



The 21st Century guide to member induction





Introduction

During election time public bodies and officers go into what is known as 'purdah' as self-restraining ordinance which requires anyone working in the public sector to hold back any impulses they may have to be radical, innovative, draw attention to themselves, or do anything at all that might call into question their official 'neutrality' while the politicians fight it out.

Rather than playing it safe and going on holiday, this is precisely the time local government officers should be fine tuning their council's 'welcome' to their new and re-elected councillors. Just as victorious foot soldiers returning from the battlefield – what water, soothing damp cloths, new sandals and a piece of bread will await them back in their town hall 'tents'?

For the last year we have been asking that precise question – and have surveyed over 150 different local authorities on their plans and strategies for what is commonly known as member induction, but in practice means 'what the first 6 months feels like for a new councillor'. Our results are pretty stark at times, but with a great deal of positive work to build on. This guide sets out some of the key results and analysis from the survey, and particularly draws on a case-study from Leicestershire County Council to highlight a '21st Century induction' in action.

A council's welcome to its newly elected members is a key indicator of the attitude it has to political and community leadership – and as every good politician knows, knowledge is power. But this of course works both ways – as much as the councillor needs to know his/her way around the council, officers also hugely benefit from an active approach to understanding their new councillors.

The welcome to a new councillor above all needs to recognise **where that councillor is coming from.**

Historically, we have inherited a political system grounded in the concept of 'the amateur' – that our political leaders 'emerge', self-selected from a vibrant world of political and community activism (particularly in local government where many councillors remain largely unremunerated for what they do). Aside from the theory behind this, the consequence is often councillors come from a very different background and perspective to their corporate and strategic management teams inside local authorities. Just contrast the language of local political campaigning – leaflets, petitions, cutting council tax, action on grot spots, saving our park, standing up for children and old folk and so on, to how the council describes itself – community development, cleansing teams, environment department, adult social services, children centres, and how key performance indicators, delivery mechanisms, regulations and standards permeates through the corporate bureaucracy. Its no wonder most people don't immediately recognise who 'runs' the local council.

Member induction should be about building a bridge between these two cultures – so that both can get the best out of each other, the corporate management team can align their strategies and delivery capacity according to the priorities set by the politicians, and the politicians can influence the machinery of the local state to get the best out of it for residents, tax payers and users of the services.

Overall results

To date we've had 240 responses, roughly two thirds from officers, one third from members. We've allowed anonymous results to encourage people to use it as a tool, but we estimate we have at least 150 authorities represented from that 240. Our results show that against our notional benchmark of 100% 'perfect' member induction, the average for councils in England is 62%. However this disguises a much more important result. Averages for officers filling out our tool is 68.7% whereas for members, the average is 49.6%. This means that whatever officers feel like their members should be taking in or accessing, the actual experience of members (which is what counts at the end of the day) is much less. The key learning point from

this research therefore, is that officers and councils need to work very hard and imaginatively about running an induction programme that is effective and understood by members.

In one South Eastern authority an officer rated their induction at 62%, whilst a member (elected in the last two years) said 17%.

We have also been publishing regional breakdowns – and have also offered further breakdowns within regions as part of our presentations to Member Development Officer Networks. These results can only be presented as a snapshot at any given time as the more and more members and officers that use the results the more accurate a picture we get.

So far, the regional averages for completion of the induction tool are as follows:

North West

76.07%

East of England

63.1%

South West

73.11%

London

61.36%

Y&H

69.8%

South East

60.7%

East Midlands

67.33%

North East

52%

West Midlands

67.33%

You can find the detailed regional results in our presentations on www.21st.cc/news (we are due in the East/West Midlands, East of England, Yorkshire and the North East in late spring).

The guide

This guide is divided into **10 sections** that generally covers a typical induction programme in each council – each talks about the principles behind it, plus the aggregate results of our survey.



01

Before the election: what, when and why become a councillor

As with anything in life, the more prepared you are the more likely you are to succeed – and getting highly motivated, committed and talented councillors is no exception. Far from the council shying away from the ‘greasy pole’ of politics, there is no reason why the council shouldn’t be actively involved in recruiting, supporting and crucially – informing – the individuals and selected candidates who are thinking about standing for election. Would the council leave to chance those thinking about applying to be chief executive if a vacancy arises? Certainly not. There are targeted adverts, active head hunting, careful attention to the ‘package’ on offer, and a great deal of time and effort to show the council in its best light to attract top quality candidates to the post. It should be no different in thinking about the politicians.

