, 6 of whom felt the role was achievable in one year and a further six felt the role was achievable in two years. The majority of participants felt that the programme would be instrumental in helping them to achieve their target role.

Finally, there has already been a shift in career paths for participants with 13 applying for new posts (2 people reported achieving them) and 9 people reporting that they had broadened and developed their current role.

## LEARNING

It is clear from the demography of participants that there is a dearth of leaders signing up for the programme that are disabled or from BAME backgrounds. While the programme is not designed to fast track leaders from these groups and there is some evidence of underrepresentation from research in the public sector, it is nevertheless important that steps are taken to ensure barriers are not present in promotion of the programme and that new networks are explored to reach these potential audiences. Additionally, the programme has not yet reached leaders from the North East region or Northern Ireland (either in 2008/09 or 2009/10). The marketing strategy will need to adapt to reach these potential participants for the future years of the programme.

### THE LEADING LEARNING PROGRAMME MODEL

The differentiated approach to learning during the residencies led to a reduction in the comments about the targeting of the training offer compared to the first year of the programme. The residencies were the highest rated element of the Leading Learning Programme.

In the second year of the programme, four action learning sets were run, in part in response to the greater number of participants and in part as an attempt to overcome geographic barriers to participation. Geography still remained a problem for this otherwise highly successful element of the programme.

While the mentoring was a highly rated component of the programme, a small number of participants were frustrated by a delay to the start. The bespoke matching process means that it will not be possible to start the mentoring in October when new participants join the programme and some management of participants' expectations is necessary. Those people that invested time in the mentoring relationships tended to derive more from them than those that did not.

The on-line resources received the lowest ratings from participants. The programme website has remained static since its launch in April 2009 and participants commented that despite being signposted to a variety of on-line resources this felt disjointed because the information was not collated in a single place. Capacity issues preclude the development of the programme website.

### IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME ON PARTICIPANTS

This year, there was a lot more movement in the careers of participants compared to the first year of the programme and in participants' engagement with political figures within their authorities.

This is likely to be a response to the particular economic circumstances resulting from the national cuts to local authority expenditure that became prominent in 2010.

The Yr1 participants that responded to the 12 months on survey evidenced that the programme had provided them with tools to tackle current change within their services, providing confidence and practical tools and methodologies to lead in these circumstances. In addition, these participants reflected that the programme had had an impact on their confidence to foster and develop strategic partnerships.

Some impact won't be realised until years after the programme completes and so it is important that contact be maintained with alumni to enable tracking of impact.

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#### OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT OF THE PROGRAMME

In Yr1 of the programme there were four participants that reported their authority as being unsupportive to their learning. In a more challenging climate, it is interesting that none of the Yr2 participants reported this as a problem, suggesting that communication about the commitment required from the programme has improved.

The cost of the residential element of the programme is competitive when compared to other residential leadership courses.

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#### SUMMARY

The second year of the Leading Learning Programme was extremely successful in providing a high quality learning experience to participants. The content rose to the challenge of the exceptional circumstances of the recession and ensuing cuts to the public sector. There was endorsement from participants that the programme had empowered them, enabling them to lead their teams and develop their professional roles and personal leadership styles. The on going impact of the programme on the first cohort of participants is further evidence of the legacy of taking part in the programme.

## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND

This report provides a summative account of the second year of the National Culture Forum's Leading Learning Programme. The programme is a three year initiative that aims to develop the leadership skills of senior managers of Cultural Services within local government across the UK (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). It is the first of its kind to specifically target this group of cultural leaders. It is intended that between 25 and 30 senior managers will participate in each year.

The programme comprises five strands of learning activity:

- 360° assessment, culminating in personal development plans (looking at strengths & potential)
- Residential sessions (6.5 days of learning, reflection & networking; optional accreditation)
- Mentoring (monthly, mentor = senior leader with extensive local government experience)
- Action learning sets (Bi-monthly, organized geographically)
- Resources (On-line forum, with published documents).

The second year of the Leading Learning Programme ran from October 2009 – July 2010, with 360° assessment beginning in September 2009. 32 participants were selected for inclusion in the programme. The mentoring element of the programme continued until December 2010.

Formal recruitment for each year of the programme happened between May and early September (although opportunities are taken throughout the year to promote the programme at conferences and events). The programme is managed by CLOA with specific elements (in Yr1 and Yr2) contracted to external partners, currently City University (residential, 360°, PDPs), Action Learning Associates (action learning sets), Business in the Arts: North West (mentoring). The programme has a steering group which advocates on behalf of the programme as well as oversees its strategic direction. Membership of the steering group comprises National Cultural Forum representatives and Local Government Improvement and Development.

The third year of the programme will operate in a similar timeframe to previous years albeit with reduced numbers of participants and a reduced budget. Elements of the programme will not be outsourced to the same number of external partners due to the budgetary constraints.

### STRUCTURE OF REPORT

This report is organised by the Leading Learning Programme aims and objectives.

## METHODOLOGY

The evaluation of the National Culture Forum's Leading Learning Programme has three aims, linked to nine objectives:

To assess the Leading Learning Programme model

- To provide five, high quality learning opportunities for participants between October 2009 and July 2010
- To embed a culture of learning among participants
- To evidence participants' learning as a result of the Leading Learning Programme

To assess the impact of the programme on participants

- To evidence a positive change in participants' leadership behaviour
- To have a positive impact on participants' career paths

To review the operational management of the programme

- To provide a programme that offers value for money and that attracts funds over the three years of its operation
- To comment on whether all activities adhere to NALGAO's equal opportunities policy
- To build the reputation of the programme so that it realises between 25 and 30 participants in each year.
- To provide high quality project management & administration.

The report draws on data from six surveys, four of which (those linked to the residencies and the interim evaluation survey) have provided formative findings to help shape the programme.

Questionnaire	Number of responses
First residency feedback questionnaire	31
First residency follow up on-line survey	29
Second residency feedback questionnaire	31
Interim evaluation on-line survey	28
Endline evaluation on-line survey	26

Table 1: Yr2 Cohort survey return rates

Questionnaire	Number of responses
12 months on feedback survey	13

Table 2: Yr1 Cohort 12 month on survey return rates

In addition to these surveys, information provided by the Programme Director, Sue Isherwood, has been considered. Reports from Action Learning Associates and Business in the Arts North West were also reviewed and findings included in this report.

## THE PARTICIPANTS

Equal opportunities data was available for analysis for the first three years of participants and is included here to provide the most up to date profile of participants.

In the first year of the programme, 29 senior leaders successfully applied to join the programme. This figure rose to 32 senior leaders for 2009/10 and fell to 17 in 2010/11 with 14 finally starting the programme (three people dropped out shortly before the programme commenced).

### GEOGRAPHIC SPREAD

Over the three years of the Leading Learning Programme, all but one of the English regions was represented in the participant pool. The region not represented was the North East. From the other UK nations, there was participation from people working in Welsh authorities and one person working in a Scottish authority. (A second participant from a Scottish authority dropped out in Year 3 shortly before the start of the programme.) There were no senior culture leaders from Northern Ireland in the first three years of the programme.

LA Region	Yr1 cohort 2008/09	Yr2 cohort 2009/10	Yr3 cohort 2010/11	All years
East of England	3	5	2	14%
East Midlands	2	1	0	4%
London	4	8	1	18%
North East	0	0	0	0%
North West	4	4	2	14%
South East	3	4	3	14%
South West	2	3	2	10%
West Midlands	2	3	2	10%
Yorkshire & Humber	4	4	1	12%
Wales	3	0	0	4%
Scotland	0	0	1	1%
Northern Ireland	0	0	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>73</b>

Table 3: Location of participants' local authority, Yr1, Yr2 and Yr3 cohorts

### DEMOGRAPHY

Equal opportunities forms were not available for all of the participants across the three years. The numbers of forms received were:

- Yr1 22 out of a possible 29 forms,
- Yr2 25 out of a possible 32 forms,

- Yr3 12 out of a possible 14 forms.

Across the three years of the programme, 59 out of a possible 75 forms are considered here.

In terms of participant age, there was a slight shift towards a higher percentage of younger participants taking part in the programme. In both Yr1 and Yr3 only one participant gave their age as between 55 and 64.

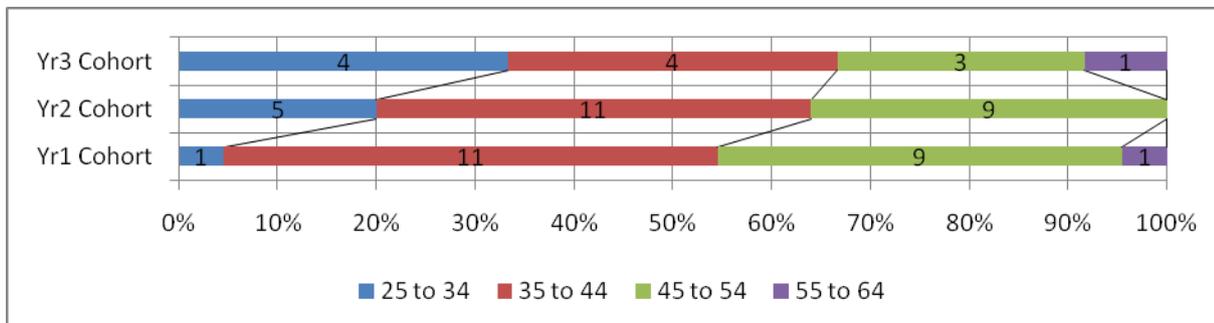


Figure 1: Age of Yr1, Yr2 and Yr3 participants

Across the three years, only one person self defined as disabled under the DDA definition of disability.

The majority of participants were from a white ethnic background, mainly White English. The first year of the programme appears to be the most diverse in terms of the ethnic backgrounds of participants. By Yr3 the in-take was mono-cultural (although one participant was very clear about their Scottish heritage, but failed to complete an equal opportunities form). Only one person self defined as being from a mixed ethnic background over the three years of the programme (Yr1).

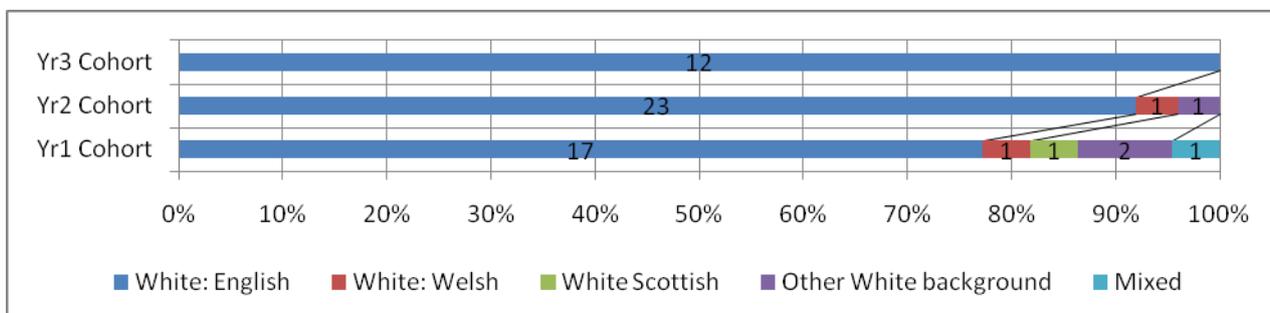
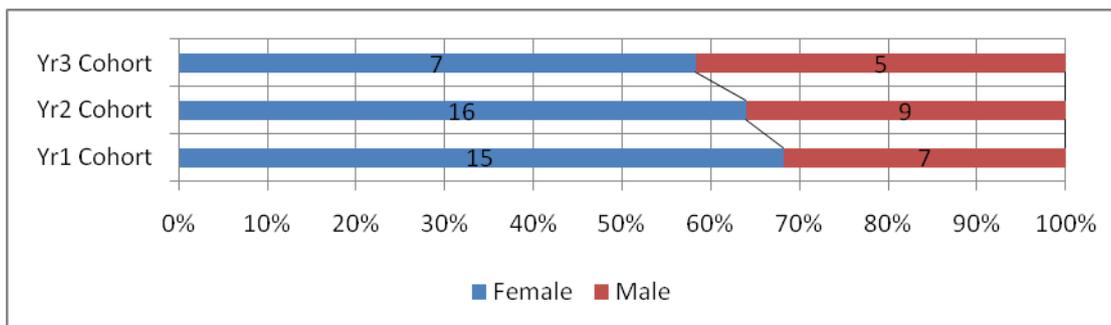


Figure 2: Ethnic backgrounds of Yr1, Yr2 and Yr3 participants

The ratio of male to female students remained at roughly 1:2 over the first two years of the programme. By the third year the numbers of students from each gender had moved closer together.



