

Leadership offer: 2021/22 update

Purpose of report

For information and decision

Summary

This report provides members with an update on the LGA's Highlighting Political Leadership and managerial leadership offers for 2021/22, including the new programmes introduced in response to the UK Government's Disability Strategy.

Is this report confidential? Yes No

Recommendations

- IIB is requested to suggest or recommend any topics or themes for programmes that should be considered for the Leadership Team's ongoing programme of events and is asked to comment on the work undertaken by the Leadership Team.

Action

- Officers to progress this work in light of the Board's comments.

Contact officer: Helen Jenkins
Position: Head of Leadership
Phone no: 07464 652732
Email: Helen.jenkins@local.gov.uk

Highlighting Leadership offer: 2021/22 work update

1. Background

- 1.1 The LGA's Highlighting Leadership offer forms part of our wider package of sector-support. We offer a range of programmes, events and resources aimed at supporting and developing councillors and local government officers at all levels. Attending our political leadership programmes gives councillors a unique opportunity to network with other Members from different tiered authorities and from all over the country. As the majority of our programmes are cross-party, it also provides a safe space to network and learn with councillors from across the political spectrum. Our managerial leadership development programme starts by growing future talent with the National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP), through to opportunities for senior officers with the flagship IGNITE programme delivered by SOLACE.
- 1.2 This report provides an update on the LGA's leadership offers, as well as providing a particular focus on a new programme of support for disabled councillors.

2. Highlighting Political Leadership

- 2.1 The LGA's leadership offer supports councils to address the key issues facing local government by providing the skills, experience and support to reflect their needs as leaders of place. Our programmes are designed to equip leaders to drive improvements for their local communities through resilient local leadership. The Leadership offer spans support at all stages of a local government career: from the moment a person thinks about standing for election through the Be a Councillor campaign to the most senior political roles with Leaders' Programme. On the officer side, we attract new talent through the National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP) and provide continuous professional development to established chief executives through the Solace Ignite programme. The following report provides the Board with an update on our key programme areas.

3 Be a Councillor

- 3.1 The LGA's Be a Councillor campaign promotes the role of local government councillor with the aim of encouraging more people, and in particular those from underrepresented groups, to stand for election. In October 2021, the Board received a paper that detailed focus group research undertaken to help enhance the campaign. Recommendations included updating the photography used in the campaign to show councillors undertaking the real work that they do in their communities, increasing case studies that demonstrate the valuable work that councillors do and more targeted advertising of the role with underrepresented groups. Progress is being made and there are currently two tenders out to seek new suppliers for photography and advertising expertise and advice. Events are planned in late spring and summer to showcase the role of the councillor and the team are continuing to work directly with a number of councils who are using the Be a Councillor resources to run their own campaign. Recent examples include: Guildford, South Staffordshire, Test Valley, Lancashire and Brent.

4 Community Leadership

- 4.1 The Community Leadership offer encompasses support for councillors at all levels through a variety of blended learning options. During the initial stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Leadership Team quickly transformed a number of its in-person events into virtual or online programmes, and upgraded our e-Learning platform to ensure it was more modern and accessible. E-learning modules delivered this financial year, include:
- 4.1.1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
 - 4.1.2 Biodiversity
 - 4.1.3 Data protection
- 4.2 Modules on licencing, model code of conduct and audit committees are all currently in development stage. An adviser in the Leadership Team has recently been allocated as the digital lead and has responsibility for considering and reviewing how the leadership offer can continue to evolve and adapt to become more accessible and flexible to different councillors learning preferences and schedules.

5 Focus on Leadership

- 5.1 Focus on Leadership provides one-off networking opportunities for councillors, with a particular focus on diversifying the pipeline of talent into leadership roles. Focus on Leadership includes our long-running Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic, Opposition and Young Councillor programmes. In recent years we have updated the offer to include a women's weekend programme and in February 2022, the LGA ran its first LGBTQ+ networking weekender.

6 Leadership Essentials

- 6.1 Leadership Essentials provide comprehensive training for councillors on themed portfolio areas. They're designed for councillors in their leadership role, whether that be chair of a committee, cabinet member or leader of the opposition. Our current offer includes:
- 6.1.1 Audit committees
 - 6.1.2 Being an effective cabinet member
 - 6.1.3 Building safety
 - 6.1.4 Communication and media (1 day masterclass)
 - 6.1.5 Children's services
 - 6.1.6 Climate emergency
 - 6.1.7 Cultural services
 - 6.1.8 Economic growth
 - 6.1.9 Effective scrutiny
 - 6.1.10 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
 - 6.1.11 Finance
 - 6.1.12 Getting your message across (2 day communication programme)
 - 6.1.13 Housing
 - 6.1.14 Leading healthier places
 - 6.1.15 Licensing
 - 6.1.16 Risk management (1 day masterclass)

6.1.17 Sport and physical activity

- 6.2 Leadership essentials and masterclasses are responsive to the changing needs of the sector and in recent years new programmes have been added including Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Building safety and climate emergency to reflect council's priorities. We are currently working on a new programme, 'Finance for non-finance portfolio holders', which will have its first 1-day masterclass delivered within the financial year.
- 6.3 Board members are encouraged to consider whether there are additional themes or portfolio areas that should be included in our offer and make recommendations.

7 Leadership Academy

- 7.1 The Leadership Academy is the LGA's flagship development programme for councillors in leadership positions. It is recognised by the Institute of Leadership and Management and provides a safe, cross-party setting for local government councillors to develop their personal, political and place leadership skills.
- 7.2 Like all of our programmes, Leadership Academy has adapted during the Covid-19 pandemic and we now ensure that we offer at least one virtual leadership academy each year.
- 7.3 The content of Leadership Academy is reviewed periodically to ensure that it remains at the forefront of political leadership training. To date, over 3,000 councillors have been through the Leadership Academy, including those who have gone on to be council leaders and MPs.