Better recruitment has been the focus of the ‘Be a Councillor’ campaign – www.beacouncillor.org.uk, the results of which are starting to come through from the London elections. Many authorities have taken active steps to welcome new people to think about standing, much of this through bespoke party streams, but there is much the council can do:

Results

Before the election – what, when and why become a councillor

1 Advertise widely online, in local papers and public buildings the election timetable?

yes **65%** no **35%**

2 Provide online information or a publication on how to stand for election?

yes **73%** no **27%**

3 Run sessions for those interested, on what the role of councillor entails, including a realistic run-down on expectations, time commitments and finance?

yes **35%** no **65%**

4 Contact all candidates running for election in advance of election day with details of the induction programme and help available?

yes **61%** no **39%**

02

After the election: practicalities

Day one practicalities

If you speak to some councillors it is at once surprising and depressing, that far from being recognised and welcomed by the council on day one, they report their experience as being largely ignored. Thankfully this is the exception rather than the norm, but it is always worth checking that those basics are getting done efficiently and thoughtfully – i.e. are you expecting the member to run round and chase up who is supposed to be providing what? Or is there co-ordination so the most ‘practical’ stuff – the car parking, email address, security badge etc gets dealt with as a matter of course?

Immediately after the election: practicalities

1 Contact every member individually welcoming them to their new role with some immediate contact details and directions to Town Hall?

yes **90%** no **10%**

2 Issue new members with an induction pack which provides valuable information on the day to day running of the Council, support services available, contact details etc?

yes **93%** no **7%**

3 Carry out ‘Day One’ basics – such as car parking or security passes, email addresses and office support, tour round building to show where toilets, canteen and members rooms are?

yes **91%** no **9%**

4 Collect appropriate personal details to set up allowances and explain expenses system?

yes **92%** no **8%**

5 Takes active steps to ensure those who could be eligible know whether a dependent carers’ allowance is payable?

yes **55%** no **45%**

6 Ensures any accessibility or occupational health requirements are adhered to?

yes **62%** no **38%**

7 Take photo and contact details for website/other publications?

yes **97%** no **3%**

03

After the election: people

First impressions count, and often it is the people networks that matter most to councillors who are trying to navigate their way round the council for the first time. After working in an organisation for some time, its easy to forget that what seem like obvious roles and responsibilities (like ‘member development’) are not necessarily to the newly elected councillor – for starters they don’t think of themselves immediately as ‘members’ nor did they realise they needed ‘development’. Also bear in mind, particularly for councillors coming from opposition benches, they may have just spent the last 4 weeks criticising council services, and therefore by implication, the people who run them. So managing introductions and welcome from the beginning is not just a tick box exercise, but vital in getting off to the right start. Also in this category is whether councils want to introduce the member to outside their local authority boundaries to the regional partnerships and groups that the new member will inevitably need to start engaging with. There are providers who can offer support with this, for example REIPs or the IDeA.

Immediately after the election: people

1 Introduce new members to chief executive on day one?

yes **78%** no **22%**

2 Introduce new members to heads of departments and other key officers?

yes **82%** no **18%**

3 Introduce new members to appropriate political support inside council?

yes **61%** no **39%**

4 Offer new members places on a regional induction programme?

yes **30%** no **70%**

04 First month: introducing the member to the council

This is probably one of the most critical, and involving aspects of member induction being explored by councils. Rather than the councillor turning up on day one and being bombarded with finance, code of conduct, planning, standards and sessions on how not to make some calamitous mistake that would cost the council thousands in legal bills, this area should also be how much can the council learn from the councillor from their (newly elected perspective). Joint officer/member visits to places in the ward or division are increasingly seen as incredibly useful in working out the councillors' priorities and, crucially, what the councillor wants to achieve for their area from their political perspective, rather from how that electoral area fits in with the council's corporate strategy. Another recent recognition by some member development and senior teams inside councils, is that councillors too have professional and political development needs. Councils are moving away from a blanket assumption that it should be the local parties that support and select candidates, and councils should have no role in being part of that councillors' training and progress through their careers. Thus Personal Development Plans (PDPs), mentoring, and coaching are becoming more and more common – including advance qualifications offered and funded through REIPs for councillors to complete post grad certificates in local governance.