**Figure 3: Gender of Yr1, Yr2 and Yr3 participants**

The 2009 *Local Authority Workforce Survey 2009 for England*, shows that of those authorities that responded, the median average of the top 5% of earners who were women was 40%. This figure was lower for those with a disability (3%) and from BAME groups (2%).<sup>1</sup>

It is not surprising given these statistics that the percentage of women in the participant pool for the Yr1 or Yr2 Leading Learning Programme was much higher than for disabled or BAME groups. While attempts were made to diversify the pool from which participants were drawn, particularly through the leadership networks that participated in an event led by the Cultural Leadership Programme in the summer of 2010, the pool of participants was not changed appreciably as a result. The programme is targeted at senior cultural managers in local authorities and so selects from a pre-existing pool rather than from a pool of emerging leaders. The programme was not designed to accelerate groups that are currently underrepresented in the top tiers of authorities along their leadership paths.

## PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCE

Similarly to the first year of the programme, the job titles for participants at the start of the programme were in the main heads of or managers of cultural services, including leisure (albeit with some roles falling within directorates of wider responsibility, for example, community or regeneration). Two people had an acting role / interim management role at the start of the programme, two people had officer posts and one was a curator.

The responsibilities for culture were varied within the group, with the majority covering either one side of the cultural sector - arts, heritage and libraries or sport – or the other, tourism and leisure. One participant's current post did not cover the cultural sector at all, although their previous posts had followed a trajectory in the sector.

15 out of 31 people were undertaking a voluntary role or unpaid work and 19 out of 31 people had undertaken some kind of voluntary or unpaid work since 2000. The kinds of experience ranged from governance in cultural organisations and community organisations, to advice roles in other sectors (healthcare and counselling). The unpaid roles were on sub-regional and regional committees, panels or regional representation in professional bodies and associations.

<sup>1</sup> *Local Government Workforce Survey 2009 – England*, Local Government Association, 2009, p.3.

## LEARNING MODEL

This part of the report looks at the success of the programme at delivering learning to participants.

## QUALITY

### OVERALL RATINGS

At each stage of the evaluation, participants have been asked to respond to questions about the quality of the learning opportunities they had experienced: residential learning, mentoring, action learning and on-line resources.

In the final survey, participants gave the following ratings:

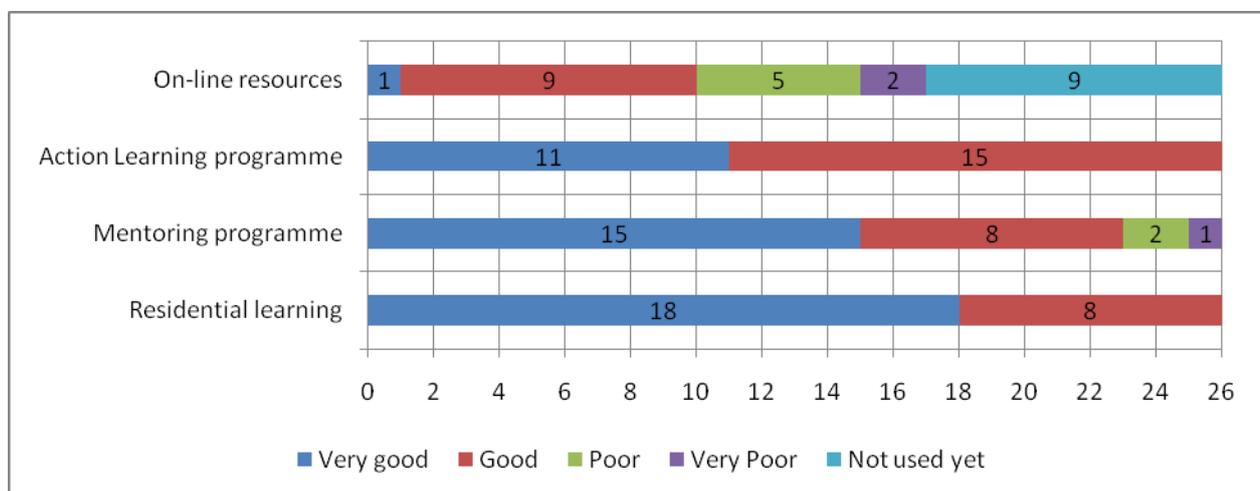


Figure 4: Participants' rating of the quality of learning opportunities (Base: 26)

These ratings were slightly different to the interim findings for Yr2. Taking an average rating<sup>2</sup> for the responses given by the Yr2 cohort for both their interim and endline surveys, it is possible to see a drop in two areas and consistency in two other areas of the course. The rating for mentoring dropped slightly from 3.5 at the interim stage of the course to 3.4. This is still between “Good” and “Very good”. The sharpest drop was in the average rating given for on-line resources, which dropped from 3.2 to 1.7. (See further discussion below.) The average ratings for the residential and action learning elements of the programme were sustained at the same levels at 3.7 and 3.4 respectively.

In the endline surveys, compared to the average ratings given by the Yr1 cohort, there was a significant rise in the rating given for the residential element of the programme, with participants in Yr2 giving a final rating of 3.7, compared to 3.3 by the Yr1 cohort.

The action learning and mentoring elements had slightly different ratings compared to Yr1 of the programme with a small rise in the rating for action learning and a small drop in rating level for

<sup>2</sup> The average is calculated by giving each rating a numeric value where “Very good” = 4, “Good” = 3, “Poor” = 2 and “Very Poor” = 1.

mentoring. The on-line resources were rated lowest by both Yr1 and Yr2 participants, and the drop in the rating for the quality of those resources by Yr2 was significant.

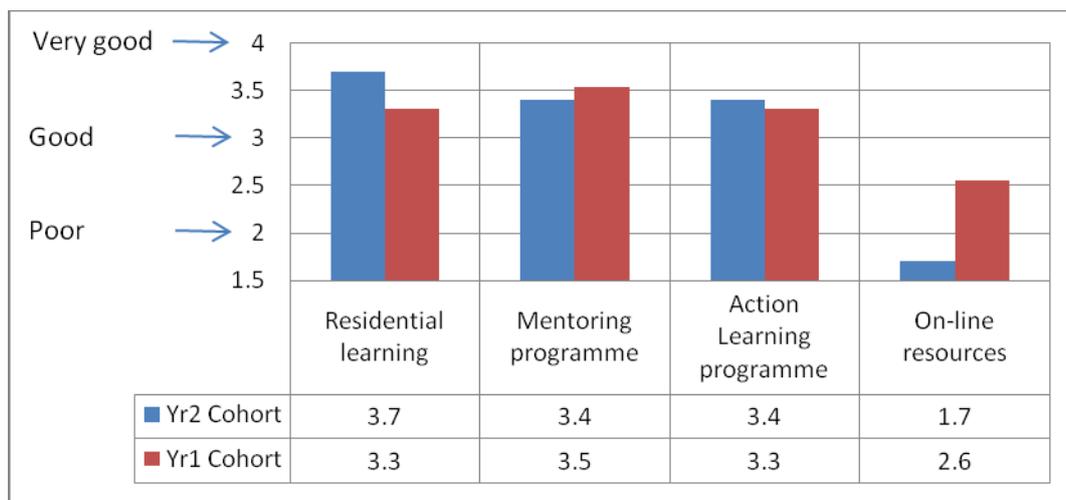


Figure 5: Yr1 and Yr2 participant average ratings on the quality of each element of the programme (Base: 26)

As part of the interim survey, participants were asked to identify how the programme might be improved. There were two major issues raised by participants which related to the programme as a whole, which were different from the first year of the programme (which focussed on the pitch of learning and responsiveness to national contexts):

- Pebblepad, which is the on-line programme recommended to participants so that they could log their learning and share documents with other participants, seems to have given some participants concern
- The delay to the start of the mentoring programme, which for two people (who had not met with their mentors before April 2010) was felt to be particularly serious.

Three participants in the first year of the programme had been concerned about the targeting of the learning to differently experienced participants. The decision was taken by the Programme Director to implement subtle streaming of participants, which started at the end of the first year of the programme. It is significant that the Yr2 cohort did not comment as frequently about the pitch of learning, with only one person commenting at the interim stage that the learning was not pitched high enough because the participant pool was perceived as less senior.

The interim survey asked participants to indicate their confidence that the programme would meet the learning needs that they identified in their personal development plans. Participants were given a rating scale where 0 = not confident and 5 = extremely confident. There was an increase in the average rating given by Yr2 participants, with an average of 3.7 given by Yr1 participants and 4.0 given by Yr2 participants.

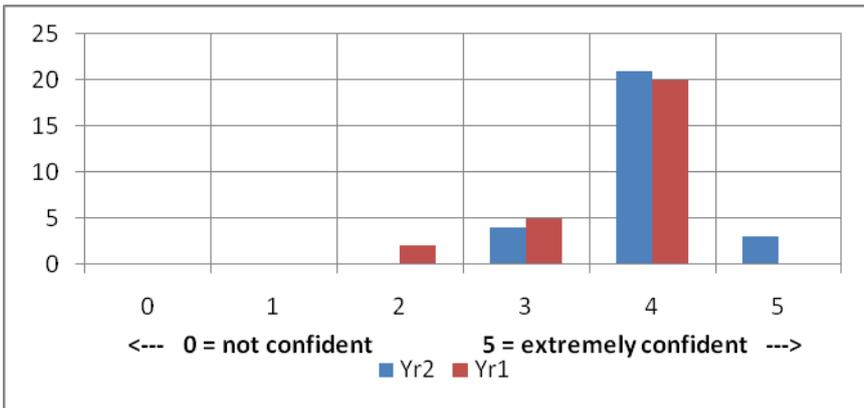


Figure 6: Yr1 and Yr2 participant confidence in the programme meeting their learning needs

In the endline survey, participants were asked to indicate the percentage of the learning needs identified in their personal development plans that had been met by the programme. Similarly to the interim survey, where confidence levels were high, the percentages of learning needs met by the programme were much higher in Yr2 compared to Yr1.

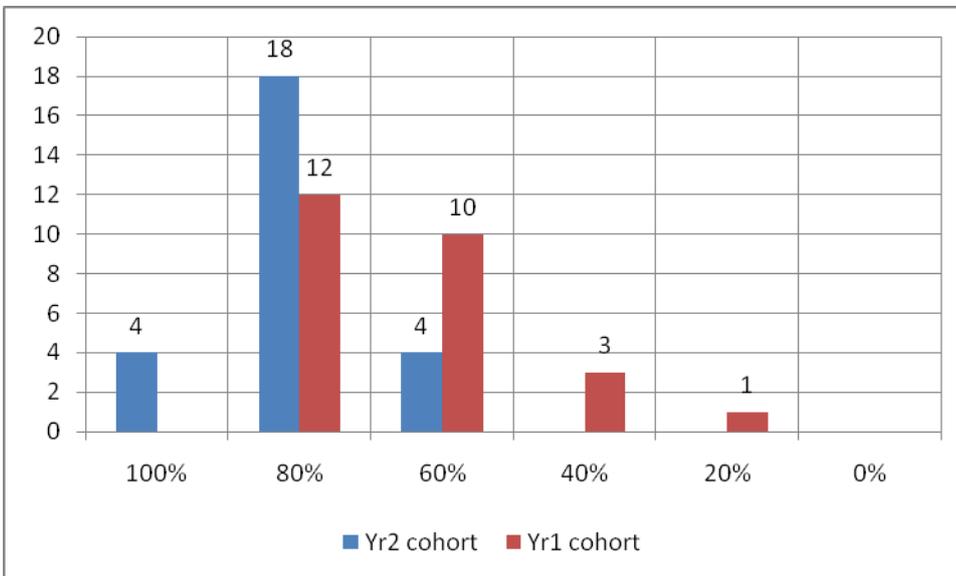


Figure 7: Yr1 and Yr2 percentages of learning needs (as identified in PDPs) met by the programme

The comments given by Yr2 participants (7 in total) included:

“My confidence has grown and I have taken on board some of the criticism about my openness with my colleagues. I have since been offered a secondment to lead on a large service review.”

“I was a little disappointed that a wider look at leadership was not adopted and that the examples used were so specific and bespoke. For example leadership in the military, sports, education, health and arts sectors could be used more for comparison and contrast.”

“I struggle to get the best out of the learning in my own working practice, difficult to fit in the tight schedule!”

“The programme was not challenging enough for the current leadership requirements.”