8 Next Generation

- 8.1 The majority of the LGA's political leadership programmes are cross-party. The Next Generation programme, however, has been specifically designed and led by Political Group Offices to nurture the rising stars within their own political party, or as an independent. Each of the LGA's political group offices runs an annual cohort of Next Generation, with 63 currently taking part in the Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and Independent Group programmes.

9 Leaders' Programme and Leading Edge

- 9.1 The political leadership offer recognises that continuous development is important, as the context and landscape of the sector our leaders are operating in is constantly changing. To reflect this, we run two programmes aimed at the most senior local government political leaders.
- 9.2 Leaders' Programme supports a select group of council leaders on an annual basis – helping them form a cross-party network with others leading their councils. Leading Edge brings together local authority chief executives and leaders to discuss the biggest challenges and opportunities facing the sector. The next Leading Edge event

is planned for March and will focus on the role that council's play in tackling regional inequalities as they navigate their way out of the pandemic.

- 9.3 In the year-to-date, there have been 887 delegates booked onto our political leadership programmes across all the offers covered in paragraphs 5-9. We are seeing a preference from delegates to return to face-to-face learning, however, we are continuing to offer an online alternative to improve accessibility.

10 Highlighting Managerial Leadership

- 10.1 Working with Solace, the LGA has continued to offer training to senior officers through the following programmes:
- 10.1.1 Springboard (for Heads of Service, middle managers and those earmarked as "rising stars")
 - 10.1.2 Total Leadership (for directors and those considering applying for chief executive roles in the near future)
 - 10.1.3 Ignite (for established chief executives)
- 10.2 During the first lockdown, the LGA and Solace also introduced a programme of executive coaching for chief executives and senior officers. An evaluation of the coaching offer was undertaken by the LGA's Research Team, and it found that 99% of respondents were satisfied (15%) or very satisfied (84%) with the coaching programme. Due to the success of the programme, the offer has continued post-Covid. As part of the LGA and Solace's ongoing commitment to improving the diversity of local government, the coaching programme is now available to officers in middle management roles from underrepresented groups.
- 10.3 The full evaluation is available to read, here:
<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/solacelga-emergency-coaching-and-mentoring-support-programme-evaluation-june-2021>

11 National Graduate Development Programme

- 11.1 The NGDP has adapted much of its programme and all of its recruitment to online delivery, following the pandemic. Participation in the programme has continued to increase and this January, applications closed for the recruitment of our 24th cohort, with around 4,100 candidates applying at Stage 1. This is a healthy number, and in line with both previous years and current trends. The next steps are a multi-stage process which has been redesigned and improved, in conjunction with our partner councils, to put diversity and inclusion at its heart.
- 11.2 2021 saw the biggest intake of graduates to the NGDP in its 20-year history, with 178 graduates placed in partner councils nationally. To continue the success of the programme, the team are currently commissioning an independent review, with a particular focus on diversity and inclusion. It's recommended that a summary of this review's findings and the subsequent action plan be brought to back to the Board at the appropriate milestone.

12 Disability Strategy

- 12.1 The Board will be aware that the LGA has received some additional in-year funding to support a number of initiatives. One of these is a programme of leadership development and support in response to the UK Government's Disability Strategy, which states:

“Building on the experience of the Access to Elected Office fund and the EnAble fund, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (now Department for Levelling up Housing and Communities) will support a new scheme from April 2022 to support those seeking to become candidates and – as importantly – once they have been elected to public office”.

- 12.2 The Leadership Team have a number of outputs and KPIs relating to this strategy, which are set out below:
- 12.2.1 Updating the Be a Councillor guidance with specific reference to anything that might be important for people with disabilities to consider. This piece of work has been commissioned to an external supplier who will create the guide. It will include a checklist for councils to help them proactively consider what adjustments they might need to make to ensure they are accessible to disabled councillors.
 - 12.2.2 Creating a new targeted advertising campaign and communications plan for Be a Councillor, specifically to attract more disabled people to stand for election
 - 12.2.3 Designing and developing a new leadership development programme for disabled councillors
 - 12.2.4 Relaunching our coaching for councillors and ringfencing it for disabled councillors
 - 12.2.5 Conducting a review of NGDP accessibility.
- 12.3 The Leadership Team are currently identifying and working with partners and the Political Group Offices to create a package of support that will deliver against these outputs.

13 Financial implications

- 13.1 All programmes will be met from existing budgets.

14 Implications for Wales

- 14.1 There are no direct implications for Wales. However, the Leadership Team continue to work with the Welsh LGA to ensure shared learning and coordinated plans for their respective leadership academies.

15 Equalities Implications

- 15.1 The LGA is committed to increasing diversity at all levels of local government. By creating new offers and ringfencing opportunities to those from underrepresented groups, for example through the new disability strategy work, we will increase the pipeline of diverse talent into leadership positions, so that councils are more representative of the communities they serve.

16 Next Steps

- 16.1 This report has provided an overview of the key areas of work for the Leadership Team. It's suggested that the following reports are brought back to the Board at the appropriate milestone:
- 16.1.1 An end of year report on political leadership programmes that details overall participation in the programme, including broken down by protected characteristics. Satisfaction rates based on evaluation forms can also be included.
 - 16.1.2 A summary of the findings and next steps of the NGDP review