In 2008-09 South East Employers worked with South Bank University to provide a qualification for councillors studying Post Grad Cert in local governance there.

First month – introducing the member to the council

1 Facilitate visits to the ward/division with the new member and a senior officer to discuss key issues?

yes **27%** no **73%**

2 Offer Personal Development Plans (PDPs) for every member?

yes **59%** no **41%**

3 Offer a political mentor to support new councillors?

yes **42%** no **58%**

4 Offer a single point of contact from the senior team to help the member navigate around new processes and structures?

yes **62%** no **38%**

05

First month: introducing the council to the member

The big challenge for councils in this section, is the balance between immediate, accurate and important information being given to the new councillor in a timely way, but not inundating them with lots of sessions that, frankly, they just won't remember. The rule of thumb is how to avoid the councillor learning the hard way (trial and error). There is help and support to councils to encourage them to use much more varied and imaginative sessions designed to engage the councillor with the key points, and then regularly follow up with repeated sessions, online info and other ways to give the councillor an opportunity to learn how the council works internally.

First month – introducing the council to the member

1 Encourage existing and experienced councillors to attend and contribute to induction sessions?

yes **74%** no **26%**

2 Provide a comprehensive introduction to Overview and Scrutiny?

yes **72%** no **28%**

3 Explain and provide accessible literature about the council's Code of Conduct?

yes **91%** no **9%**

4 Provide training and information about Standards?

yes **88%** no **12%**

5 Take new members on tours of council facilities and service-based officers?

yes **72%** no **28%**

06

Doing the job: working inside the council

One of the most important and complex relationships councillors have to navigate is the one with officers – and of course the other way around. Constant tensions and misunderstandings about roles can lead to accusations of the ‘officer party’ being in charge, or that ‘politicking’ by councillors has a negative impact on decision making. As well as looking at the way the institution works (and whether it helps or hinders the relationships), induction should also actively facilitate sessions with officers as well as members. Put another way – train officers on how to get the best from members, to understand political perspectives and why councillors take the positions they do, and to demonstrate the key importance of the democratic ‘wing’ of the operation. This can also include sessions on roles within opposition and administration groups – to help shape and support the distinct identities of both, and to allow for ‘political’ differences, to become an integral part of the workings of the council – embrace it, don’t shy away from it!

Working inside the council

1 Offer detailed sessions on particular subjects (Finance, Adult Care, Children’s Services, Leisure, Environment, Corporate Parenting etc)?

yes **80%** no **20%**

3 Provide helpful and ongoing IT training and expertise?

yes **86%** no **14%**

5 Provide sessions to help members and officers understand the relationships and responsibilities of each?

yes **64%** no **36%**

7 Run refresh sessions on expectations and techniques for working in administration and opposition?

yes **20%** no **80%**

2 Does your council provide you with IT (e.g. PC or laptop and printer, access to broadband) or a financial contribution towards this?

yes **92%** no **8%**

4 Explain clearly the decision making processes of the council and how to contribute / influence?

yes **77%** no **23%**

6 Personal skills training – chairing, digesting briefing materials, how to find out more information, and access services the council provides?

yes **75%** no **25%**

07

Doing the job: working outside the council

Many councillors are not only juggling sometimes 2 or 3 elected positions within tiers of local government, not including any executive position they may have on the council, they might also be school governors, magistrates or hold other voluntary positions. This is on top of what they do as local community leaders, the pastoral work they do as a matter of course, the casework they follow up and then of course whatever position they hold in their local party. And with the state of membership of political parties where it is, in many areas you will find the councillor group IS the activist group for their party, so they will also be local party chairs or hold officer posts, they will be writing and designing (and delivering) leaflets and being the face of their local campaigns. On top of all this they could be working, caring for family members. In all this, the council should consider what kind of administrative and technical support the councillor is getting – and if the answer is very little, how should the council rely on the member being able to keep in touch with everyone they should be in their ward, where engagement is of critical value to the council.