This last comment illustrates the extraordinary time in which the programme has operated: a change in government and unprecedented cuts in the public sector.

### 360° AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

This aspect of the programme was developed and managed by City University. The 360° feedback was set up to give participants a sense of how their leadership was perceived by their line managers, peers, direct reports, elected members and external reports. The participants themselves were also included in the 360° exercise, completing an assessment about themselves. 52 leadership competencies were given for this assessment under the headings: leading and developing others, strategic thinking, leading and managing change, influencing, communication, personal qualities and innovation. Respondents were asked to score each competency by importance (4 point scale) and frequency (4 point scale). After the exercise was completed, participants were given feedback in a two hour telephone session.

Data exists for 31 out of 32 participants and shows the range of feedback elicited for each person. All but one of the 31 respondents returned their self assessment.

- 30 participants had feedback from their managers,
- 26 participants had feedback from between 1 and 4 direct reports (a total of 72 responses),
- 31 participants had feedback from between 1 and 4 peers (a total of 84 responses),
- 18 from elected members,
- 27 from external partners,
- A total of 261 people gave feedback (excluding self assessments), plus an additional 4 partial responses.

A breakdown of the number of responses received for each participant is given in Appendix 3.

Three participants commented on their 360° feedback in the endline survey. Two made comments on its usefulness as a tool to highlight existing leadership behaviours:

“Through my 360, I have begun to address weaknesses in my leadership style, particularly in communicating strategic direction. In order to do this I have sought clarification of issues before going into management or team meetings, and made greater use of our service delivery plan as a point of reference.”

*(Endline survey respondent)*

One respondent commented that they had initiated quarterly updates as part of their informal leadership development:

“Quarterly 360 feedback updates on key actions via Manager, Direct Reports and ‘key peer’.”

*(Endline survey respondent)*

Unlike in the first year of the programme, participants in Yr2 seemed not to be concerned about the creation of their Personal Development Plans. The process in Yr2 seems to have been more straightforward for this cohort of participants.

### RESIDENTIAL LEARNING

The ratings for the quality of the residential component of the programme (see above figures 4 and 5) showed high levels of satisfaction, without any ratings indicating that the quality was “poor” or “very poor”.

Participants were extremely positive about the residencies. Changes implemented to the programme seem to have reduced, or removed entirely, criticisms about the pitch of teaching, types of learning styles provided for and the need for fresh air. Mostly comments were extremely positive and the ratings for the quality of speakers and facilitation rose in Yr2 from the levels given in Yr1.

Criticisms about the residencies were quite specific. Four participants were critical of the first sessions on the first day, saying that too much time was devoted to the introduction to the mentoring. Four participants found the first residency tiring and felt therefore that they had been unable to take in as much information from the financial session as they would have liked.

For the endline evaluation survey, participants were asked to give their final ratings for the residencies, bringing together their feedback for all three residential learning events.

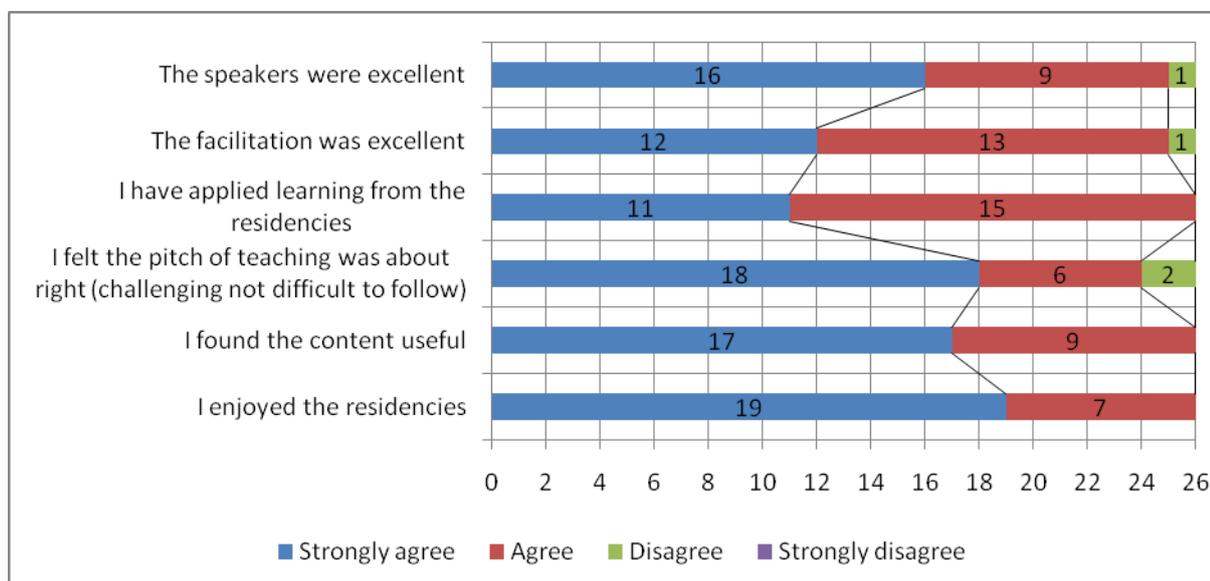


Figure 8: Participant agreement with statements about the residential learning component of the programme (Base: 26)

As the preceding figure shows, enjoyment of the residencies received the highest rating, followed by the content, teaching pitch and quality of the speakers.

Averaging the ratings out for Yr1 and Yr2 (giving a numeric value to the four ratings where “Strongly agree” = 4 and “Strongly disagree” = “1”), it is possible to see an uplift in the ratings in

Yr2. The most significant increase in rating was in relation to the pitch of teaching, which had been criticised by the Yr1 cohort.

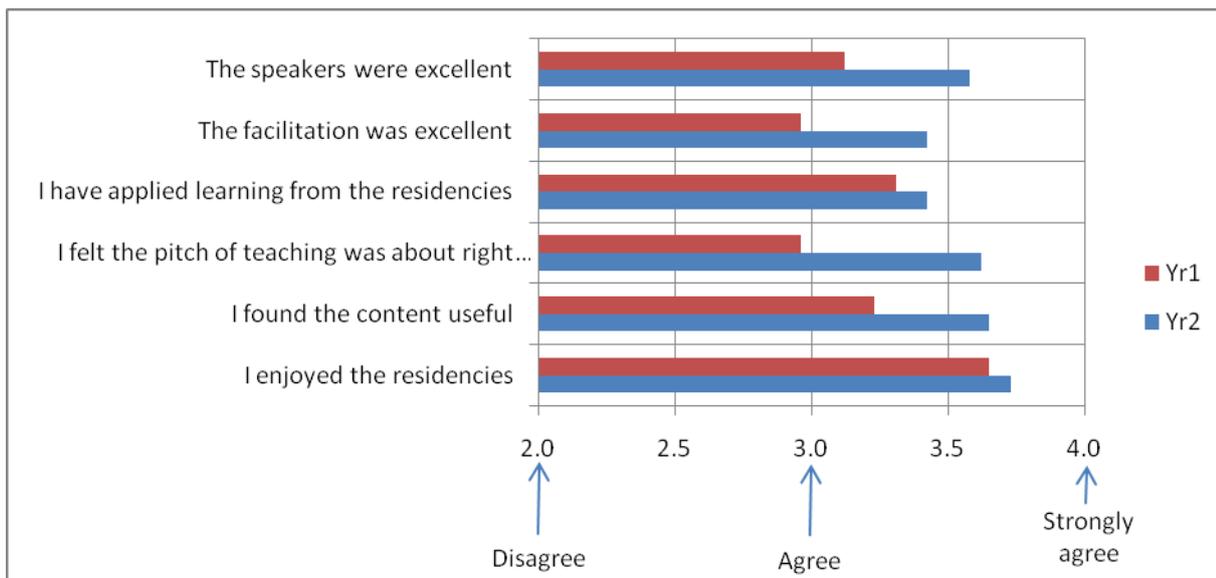


Figure 9: Yr1 and Yr2 average ratings for the residential element of the programme

#### MENTORING PROGRAMME

The mentoring element of the programme was managed by Business in the Arts North West and was intended to run between November 2009 and July 2010, although similarly to the first year of the programme many of the relationships continued until the end of 2010. The structure of the mentoring programme allows for monthly meetings with mentors, so a total of 9 meetings were possible.

As with the first year of the programme, the start to the programme was delayed for a number of reasons and by April 2010 two participants reported that they had yet to meet with their mentors. A persistent criticism, albeit from a limited number of individuals, was that the mentoring had started late. The delay to the start of the mentoring element of the programme is inevitable because the matching process seeks to find the right mentor for each mentee. While there is a pool of mentors recruited to the Leading Learning Programme, an expansion of the pool is necessary to meet the matching criteria. The frustration expressed by participants was about timing and not about the quality of mentors. Future cohorts need to be made more fully aware of the matching process in order to manage their expectations of when the mentoring relationships will start.

The mentor pool for the Yr2 cohort comprised a larger number of more senior executives compared to the first year of the programme. The spread of roles breaks down as follows:

Roles <sup>3</sup>	Yr2 mentors	Yr1 mentors
Top tier chief executive in local authorities & other organisations	13	7
Second tier Director roles or similar	12	11
Third tier heads of service or similar	3	4
Consultants or senior roles in organisations	4	7

Of the 32 people that were matched to a mentor, one person opted out of the process early on because they felt that mentoring was not for them. Two relationships were unrecorded with both parties failing to submit any documentation. The lengths of the remaining 29 relationships (evidenced through the agreement, interim and final documents) ranged from four months to 15.5 months. The range was greater this year because of maternity leave (the four month relationship) and for a variety of other personal reasons and unexpected challenges (the 15.5 month relationship).

Comments from mentees about the mentoring element of the programme were in the main extremely positive:

“This has been a very positive experience for me and I really appreciate the support and guidance that [mentor’s name] has so generously given me. I have met many of the objectives set and fell confident that as a result of the mentoring I am better equipped to continue to improve on not only these objectives but new challenges as they arise in the future. Thank you for the opportunity.”

*(Mentee final report comment)*

“It has been a privilege to be part of the Mentoring programme. The organisation was friendly and relaxed. My mentor was thoughtful, intelligent, helpful and generous with his time.”

*(Mentee final report comment)*

“I found my mentor to be a fantastic asset and have found [mentor’s name] to be supportive, challenging, interesting and extremely knowledgeable in a range of fields. Having this opportunity has been invaluable to me as this year has been a challenging one for my service and having this relationship has helped me navigate some really difficult issues. I found this to be the best element of the NCF leading learning course in respect of my learning needs and I am pleased [mentor’s name] is keen to meet beyond the closure of the first phase.”

*(Mentee final report comment)*

Where criticisms occurred it seems to have been because of time and different styles of learning:

“It’s always hard to find the time for it.”

<sup>3</sup> Role descriptions were provided in the evaluation report submitted by Business in the Arts North West.

*(Mentee final report comment)*

“I believe my lack of focus frustrated [mentor’s name], I struggled with the ‘plans’ she suggested me writing, but I did not raise my concerns and things were left to float along without purpose.”

*(Mentee final report comment)*

The reflection of Business in the Arts North West is that for three of the relationships it was obvious that the match was not ideal and that neither mentor or mentee sought to take advantage of the ‘no fault divorce’. This is despite reassurances in the documentation and in the presentation of the mentoring to participants at the first residency that there is an opportunity to re-match participants if necessary. The impact of neither party taking action is that the relationship is unsatisfactory to both parties and in some instances risks the mentors’ future relationship with the project.

#### ACTION LEARNING

The Action Learning element of the programme was managed by Action Learning Associates. Four sets were organised across the country, initially each with eight members (a reduction from the first year of the programme which had membership of between 9 and eleven):

	London	West	North	East
Dates (to/from)	20 Jan 2010 to 23 Sept 2010	14 Jan 2010 to 20 July 2010	23 Nov 2009 to 21 Jun 2010	14 Jan 2010 to 7 October 2010
No. of set members	7 (one person dropped out)	7 (one person dropped out)	8	8

**Table 4: Details of action learning sets**

The sets were facilitated by three Action Learning Associates facilitators and the Programme Director (a trained action learning facilitator). Each set held five meetings each and each set intends to continue as a self-facilitated set in the future.

Among the recommendations made by Action Learning Associates was one relating to the geographic organisation of the sets. Similarly to Yr1 of the programme, geography was clearly an issue for some Yr2 participants. Each set seemed to have had a core of people that were absolutely committed to the sets and were able to find time out of the office to attend. Illness and childcare accounted for some absences, but work commitments were the main reason for non attendance. Two of the sets reported that the roving venue for the sets had proved less desirable than a static venue for two reasons: first, it took time to settle in a new location and secondly, the appropriateness of the space for the set was too variable.

There are a number of potential solutions to the geographic problems posed by the participant pool:

- During the programme run a larger number of sets (which would require a higher participant fee)
- During the programme link the sets to the residential learning components (suggested by ALA)
- During the programme, look to the alumni and their self-facilitated sets to pick up any current participants that are finding the geography challenging.
- After the programme, encourage the alumni to work together to grow their sets so that the geographic reach of the programme is maximised.

Each of these suggestions will need weighting against feedback from participants (for example, how tiring some find the residential learning) and the challenges that are inherent in joining new sets.

Similarly to the mentoring element of the Leading Learning Programme, comments about the action learning were extremely positive. Two participants described the complementary benefit of action learning to other elements of the programme:

“The action learning coupled with the mentoring has been a huge success for me.”  
(*Action learning set evaluation comment*)

“I have found it beneficial in my 360 improvements[.]”  
(*Action learning set evaluation comment*)

In response to the quality of the facilitation:

“I found the facilitator extremely professional and experienced. She was a great guide that left us a lot of space to reflect and learn but also excellent on putting things back on track if we were going astray.”  
(*Action learning set evaluation comment*)

“The facilitator was helpful, considerate and sensitive to the dynamics of the group and how this changed over the course of the sessions.”  
(*Action learning set evaluation comment*)

“The facilitator was excellent. With a light touch she offered guidance on asking open question, alternative formats such as laser sets, questioned negative language and failure to use the first person voice and ensure that there were clear parameters for difficult subjects so that the presented did not feel threatened. Most importantly her management of the sessions meant that despite addressing some challenging issues I always left them feeling positive and energised by the thinking that had taken place.”  
(*Action learning set evaluation comment*)

While criticisms were few and far between, those comments that were critical tended to be about personal learning preferences.

“I found action learning taught me a lot about myself though as a learning style I’m not sure it is the most effective for me. Having said that I gained a lot from the experience and

would be keen to join a future set to see if in time the techniques come easier to me and therefore feel less rigid.”

*(Action learning set evaluation comment)*

“During the sessions I really wasn’t too sure about the benefits. Now they have finished I can see the benefits more clearly and can see opportunities I missed.”

*(Action learning set evaluation comment)*

It is interesting to note the preconceptions about action learning in these comments against the value that was understood with hindsight.

#### ON-LINE RESOURCES

The website for the programme went live on 15 April 09. The address is [www.ncf-leadinglearning.org](http://www.ncf-leadinglearning.org). By Yr2, the site was not sold to participants as the single place where information would be housed. In the interim survey there were 4 comments about the need for a coherent approach to on-line resources, whether that was a single place for information or signposting to information between residencies.

Due to problems with resources and capacity, the current Leading Learning Programme website has remained static since 2009.

#### EMBEDDING CULTURE OF LEARNING

##### YR2 COHORT

In their application forms, participants were asked to evidence what leadership training they had undertaken in the last five years. 23 participants gave details of this training and examples included opportunities led by their authority, MLA and Local Government Improvement and Development.

For six participants the Leading Learning Programme represented the first specifically leadership focussed course they had taken part in for five years.

At the start of the programme, all participants were offered the chance to accredit their learning through attendance of the residential learning and writing two 3,000 word papers on a work-related topic. The Leading Learning Programme could be converted to up to 45 credits towards an MA in Cultural Leadership. In Yr2, 12 participants signed up to accreditation, 6 of whom completed the accreditation and six withdrew. This was an increase in the number of participants that completed the accreditation application form compared to the first year of the programme (five people completed the application form, with two completing and three withdrawing).

Three participants also expressed an interest in repeating the 360° exercise, with two repeating it in Yr2. While not included in the Leading Learning Programme, it is evidence of the embedding of reflective practice that these participants requested the opportunity and are funding the exercise independently.

**TIME COMMITMENT**

Similarly to the first year of the programme, as the course progressed, participants typically invested more time in both the number of contact days and preparation or task based activities following contact days.

Residential learning was 6.5 days in total, comprising: 3.5 days first residency, 2 day second residency and 1 day third residency. In addition, participants invested the following time for mentoring and Action Learning:

	<b>Average Oct 09 - Mar 10</b>	<b>Average Apr 10 - Sep 10</b>	<b>Average across whole programme</b>
Mentoring	1.9	3.9	5.7
Action learning	2.3	3.6	5.9

**Table 5: Average number of contact days for Yr2 cohort (Base: 28 and 26)**

The amount of time put into the programme in preparation for residencies, mentoring or action learning and associated tasks also rose as the programme progressed.

Compared to the first year of the programme, the Yr2 cohort spent less time preparing for the action learning.

	<b>Average Oct 09 - Mar 10</b>	<b>Average Apr 10 - Sep 10</b>	<b>Average across whole programme</b>
Residential learning	1.8	2.5	4.4
Mentoring	0.9	2.5	3.3
Action learning	0.7	1.2	1.9

**Table 6: Average number of preparation and task days for first cohort (Base: 28 and 26)**

In summary, then, the average number of days that participants put into the programme rose from 15.6 contact days in Yr1 to 16.6 contact days in Yr2, plus an additional 9.1 preparation and task based days in Yr1 which rose to 9.6 days in Yr2. This gave an average time commitment of 26.2 days in Yr2 compared to 24.7 days in Yr1.

In addition to the main learning components of the programme, participants were also asked to itemise the number of days they had spent on independent learning, such as reading and research or reflection, such as completing their journal.

Again there was an increase in the time commitment invested in the programme by Yr2 participants compared to Yr1.

	<b>Average Oct 09 - Mar 10</b>	<b>Average Apr 10 - Sep 10</b>	<b>Average across whole programme</b>
<b>Independent learning</b>	3.0	3.6	6.6

<b>Reflection</b>	1.9	2.1	4.0
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**Table 7: Average number of days during the first year of the programme (Base: variable)**

Putting these averages together, participants in the first year of the programme were committing 33.8 days to their participation, 9.1 days of which were independent learning. This compares to 36.8 days in Yr2, 10.6 days of which were independent learning.

The number of days participants put into the programme is evidence of their commitment to learning and development. It is highly unlikely that their respective employers allowed them to take over a month leave during the programme and so it is far more likely that these days are made up of their personal time – evenings, weekends or holidays. There was no contract with participants that they would fulfil a certain number of hours preparation or independent learning. The only expectation was that they would attend the residencies, meet with their action learning set and their mentors.

The number of days that participants invested in the programme, together with the fact that some participants were prepared to accredit their learning and independently fund a further 360° exercise is evidence of a commitment to learning and professional development.

In addition to the learning associated with the programme, both the interim and endline evaluation surveys asked participants to give details of any formal and informal learning they had taken part in between October 2009 and September 2010.

14 participants had undertaken additional formal learning activities between October 2009 and March 2010 and 9 participants had undertaken formal learning between April 2010 and September 2010.

The types of formal learning included: coaching and training to be a coach, a variety of training courses, membership of leadership networks, shadowing or being shadowed, undertaking an acting role.

Informal learning included: self directed research & reading (often related to the Leading Learning Programme resources, including the Local Government Improvement and Development website), reflection, 360° feedback (which one person had arranged to occur on a quarterly basis), application of learning, undertaking assignments linked to the accreditation of the Leading Learning Programme, experiencing particular tasks, becoming a Council Member and Trustee. Three participants described putting theory into practice.

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#### **YR1 COHORT, 12 MONTHS ON**

In their 12 months on survey, the Yr1 cohort were asked to give an indication of the formal and informal learning that they had undertaken in the twelve months following taking part in the Leading Learning Programme (October 2009 to September 2010).

Of the 13 responses received, nine people reported that they had undertaken formal learning. One of the four people that had not commented that they had begun formal training programmes after September 2010. Six of the participants had invested in coaching or mentoring, two of

whom described an extension of their relationship to their Leading Learning Programme mentor (until January 2010 and until July 2010). Nine of the responses described informal learning activities.

In the sample of Yr1 participants that responded to the survey, there is clear evidence of on-going learning with the majority of respondents.

## LEARNING ACHIEVED

### OVERVIEW

Both the interim and endline evaluation surveys asked participants to comment on whether the programme had enabled them: to develop new leadership skills, reflect constructively on their leadership behaviour, have new experiences or develop new networks.

By the end of the programme, their responses were:

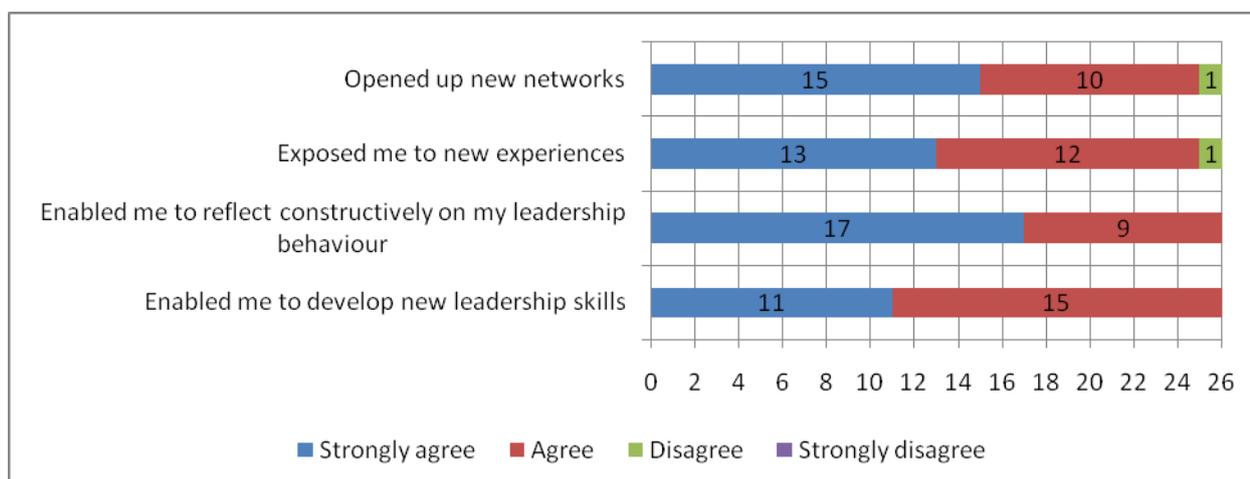


Figure 10: Participants' agreement with statements about programme impact (Base: 26)

These findings are slightly different to the findings from the interim survey, with fewer people indicating disagreement with the statements and more people ticking “Strongly agree”.

Assigning a numeric value to the findings (where “Strongly agree” = 4 and “Strongly disagree” = 1) reveals that in all categories there was a higher average rating for these statements in Yr2 compared to Yr1.

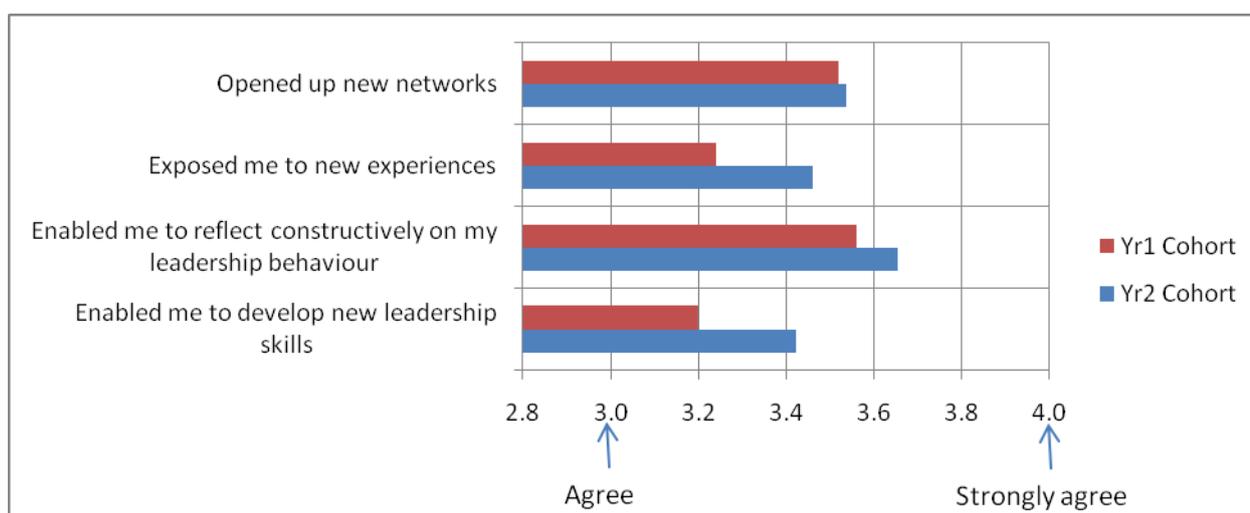


Figure 11: Average impact of programme on Yr1 and Yr2 participants (Base: 26)

The strong message here is that the course appears to have improved in terms of its immediate impacts on participants (albeit with the caveat that this is based on an assumption that the cohorts are similar in terms of their starting points and professional experience).