Opposite is our list of some of the many roles councillors undertake – the job of induction is for the council to recognise, value, and in whatever way support where they can some of those roles where it can be recognised that doing so benefits the council – and if you know somebody who is doing all these jobs let us know!

Working outside the council

1 Facilitate stakeholder / councillor meetings from member's electoral area?

yes **29%** no **71%**

2 Provide guidance and advice on community leadership?

yes **50%** no **50%**

3 Provide comprehensive and detailed statistical data about the ward or division to give the best possible sense of place?

yes **56%** no **44%**

4 Encourage new members to attend regional and national conferences and events?

yes **53%** no **47%**

Roles of the councillor

A councillor can be:

an elected member on his/her principal tier of local council

an elected member to an additional second/third tier

an executive/shadow portfolio holder on council

a chair of scrutiny committee on council

a committee member

a holder of any honorary position in council (such as mayor)

a chair of a local council area/ neighbourhood forum

a member of a local council area/ neighbourhood forum

an elected member or appointed to school board/voluntary boards/ magistrate

a chair of a local community/ campaign group

a caseworker/pastoral worker for ward issues

an officer of local party

a manager of volunteers/delivery network

a recruiter of new activists

a thinker/innovator of policy for local group

a contributor to national local government policy

a contributor to national party political policy

a writer/designer of leaflets

a deliverer of leaflets

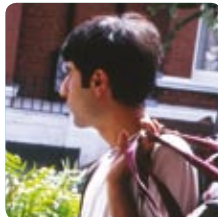
working in paid employment

a carer/have family commitments

a parent

a friend

an individual



08

'Death by PowerPoint': what tools were used?

This is directly connected to one of our key results from the survey – that members are not aware or accessing all the support and help that officers report that in theory they should have. In many cases this comes down to the resources available. Below is a list covering some of the new types of training and support available, which is improving all the time with providers such as Jobs Go Public and Learning Pool offering bespoke online tools and training materials. As we have mentioned on top of this is that the time commitments of councillors are huge so the opportunities to engage them directly and then on a regular basis about their development relies on the reputation of what's happened before and quality of materials being offered. In short if you don't get the induction right at the beginning you are likely to have a much harder struggle in member development and getting the right leadership out of your councillors from then on.

'Death by PowerPoint' – what tools were used?

1 Hold sessions at different times and repeat them to suit availability and choice of members?

yes **74%** no **26%**

2 Provide on-line information and training, such as e-learning tools?

yes **62%** no **38%**

3 Fund external providers to hold training sessions (e.g. IDeA) or bring in expert contributors to particular sessions?

yes **79%** no **21%**

4 Use interactive resources such as CD Roms and DVD?

yes **52%** no **48%**

5 Require members to lead and contribute directly to sessions and their own learning?

yes **44%** no **56%**

6 Does your council record training sessions for members to view online in their own time?

yes **18%** no **82%**

09

On going support: member development strategy

The results from our survey show a huge variety inside councils in terms of support they offer – from a notional 8% to the councils that are scoring 90% or above. This of course is directly related to the budgets and number of staff available to implement an induction programme. What is clear is the induction very quickly becomes part of an integrated member development programme – so if there is no welcome, there is not likely to be any on going help either. Many councils now encourage members to form their own steering group to oversee the member development budget and strategy. Putting members at the heart of the induction and member development is the best way to ensure you are targeting your resources efficiently.

On going member development and support

1 Achieved accreditation through the Regional and IDeA Charters for Member Development?

yes **40%** no **60%**

2 Convene a cross-party member development steering group to oversee induction and support to Members?

yes **68%** no **32%**

3 Support and fund members to attend IDeA Leadership Academy, Leadership Centre's Next Generation programme or similar?

yes **65%** no **35%**

4 Integrate the induction programme with the wider member development strategy?

yes **72%** no **28%**

10 On going strategy: review and evaluation

The only way we are going to improve our offer to people when they are elected to our democratic institutions, is if we continually review the strategies and build in evaluation and improvement into the mainstream work programme. The following results show that most, but not all councils follow through on their induction to ensure that they can offer a continually improving service to councillors. Indeed many councils (such as in the London region) have resolved to use the 21stCC tool as a way of comparing results before and after the May 2010 elections in London, to see if they can lift the overall averages.