## MENTORING

The status of the mentoring relationships at the time of writing this report was:

Completed relationships:

- Seven relationships completed and returned final report forms
- One relationship completed but awaiting mentees' final form
- Five relationships completed but awaiting mentors' final forms
- Two relationships completed but awaiting both mentor and mentee forms

Ongoing relationships:

- Eight were due to complete by the end of December 2010.

Unknown:

- Two relationships have not returned any documentation, despite considerable effort to chase up for their agreement form.

Findings for the mentoring are therefore partial and on-going and will not necessarily be finalised until 2011.<sup>4</sup>

Feedback from the mentoring relationships was through three documents: the mentor agreement, an interim report and a final report. The interim and final reports were completed separately by mentors and mentees. 11 interim reports were returned by mentees and 11 by mentors. 12 final reports were returned by mentees and 8 by mentors.

<sup>4</sup> All findings are taken from the Business in the Arts North West evaluation report.

Respondents to the interim report were given a rating scale to indicate how well progress was being made towards the mentoring goals. The scale ranged from 1 = very little and 6 = excellent. The majority of mentees (10 people) and mentors (8 people) gave ratings of 4 or above.

A similar six point scale was given to assess the benefits of the relationships at a personal level, where 1 = no benefit and 6 = great benefit. Two mentees scored six and a further eight mentees scored a 4 or a 5. Five mentors scored 4 or above.

In the final reports, there were high scores in response to questions about achievement of gains, personal benefit and career development. Lower scores were apparent in three cases, where the mentor relationship had been short lived (for reasons discussed above p. 17).

Mentees were asked to comment on whether the mentoring relationships had benefited their career development, again with a six point rating scale where 1 = not at all and 6 = extremely. Six mentees scored 4 or over, two mentees scored 3.5, two mentees scored 3, one mentee scored 2 and one mentee scored 1. All mentees had therefore experienced some benefit to their career development as a result of the mentoring component of the programme.

In the 12 final reports, mentees were asked to give details of the frequency and style of meetings with their mentors.

Number of meetings	Number of mentees
8	1
7	0
6	2
5	4
4	3
3	1
2	1
1	1

**Table 8: Number of mentoring meetings (Base: 6)**

(The single meeting was the relationship that was abandoned straight away.) Those relationships that met more frequently were most likely to achieve the most positive scores in the questions posed in the feedback forms.

#### ACTION LEARNING

In Yr2, there were more participants in the programme and it became necessary to include a fourth learning set. The geography of the sets was slightly less complicated than Yr1, but (as discussed above) remained a challenge alongside the time commitment required. The equality between set members in terms of their seniority and experience seems also to have been problematic for some set members. Sets work best where the participants are peers and hierarchies of experience and status are not present.

While the facilitators were aware that sets were not entirely level in terms of seniority, despite their best efforts there were inevitably some comments on disparities between set members. For example:

“I feel that there was too wide a range of experience in the group – senior to relatively junior manager. As a result the issues discussed were often at a low level, particularly in leadership terms. This would be difficult to resolve however due to geography and natural group mix.”

*(Action learning set evaluation comment)*

The set facilitators were able to comment on the learning achieved from their perspective. The headline topics presented by set members were to do with management issues as opposed to leadership, work life balance and on career progression.

“... While I still need to achieve a better balance between management and leadership I can now distinguish the two and I have worked hard to delegate more effectively to concentrate on leadership.”

*(Action learning set evaluation comment)*

Participants also referenced the practical application of action learning tools (listening, open questions, and peer learning) as well as specific resolutions to their presented issues.

“... The practice of open questions also helps you become more open yourself to different solutions and letting them present themselves through managed thought rather than seeking a chosen solution. I feel it has helped me in helping making others feel valued and motivated as I have been able to present questions that help them decide things for themselves more. Both my direct reports have commented that I am more focussed.”

*(Action learning set evaluation comment)*

“Enabled me to use open questions in some situations which has generally led to a better outcome.”

*(Action learning set evaluation comment)*

“... I think that the subject I discussed is very pertinent at the moment in terms of the economic situation and the improvement and efficiencies that I am being asked to make and so it has opened my eyes to more alternatives and made me question why we are delivering services in a particular way.”

*(Action learning set evaluation comment)*

The facilitators also noted that the learning that participants wanted to achieve, as set out in their personal action learning aims, were not always measurable and in some instances “absurdly ambitious”. Action Learning Associates have suggested that some slight tweaking in how the action learning element of the programme is introduced to participants might be worthwhile. Moreover, one facilitator noted that because their set began with an issue of leadership as the first presentation, this set the tone and focus for subsequent presentations.

“It seemed to set the tone for the life of the set and most of the presentations were on complex strategic/planning issues, which provided plenty of opportunity for reflection and challenge on leadership issues in addition to creativity in thinking and planning for change.”

*(Action learning set facilitator comment)*

There is a balance to be struck between providing a forum for genuine and burning issues to be worked on in the sets and in ensuring that the sets adds value to the leadership focus of the Leading Learning Programme. The first presentation seems to be a critical factor in how the sets proceed.

## IMPACT ON PARTICIPANTS

This section of the report focuses on the impact of the programme on participants in terms of their leadership behaviour and its impact on career paths.

### CHANGES TO LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR

#### OVERVIEW

Participants were asked to give examples of how, if at all, the programme had had an impact on their leadership behaviour. 20 people gave examples of this impact in the endline survey.

Five participants commented that the programme had helped them to understand their leadership style and to think about leadership more broadly:

“It has allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of what is meant by leadership and stimulated a more imaginative and mature approach to tackling strategic and operational problems in the workplace.”  
*(Endline survey respondent)*

For four participants, the programme had had an impact on confidence to lead, both in terms of achieving a better sense of their strengths and in terms of addressing what they felt were their shortcomings:

“The course has boosted my confidence, restored faith in my own abilities, given me new skills/tactics for approaching challenges and key relationships at work and broadened my understanding of local government. As a result my team is stronger, my senior team are more responsive to me and productive and I also feel now that I can handle difficult staff and political issues with equal confidence.”  
*(Endline survey respondent)*

“The programme helped [me] to have a much more open mind on leadership and what this means. I already had very strong strategic thinking and management skills; I just needed to be more confident in my ability to relate these to my staff, peers, manager and partners. The action learning set was exceptionally good in doing that as allowed me to open more up to people.”  
*(Endline survey respondent)*

For four others the programme provided valuable insights into the importance of the political context and strategies to engage with Politicians:

“At the service away day and with my management team we have mapped service activity by ward and improved our communication with councillors about activity in their wards. I am more politically aware than I was and make time to gather political intelligence and feed this in to strategy development. Staff are also more keenly aware of the political

context as a result and each team now has a ward map with councillors' names on which they map their activity.”

*(Endline survey respondent)*

“I have a deeper understanding of the way leadership works in a local authority, in particular how political decisions are influenced and how this impacts on day to day working.”

*(Endline survey respondent)*

Six participants described particular relationships: how their team worked better or how they were able to delegate better as a result of the programme.

“[The Leading Learning Programme] has improved my delegation of tasks and bringing on staff members. Encouraging staff to lead on projects and stand in for me at meetings.”

*(Endline survey respondent)*

“Has enabled me to understand more fully my drivers and use them to good benefit. Also to be more confident about my strengths. Action learning has given me a new tool to use in staff management. Mentoring in particular has given focus on specific issues, such as motivating my staff team, and has helped me to delegate more effectively.”

*(Endline survey respondent)*

Finally, one person described how they had used each element of the course to address particular issues and development needs:

“Action Learning helped me plan an interview for a new role which I achieved. Mentoring has helped me successfully establish myself in this new role. 360 helped me reflect on my leadership behaviour and improve areas identified for development. Residential and action learning helped establish new networks.”

*(Endline survey respondent)*

The endline survey also asked a specific question: “as a result of the programme, do you feel better equipped to work with key politicians within your authority?” 26 people answered the question with 18 people ticking “yes”, five people ticking “partly” and three people ticking “no”.

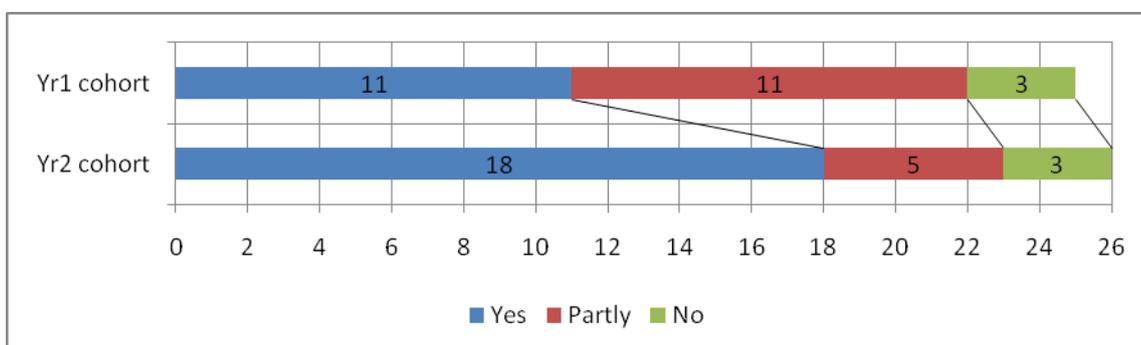


Figure 12: Did Yr1 and Yr2 participants feel better equipped to work with key politicians in their authorities?

The following comments illustrate the positive responses that participants had to this element of the programme:

“This was one of the most revelatory aspects of the course.”  
(Endline survey respondent)

“[The] political skills residential was excellent and will stand me in good stead to get a very radical service review past potential political obstacles.”  
(Endline survey respondent)

“I still think this element of learning comes from experience and from doing the job. I am however more confident in thinking that I can do it.”  
(Endline survey respondent)

One person, who did not work for a Local Authority commented that they already felt equipped prior to the course.

## PARTNERSHIPS

Elsewhere in the endline evaluation survey participants were asked to indicate if their attendance on the course had given them confidence to foster and develop strategic partnerships.

Compared to Yr1 participants, Yr2 participants were slightly less likely to agree with this statement. Assigning a numeric value to these ratings (where “Strongly agree”=4 and “Strongly disagree” = 1) gives an average rating of 3.0 for Yr2 and a slightly higher rating of 3.2 for Yr1.

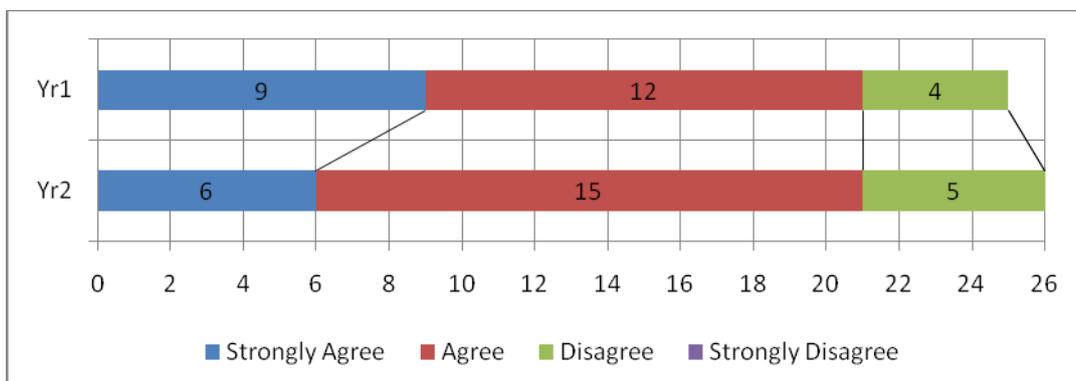


Figure 13: Yr1 and Yr2 responses to question about programme giving confidence to foster and develop strategic partnerships

Two further questions asked whether participants had developed any new partnerships that would contribute to their Local Area Agreements during the programme. The question about Local Area Agreements was kept in the endline survey for the Yr2 cohort despite an announcement by the new government that they would be discontinued after March 2011.

Five participants had developed new partnerships during the programme and a further five were in negotiations. Those that answered yes or were in negotiations gave the following details of these partnerships.

Type	Partnership	No. of participants
Public bodies	PCT	4
	FA	1
	Building Schools for the Future	1
	GLA	1
	Internal partnership with adult social care	1
	Chinese Municipal Archivists	1
Com	Chamber of Commerce	1
	Commercial Music Promoters	1
TSOs	Joining up neighbouring CSNs	1
	Youth arts delivery from TSOs	1

Table 9: List of new partnerships with public bodies, commercial organisations and Third Sector organisations

Similarly to the first year of the programme, participants were least likely to have established partnerships with the commercial sector and most likely to make partnerships with the public sector.

13 participants said that they had developed existing partnerships, which included:

Type	Partnership	No. of participants
Public bodies	PCT	3
	District Council / neighbouring authorities	2
	Education providers	2
	Other services within council	4
	Other cultural services within council	1
	Other	2
Com	Theatre Management Company	1
	3 <sup>rd</sup> party contractors	1
TSOs	Arts Centres	2
	Health TSO	1
	Development of support programme	1

Table 10: List of existing partnerships with public bodies, commercial organisations and Third Sector organisations

Again, the list of partnerships within local government was greater than those existing partnerships with commercial or third sectors.

## ACTION LEARNING

Changes to leadership behaviour was reported by several Yr2 participants as the application of action learning techniques to their workplaces and the particular impact the sets had had on how they worked with teams.

“... I am more focussed on the primary tasks and more able to deal with the challenges I and colleagues are currently facing. It has helped me in terms of developing my staff team, one to ones, etc.”

*(Action learning set evaluation comment)*

“I think my gain in confidence and listening skills has made me a stronger member of the management team I am part of and encouraged me to ask for help from a range of sources rather than feeling I have to struggle on by myself. This in turn as strengthened the integration of my team into the bigger service we have merged with and established me as a key member of the team.”

*(Action learning set evaluation comment)*

“I have taken back the learning and techniques from the ALS and shared this with direct reports and my line manager. The benefit to the organisation has also been through my personal professional development which I hope will contribute to me becoming a more effective leader.”

*(Action learning set evaluation comment)*

“... as one of the key components in the leading learning course, it has provided for significant and measurable improvements in sections derived from my 5 lowest scoring 360 elements and in actions derived from things that were identified as things to do and things that I should stop doing.”

*(Action learning set evaluation comment)*

The Action Learning component of the programme was therefore both a tool for personal leadership development and provided resources for leaders in the workplace.

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#### IMPACT ON YR1 PARTICIPANTS

In the 12 months on survey that was circulated to Yr1 participants, a question asked specifically whether the programme had helped them to manage major changes to their service. 10 people answered the question, nine of whom indicated ways the programme had supported them.

Six people made reference to the confidence the programme had given them in how to approach or address change:

“To approach these [changes] with confidence and new skills and insight. Also to use my Leading Learning networks to check out what others are doing / share learning.”

*(Yr1 participant response to 12 month on survey)*

Other comments included:

“With so much uncertainty over the last six months, the programme has helped me to prepare for change and keep my staff motivated and focused. I have understood much better the change management process and how people react at each stage; the need for a strategic approach to ensure we are not slashing and burning and that there will be some kind of service once the cuts have been implemented; and the need to remain positive for

the sake of my team. The programme increased my confidence in my leadership abilities and empowered me to be a leader working across more areas of the Council. I am preparing to take on more areas of responsibility.”  
*(Yr1 participant response to 12 month on survey)*

“It has helped me understand the political environment better which in turn has helped with my own decision making and the way I approach change management.”  
*(Yr1 participant response to 12 month on survey)*

“Restructuring has used scenario planning and zero budgeting techniques first introduced to me on the LLP programme.”  
*(Yr1 participant response to 12 month on survey)*

“Some of the coaching work with my mentor has also helped in sharpening my political antennae and asking high quality questions.”  
*(Yr1 participant response to 12 month on survey)*

In each of these comments a different aspect of the Leading Learning Programme is referenced, whether it was a particular element of the training or self-confidence to lead the change.

Elsewhere in this survey there was a question asked whether the programme had impacted on participants’ leadership behaviour. Nine of the 13 survey respondents were able to give examples of how their leadership behaviour had adapted as a result of the programme. Two examples are provided here:

“I think I’m better for my team as I am a better analyst and planner. They have been given more confidence through greater adopting of a more coaching style of leadership. And I'm easier on myself because if I get it wrong then I look for the lessons learned rather than exist in a dark funk of self recrimination.”  
*(Yr1 participant response to 12 month on survey)*

“I had a 360 recently and scored over 90 out of 100 for overall leadership. I know that Leading Learning helped my to identify and tackle my weaknesses and build on my strengths to be a better leader.”  
*(Yr1 participant response to 12 month on survey)*

One of the legacies of the Leading Learning Programme is a heightened sense of personal leadership style and behaviours. The last quotation illustrates that for some measuring on-going development and change is important.

## IMPACT ON CAREER PATHS

As part of the interim evaluation survey, participants were asked to indicate if they had identified a target role or job. 16 of the 19 respondents to this question said that they had. None of the respondents who answered “yes” to this question felt that they were in their target role or job.

For one person, the programme had already had a direct impact by the early summer of 2010:



The endline survey asked what kind of action participants had been taking since joining the programme in order to move along their career paths. While the responses to the interim survey were much more likely to be researching the terrain (10 participants were researching the job market) by the endline survey a lot more activity in the market had taken place:

Action taken	No. of participants
Applying for new roles or jobs	13 participants
Development/broadening current role	9 participants
Researching job market, but not applying	2 participants
Undertaking voluntary roles	2 participants

Table 11: Activity undertaken by Yr2 cohort to progress along career paths (Base: 25)

One of those participants that had researched the job market found that there weren't any jobs (which contradicts the number of jobs their peers had applied for – many reporting that they had made more than one application).

Among those that had applied for new roles two said that their mentors had played an instrumental role either in preparing to make an application, preparing for an interview or talking through an unsuccessful application.

Finally, the endline survey asked how far participants agreed with two statements in respect of the impact of the programme to their career progression:

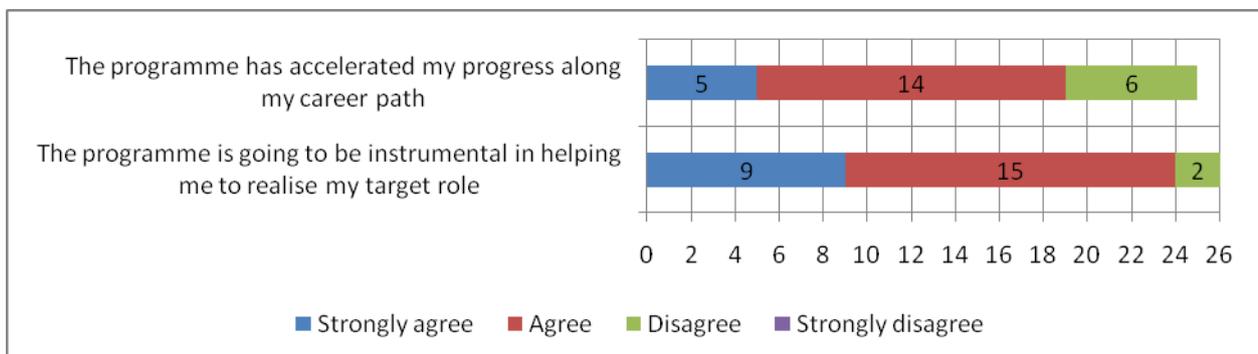


Figure 16: Yr2 participants' agreement about impact of programme on career paths (Base: 26)

Compared to the first year of the programme, there was more agreement that the programme would have an impact in these areas of participants' professional lives. If a numeric value is assigned to the ratings (where "Strongly agree"=4 and "Strongly disagree"=1) then the average rating for these questions rose slightly by the second year of the programme.

Statement	Yr2 average rating	Yr1 average rating
The programme is going to be instrumental in helping me to realise my target role	3.3	3.2
The programme has accelerated my progress along my career path	3.0	2.9

Table 12: Average impact of programme on Yr2 and Yr1 cohorts' career paths

Positive comments in support of this question included:

“The programme has also reinforced to me that local government may not be the place I stay longer term. I am keen to take my management skills into other sectors and broaden my horizons.”

*(Endline survey respondent)*

“The programme has been brilliant but in the current jobs market it is difficult to accredit it with directly associated career movement. My role at work has developed though as one of my major projects has come to fruition and the course has helped me shape a new JD.”

*(Endline survey respondent)*

Responses that were slightly more qualified included:

“I did not really have a career path and in my fifties I am looking for opportunities to spend the rest of my career doing something interesting realising that I have got used to and enjoy a leadership role.”

*(Endline survey respondent)*

“Although the programme has been useful it has not been instrumental in my career development and I feel I would have progressed without attendance on the programme.”

*(Endline survey respondent)*

“I think to keep in paid work would be an accurately revised ambition in the current climate.”

*(Endline survey respondent)*

This last comment serves as a reminder that in the background to their participation, the Yr2 cohort were also thinking about job security.

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## ACTION LEARNING

The sets inevitably covered career progression and during this year, where there was more fluidity in the group in terms of their jobs, there was some clear evidence that the action learning processes contributed directly to participants’ career progress.

Two set facilitators noted that their sets had dealt with very specific career issues. One person presented their interview and the model of peer consultancy enabled that individual to take advice from other set members and prepare better. The result reported in a later set was that the person was successful and felt that there was a definite link between their success and the work done in the set.

The other set facilitator reported that a set member achieved a new role, which they had presented in the set. The role was one that the set member needed to develop an approach so that the role would be approved by their chief executive. Again the set was felt to have been critical to the eventual success in securing the role.

Finally, there were more subtle impacts of the sets on career progression. As one person commented:

“I believe I have gained a better sense of pace. I used to rush headlong into everything and my energy levels and enthusiasm used to go before me. I feel I am now able to temper these more appropriately to different situations. I feel this was potentially the thing that was ‘holding me back’ in my career progression.”

*(Action learning set evaluation comment)*

Where career progression was presented within the action learning set component of the Leading Learning Programme, it seems to have had a positive impact for participants.

#### IMPACT ON YR1 PARTICIPANTS

Twelve out of the 13 Yr1 respondents to the 12 month on survey commented that they had been active in some way either in the job market or in developing their roles. Eight people were keeping an eye on the job market and one person transformed an acting role into a permanent post. However, as one person commented, looking at the market was not always with the outcome of leaving their current service:

“I have looked at other jobs but my own is too exciting and having moved directorate - again - I now feel much more supported and can see a real future emerging.”

*(Yr1 participant response to 12 month on survey)*

The question about whether the Leading Learning Programme had been instrumental in a participant realising their target role or if it had accelerated them along their career path was repeated in the 12 month on survey.

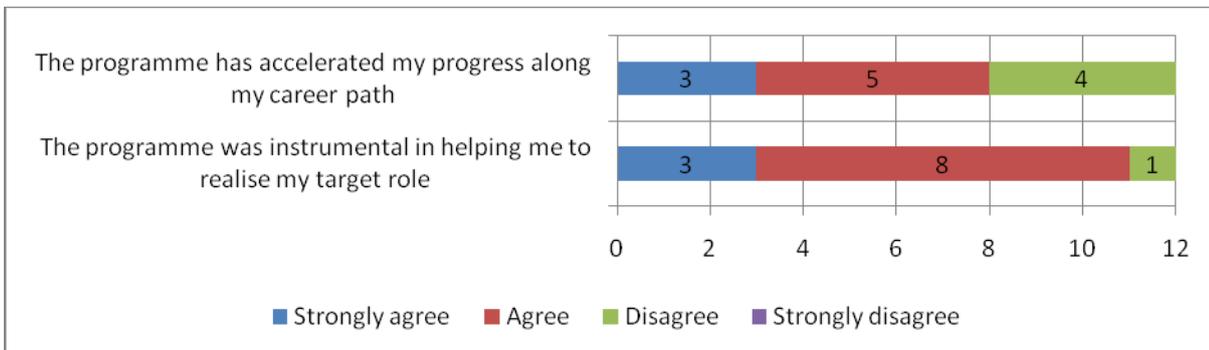


Figure 17: Yr1 participants' agreement about impact of programme on career paths in the 12 month on survey (Base: 12)

The average ratings for these questions in the Yr1 and Yr2 endline surveys are given in table 12 above. The average scores in the 12 month on survey map exactly to those given by Yr1 participants in their endline survey. This suggests that there hasn't been a diminishment of perceived impact of the programme on the careers of participants.

A final impact of the programme 12 months on was in the way it had increased participants' confidence to develop and foster strategic partnerships.

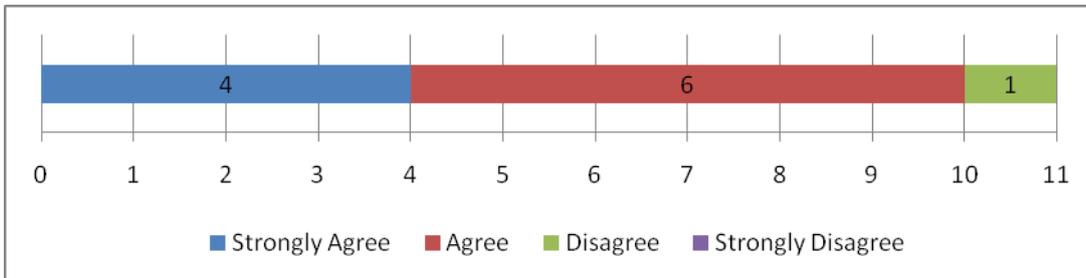


Figure 18: Yr1 participants' confidence to foster partnerships (Base: 11)

Clearly for the majority of participants, the Leading Learning Programme has had a positive affect on strategic partnership making.

In their closing comments participants made reference to the useful professional network that had emerged for them as a result of participation:

“A year on from Leading Learning, I can clearly see how it has helped me develop my skills, confidence and experience as well provided a useful network of peers to bounce ideas off and collaborate with - thanks for that opportunity!”  
*(Yr1 participant response to 12 month on survey)*

“I have acquired a network of contacts in local authorities in Yorkshire which I value.”  
*(Yr1 participant response to 12 month on survey)*

Aside from developing leadership skills, the programme has provided the opportunity to build relationships with peers within the programme's alumni.

## OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT

This section of the report addresses the operational management of the programme and looks at the quality of the management, value for money, profile and equality of opportunity.

### QUALITY

Participants were asked to rate the management of each of the three main elements of the programme and to provide an overall rating.

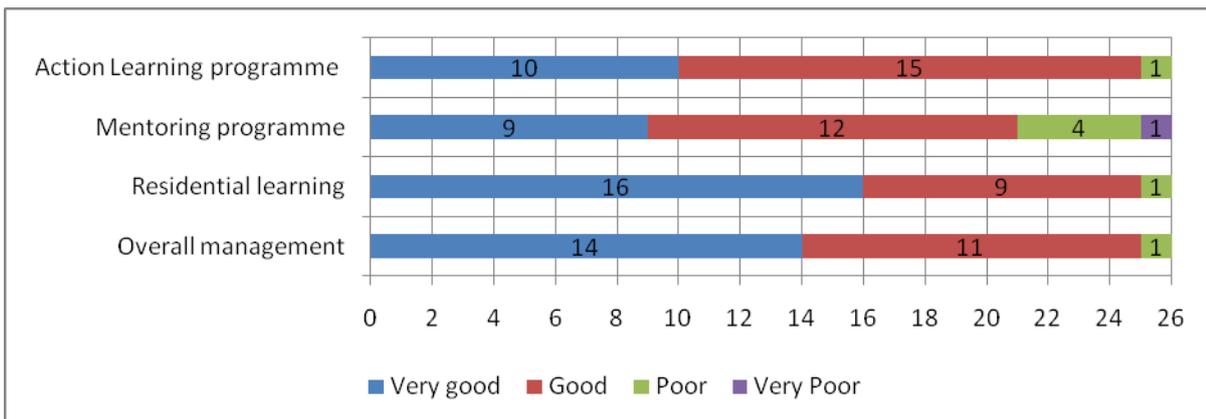


Figure 19: Participants' rating of the management of the programme (Base: 26)

There were a limited number of "Poor" ratings, particularly in relation to the mentoring element of the programme.

While there were comments about the late start of the programme and some snags with communication, there was also a criticism about the matching:

"The criticism on the mentoring programme is not directed to the organisers but on the quality of the mentors. Perhaps I have high expectations though!!"

*(Endline survey respondent)*

Compared to the first year of the programme there was some increase in the ratings by the second year. Giving a numeric score to each rating (where "Very good"=4 and "Very poor"=1), the average ratings were as follows:

	Yr2 average rating	Yr1 average rating
Overall management	3.5	3.3
Residential learning	3.6	3.3
Mentoring programme	3.1	3.3
Action Learning programme	3.3	3.3

Table 13: Average rating for management of programme by Yr1 and Yr2 participants (Base: 26)

The frustration over the late start of the mentoring affected the rating in the second year of the programme. However, it is worth remembering that any score over 3.0 is at least a “Good” rating. The residential element of the programme, by Yr2 was closer to “Very good”.

Participants were also asked how supportive their host authorities had been towards their taking part in the programme. The reason for asking this question was to ascertain whether any participants were unable to get the best out of the programme because they were not able to invest time to reflect or build on their learning.

In the second year of the programme there were no responses indicating that an authority had been unsupportive, which given the particular set of circumstances participants faced during the second year of the programme is surprising.

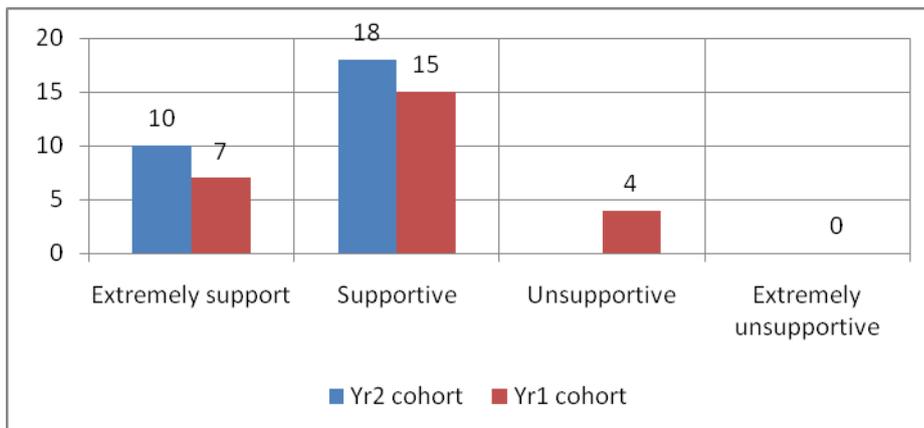


Figure 20: How supportive Yr1 and Yr2 participants felt their organisation to be

This suggests that the recruitment process has been more explicit about the time commitment expected from participants and that this is being communicated more effectively to line managers.

## VALUE FOR MONEY

The cost for the second year of the Leading Learning Programme for the following elements – residential, mentoring, course delivery, website, action learning set facilitation - was £106,000, which equates to £3,312.50 per person.

If the full cost of the programme in the second year is included at £142,660 (which also includes management, evaluation and administration/travel), then this equates to £4,458 per person.

## COMPARING WITH SIMILARLY STRUCTURED LEADERSHIP PROGRAMMES

There are three leadership programmes, two in the cultural sector and one in the commercial sector which operate along similar lines to the Leading Learning Programme: Leading Archives and Museums Development Programme, University of East Anglia’s Museum Leadership Programme and Ashridge’s Leadership Process. Looking first at the Leading Archives & Museums Development Programme and the Ashridge Leadership Process, it is useful to look at the course structures and course fee structures.

The Leading Archives & Museums Programme had two strands: Future Leaders and Senior Managers. Both strands developed from a pilot in late 2005/early 2006. This information is taken from an evaluation report which looked at the programme from 2005 to 2008.<sup>5</sup> The strands were as follows:

- The Future Leaders strand comprised 10 days activity (pre-course preparation - 360° feedback and Myers Briggs Type Indicator, two 2-day residential modules, questionnaire feedback, work-based project, follow up day and a single action learning workshop.
- Senior Managers Leadership strand comprised an 11 day programme (pre-course preparation - 360° feedback and Transformational Leadership Questionnaire, two 2-day residential modules, questionnaire feedback, a work-based project, a follow-up day and an action learning workshop.

The programme operated a sliding scale of attendance costs, some subsidised by partner agencies (for example, the Museums Association funded 6 Diversify participants). Where participants were charged for attendance, costs were between £2,000 for those attending the Future Leaders strand of the programme and £3,000 for those attending the Senior Manager course.

The Ashridge Leadership Process includes pre-programme work (360° feedback, Myers-Briggs Step II, Leadership CV review & coaching session), five day residential programme (sessions with a leadership coach, group work, development of a leadership development plan) and post programme (two follow up coaching sessions). The course costs £6,000 + VAT but guarantees relatively low numbers of participants (between 12 and 20 per course).

In common with the Leading Learning Programme, the Leading Archives and Museums Development Programme and Ashridge have a pre-course element, residential learning and coaching or mentoring. Compared to these courses, the Leading Learning Programme gave a much larger element of action learning, plus slightly more residential learning in comparison to the Leading Archives and Museums programme.

The University of East Anglia's Museum Leadership programme comprises 11 residential days, mentoring and a visit to the participants' organisation. Costs per participant operate on a sliding scale between £850 and £2,500 per person. While it offers more residential learning, it does not provide Action Learning, nor does it offer a similar breadth of pre-course activity.

At just over £4,450 per participant, the Leading Learning Programme is not the cheapest leadership course compared to others in the cultural sector, but it appears to be competitive. Further, because it offers a broader range of learning opportunities (the action learning component in particular feels like a departure from other programmes), it arguably offers more value for money. Compared to the commercial sector equivalent, the Leading Learning Programme is extremely good value for money. However, the fees for Ashridge may be higher because of a guarantee to participants that they will keep numbers down. It will be interesting to do a similar exercise with the lower number of Yr3 participants on the Leading Learning Programme.

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<sup>5</sup> *Strategic Evaluation of the Leading Archives and Museums Development Programme*, DTZ/4 consulting, MLA, 2008.

### COMPARING THE RESIDENCY COSTS

Looking just at the cost for the 6.5 day residential component of the Leading Learning Programme, this equates to £2,775 per person or £427 per day (including residential costs, speaker fees, personal development aspects of the programme, plus 60% of the programme management, administration and operational costs).

The Clore Leadership Programme, spent £5,000 per person for their short residential course (which includes all administration and management costs, plus personal development sessions), for 12 full days training, meals and overnight accommodation. This equates to £416 per day or £2,704 for 6.5 days for each participant.<sup>66</sup> In the first two years of Arts Council England's Cultural Leadership Programme, 31,700 training days were delivered at a cost of £378 per day (which does not include overnight accommodation).

Compared to the Clore short courses, the Leading Learning Programme offers roughly an equivalent cost for each day of training. The training days offered by the Cultural Leadership Programme, which do not include overnight accommodation or the same degree of 1:2:1 personal development sessions, were somewhat less costly per capita.

### PROFILE OF PROGRAMME

The marketing for the first year of the programme was through the National Culture Forum network, which includes 16 professional associations. This year the programme was also promoted at Arts Council England's CLP celebration event in the summer of 2010, which brought together participants across the learning programmes and networks that have developed over the three years CLP has operated.

In the interim survey, participants were asked where they had heard about the programme. 27 people answered this question and responses included:

- E-zines or bulletins (for example, NALGAO, CLOA, ISRM) – 7 participants
- Word of mouth (for example, line managers, colleagues, Leading Learning Alumni, Sue Isherwood presentation, MLA, CLP) – 13 participants

In both the interim and endline surveys, participants were asked to state whether their participation in the programme had been referred to in public or in print. In the interim survey, 3 people stated that the programme had been referred to in this way and 5 people in the endline survey. Examples include references in: internal Committee reports (two people), a Renaissance Business Plan, Culture First website and in CLOA meetings (presumably minuted).

13 participants said they had been approached by prospective participants with an interest in applying for places in the future. (In Yr1, nine participants had been approached.)

<sup>66</sup> These statistics and those for the Cultural Leadership Programme are taken from "Leading questions for culture", *Museums Journal*, November 2009, p. 13

## EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

The programme worked within NALGAO's equal opportunities policy. After the first year of the programme equalities monitoring was linked to the application stage of the programme. The statistics from these forms were discussed in the participant profile section at the start of this report.

The application forms for 2008/09 and 2009/10 did not provide space or invite applicants to provide information about access of cultural requirements, nor did they state that applicants can provide copies in alternative formats. Applicants were however provided with contact details for the Programme Director, which indirectly provided opportunities to discuss needs were they to arise. This contact was reiterated in the information document about the programme with applicants being offered the opportunity "to discuss any aspect of this information or get clarification on any point arising".

In the endline survey, applicants were asked to state if their access or cultural requirements had been met by the programme. Of the 26 people that answered the question, 1 had an access requirements which they felt had been met by the programme and 3 had cultural requirements which had been met by the programme.

	Does not apply	Yes	Partly	No
Access requirements	25	1	0	0
Cultural requirements	23	3	0	0

**Table 14: Participants' access and cultural requirements**

Both of these findings are interesting because the partial equal opportunities monitoring does not readily suggest that there were participants with these requirements. The question about access requirements used the phrase "access requirements related to your being disabled" and the equalities monitoring form gave the DDA definition of disability. However, there was not 100% equalities monitoring data available for the Yr2 cohort, which might explain this anomaly.

One person did comment that they felt so tired in the first residential that they "felt ill" by the third day. While an isolated case, it is important that enough time is allowed for breaks and reflection. Much has been done already by the Programme Director to build this "down time" into the residencies. However, if the profile of the course were to change significantly, then the intensity of the residency might become a barrier to disabled people participating.

The Woodside Conference Centre, in Kenilworth, is used by the Leading Learning Programme for residential teaching. The venue has disabled facilities available for guests requiring overnight accommodation and they ask that organisers of conferences and events liaise directly with delegates to make sure access requirements are met. The large meeting rooms on the ground floor are on a single level, although there is a step between the bar and one of the rooms. The Centre has induction loops and welcomes guide dogs. Staff at the venue have received disability awareness training.

While the programme was not designed to fast track BAME or disabled leaders there is a risk that by not addressing race and disability in the programme literature leaders may be put off from applying.

## CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation has found strong evidence that the programme has had a positive impact on participants' leadership behaviours and in many instances suggests that there has been greater impact this year compared to the first year of the programme. It is significant that in a year where a change in government and cuts to the public sector were the backdrop to the programme that there was so much energy put into finding new positions or roles.

The Yr2 cohort of the programme invested even more time in their learning during the 12 months of the programme than the first year and clearly gave personal time to realise their objectives. Moreover they have accessed additional formal and informal training opportunities as part of their professional development.

The combined approach of the Leading Learning Programme - 360° exercise, personal development plans, residential learning, mentoring and action learning – proved useful in some combination to all participants. The quality and management of these elements were rated highly, although there was a persistent concern across the surveys about the late start of the mentoring programme. Formative evaluation findings enabled the delivery of the programme to be tweaked and improved. Aside from the mentoring issue, there was a noticeable lack of continuity between the two years about things that concerned participants.

Where the programme might develop is in how participants are steered in their use of the mentoring and action learning elements of the programme. It was a notable reflection that the set which began with a leadership based issue set the tone for the work of that set and that others worked on other areas that were not necessarily leadership focussed. Allied to this point was the fact that a limited number of people were less confident about knowing which steps to take to realise their target roles. The Leading Learning Programme offers a fairly unique opportunity to work on specific leadership issues and traits and it may be that those facilitating the mentoring (mentors) and action learning sets should present this issue at the start of relationships.

The programme is currently recruiting more women than men and not reaching BAME or disabled leaders. There are yet to be participants from the North East region. While the programme is not intended to have a positive action dimension, it is nevertheless important that access is addressed in the literature and recruitment drives in the future.

Looking forwards, leadership has been identified as one of the five priorities for the local authority workforce by the Local Government Association. On leadership development there are four objectives:

- supporting their political and managerial leaders and partnership boards in developing the leadership skills to tackle new challenges
- fostering the development of leadership skills and leadership behaviours at all levels in the authority and across public sector partnerships
- taking effective action to attract, develop and retain the political and managerial leaders of today and tomorrow

- taking effective action to increase the percentage of leaders from diverse backgrounds.<sup>7</sup>

The Leading Learning Programme participants provided evidence that they are taking their skills back into their organisations, to their teams and to the outer tiers of leadership. In providing a leadership training opportunity to a growing number of women leaders, the programme has also answered part of the call to diversify leadership.

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<sup>7</sup> *Delivering Through People: The Local Government Workforce Strategy 2010*. Executive Summary, LGA Group, April 2010; p.2.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: CHANGES IN LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR AS A RESULT OF THE PROGRAMME

I feel more confident in my leadership abilities and have proactively learnt to seek feedback from senior managers to assist in my personal professional development.

At the service away day and with my management team we have mapped service activity by ward and improved our communication with councillors about activity in their wards. I am more politically aware than I was and make time to gather political intelligence and feed this in to strategy development. Staff are also more keenly aware of the political context as a result and each team now has a ward map with councillors name on which they map their activity. The initial session on change management and the chaos moment has boosted my confidence in managing change and dealing with moments of apparent chaos - particularly in these uncertain times this has helped me to be more resilient to the challenging political and financial environment and to focus on positive outcomes of change.

Action Learning helped me plan an interview for a new role which I achieved.  
Mentoring has helped me successfully establish myself in this new role.  
360 helped me reflect on my leadership behaviour and improve areas identified for development.  
Residential and action learning helped establish new networks.  
The residential could have been more challenging and less traditional in its delivery.

The course has boosted my confidence, restored faith in my own abilities, given me new skills/tactics for approaching challenges and key relationships at work and broadened my understanding of local government.

As a result my team is stronger, my senior team are more responsive to me and productive and I also feel now that I can handle difficult staff and political issues with equal confidence.

I have employed ALS techniques when facilitating team discussions around certain issues. Through my 360, I have begun to address weaknesses in my leadership style, particularly in communicating strategic direction. In order to do this I have sought clarification of issues before going into management or team meetings, and made greater use of our service delivery plan as a point of reference.

Relationship with senior colleagues has improved - unofficial leader as line management is now more remote e.g. led team in service review session to establish vision, mission, priorities and suggested structure to achieve budget savings.

Now been asked to lead small review team to review service as a whole - 6/9 months including implementation - good opportunity to use change management, political skills, financial management and am getting good support from my mentor.

I am more politically aware and feel more confident in dealing with these situations and advising my team on how we address issues.

Positive impact in terms of assessing areas for development need, reflecting on my ability and self confidence.

It has helped me take stock of my all round capabilities and helped me modify and improve in key areas such as the political environment and in terms of developing networks and personal relationships with key stakeholders.

I have now been placed on the Council's internal leadership programme and at the first session we explored associated animal styles. The speaker noted that I am modifying my behaviour to be more considered in my approach to things.
I spent quite a lot of time exploring my relationship with my director in mentoring and action learning and have been made to think in particular about how I communicate with him and I have put this into practice with some small success - I succeeded in getting one of my appraisal evaluations regraded as outstanding.
The programme helped to have a much more open mind on leadership and what this means. I already had very strong strategic thinking and management skills; I just needed to be more confident in my ability to relate these to my staff, peers, manager and partners. The active learning set was exceptionally good in doing that as allowed me to open more up to people.
I have become much more aware of the importance of political leadership and have developed my own behaviours and approach depending on the person I am talking to.
New approaches to cost benefit analysis and strategic planning with a financial check. Most impact in terms of meetings with mentor - opening my eyes to what questions need to be asked. Thinking about the role of the profession in this new world and what the opportunities are
Has enabled me to understand more fully my drivers and use them to good benefit. Also to be more confident about my strengths. Action learning has given me a new tool to use in staff management. Mentoring in particular has given focus on specific issues, such as motivating my staff team, and has helped me to delegate more effectively.
Has improved my delegation of tasks and bringing on staff members. Encouraging staff to lead on projects and stand in for me at meetings.
Better delegation and development of direct reporting staff.
It has allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of what is meant by leadership and stimulated a more imaginative and mature approach to tackling strategic and operational problems in the workplace.
I have a deeper understanding of the way leadership works in a local authority, in particular how political decisions are influenced and how this impacts on day to day working.
I have a better understanding of my own and others leadership behaviours.
It has made me reflect more on what I do and look at things in a more long term approach as opposed to reacting.

## APPENDIX 2: A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ADELE POPPLETON

From *Firstonline*, June 2010. E-zine on Local Government Association website:  
<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelId=11765627>, downloaded December 2010.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ADELE POPPLETON<sup>8</sup>, ARTS AND CREATIVE ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT MANAGER,  
 KIRKLEES COUNCIL



Adele Poppleton (centre) chairing an arts grant meeting

I've got a perfect start to the day, chairing an arts grants meeting. I like to feel like I am helping others.

With a little investment from Kirklees council, groups are able to help create thriving and creative places. As usual, demand outstrips supply so we can't fund all applications, but those we can support include a youth choir; an older people's project to reduce social isolation; and two new music festivals in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

I return to my office to find my team in a state of shock. They've just read an email from our chief executive about leaving Kirklees to take up the position of interim chief executive at Doncaster council.

Even worse, the computer software has just been upgraded and the email system has changed! Tempers are frayed as staff try to get to grips with the fast pace of change we are presently undergoing.

### Sense of humour

One of the things I learnt while on the first national cultural leadership learning programme was how to support staff through change and the importance of remaining positive. My inspirational mentor, Christine Fisher, chief executive of North West Leicestershire District Council, helped me to realise that my reaction to an event determines the outcome, so I take a deep breath, listen to my team's concerns, inject a sense of humour and start to work out solutions with them.

Other officers are busy on the phone so I take a call from a new worker at a hospice seeking advice about funding. Patients and their families have told the worker how the existing arts activities give them opportunities to express themselves and a welcome break from treatment and the worries they have. We discuss possible arts projects and how to raise funding. By the end, the worker says she feels inspired to try the new ideas we have discussed.

<sup>8</sup> Adele is an alumnus of Yr 1 of the Leading Learning programme.

The afternoon is spent chairing a project board meeting for a Yorkshire Forward funded programme to raise aspirations in Dewsbury – a town suffering from recent events, which have attracted negative national attention. My role is to lead officers from different services who have traditionally not worked together. I have to help them overcome their suspicions about each other and try to find joint ways of working as they are used to a variety of management cultures.

We hear about the first successful project, the opening a shop managed by artists who have used creative methods to engage residents in Dewsbury's regeneration. Feedback has included comments such as: "Good idea, a thing for all ethnicities and ages," and: "At last Kirklees council spending some money wisely on the community."

My day ends with attendance at the opening of a new contemporary art gallery in two empty shops in Huddersfield. The exhibition features work by international artists such as James Turrell and Jaume Plensa, curated by two international creative project managers who live in Kirklees. I didn't know we had such talent and experience on our doorstep.

I go home feeling inspired and passionate about our creative district.

## APPENDIX 3: 360° FEEDBACK TABLE

The following table shows the number of people within the 360° framework that provided feedback to each participant.

Participants	Self	Manager	Direct Report	Peer	External Partner	Elected Member	Total
Participant 1	1	1	3	1	1	0	7
Participant 2	1	1	0	2	3	1	8
Participant 3	1	2	3	4	2	0	12
Participant 4	1	1	3	4	2	0	11
Participant 5	1	1	4	3	2	1	12
Participant 6	1	1	0	4	2	0	8
Participant 7	1	1	2	3	1	0	8
Participant 8	1	1	2	2	3	1	10
Participant 9	1	1	3	2	1	1	9
Participant 10	1	1	3	2	2	1	10
Participant 11	1	1	1	2	1	1	7
Participant 12	1	2	0	4	2	0	9
Participant 13	1	1	2	2	2	1	9
Participant 14	1	1	3	3	2	0	10
Participant 15	1	2	2	2	2	1	10
Participant 16	1	1	3	2	2	1	10
Participant 17	1	1	4	3	0	0	9
Participant 18	1	1	3	2	2	0	9
Participant 19	1	1	4	4	0	0	10
Participant 20	1	1	3	3	0	1	9
Participant 21	1	0	3	2	0	1	7
Participant 22	1	1	2	3	1	1	9
Participant 23	1	1	3	1	2	1	9
Participant 24	1	1	3	2	1	1	9
Participant 25	0	1	3	3	2	1	10
Participant 26	1	1	1	2	1	0	6
Participant 27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Participant 28	1	1	0	4	3	0	9
Participant 29	1	1	3	3	2	1	11
Participant 30	1	1	3	3	2	0	10
Participant 31	1	1	3	3	2	1	11
Participant 32	1	1	0	4	6	1	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>291</b>