Review and evaluation

1 Review all induction materials and support after the election and initial delivery of programme?

yes **75%** no **25%**

2 Ensure views and feedback from members is incorporated into ongoing induction plan?

yes **78%** no **22%**

Conclusions

As stated at the beginning – this guide is based on results, from both members and officers, from a tool intended to help Local Authorities improve and develop their induction programmes. Because it is still live, these results could change over time and so further breakdowns will be available over 2010. From over 140 results we can see that officers report in theory a much more comprehensive ‘offer’ than members retain or access, which is critical in thinking about using resources imaginatively and efficiently.

Moreover – councils are now more and more investing in strategies designed to ‘get to know’ their member, personally, politically, and in their wards – to maximise how the council, and conversely the member, can work together better.

Leicestershire

Casestudy

1. Why did we do it?

Immediately after an all-out election is an excellent opportunity for a council to do some serious and imaginative work with new and returning councillors in the spirit of giving them the best possible knowledge, information and tools to be the best possible 21st Century Councillors.

Leicestershire County Council is proud of its consistent and objective measures of excellence and knows that well motivated and committed councillors must be part of their success.

Working with their dedicated Democratic Services team, the Member Development Steering Group and the Leadership Centre for Local Government some fresh approaches to Induction and Learning have been designed, developed and delivered over the past year.

2. What did we do?

Some things were clear from the very earliest planning sessions. New councillors, those returning and those with experience of District but not the County Council needed:

- A first class induction programme which gives them the basic tools for the job
- A chance to really get to know their wards and divisions
- Opportunities to get to know each other in informal settings
- Some opportunities for cross-party learning and development
- A better understanding by officers and members of their different roles
- Opportunities for those who wish to take a more in depth look at their leadership roles in the wide range of settings in which councillors work
- 1 to 1 mentoring and personal development planning opportunities
- A serious and rigorous approach to evaluating the programme and taking on-board suggestions for change

The initial programmes were carefully designed to try and meet all those needs and also give the basis for future development work throughout the life of the County Council.

3. How did we do it?

We started from the premiss that old fashioned approaches in which officers decide what members need to learn simply wouldn't do. Many hours were spent in discussion and design, looking at innovative approaches to learning to ensure maximum participation by the councillors. As well as asking them what they wanted we were able to suggest some innovative approaches such as division walks, media training and community leadership development.

We also looked carefully at very specific Leicestershire issues such as:

- Community Forum structures and partnerships
- LSR-Online services
- Twin and triple hatted members
- The need for productive Opposition as well as Administration

It became clear quite early on that a substantial core group of councillors was highly motivated and committed to all parts of the programme and they served as an excellent sounding board as the programme progressed, telling us what worked best, what could be improved and what they would like in the future.

4. So what was new?

We know, of course that there are a certain number of basic things that all new councillors need to know about, such as national and local Codes of Conduct, training in quasi judicial roles, officer and member council structures and a bit of friendly local government finance. New members also need very specific information about the main service areas of the council and decision making structures.

Some things could have easily been forgotten:

- The opportunity for division walks and observation with officers and members working together to identify local issues
- Mentoring and Personal Development Plans for those who wish them
- A serious look at the skills of being an effective Opposition or Administration councillor and how best to make an impact in either of those roles outside of Cabinet
- An early look at the skills and qualities of effective scrutiny
- How councillors can best contribute to and find positive outcomes in partnership working across the county
- Inviting officers to participate in sessions where their specific expertise was invaluable such as 'A Sense of Place' and 'Working in Community Forums'
- What does community leadership really mean in our wards and divisions
- Some light-hearted and practical media training
- How councillors can really contribute to managing the performance of the council

5. What was challenging?

It wasn't at all easy to find the right balance between the things which councillors have to know and those which they want to know, and that meant some hard choices for some about how many events they could manage in a short space of time. The Autumn was a bit over-loaded, and some felt that they would like to consider some of the real Leadership issues in far greater depth than was possible in half-day sessions.

Whilst those who attended most of the programme could see real development of their skills and knowledge others who dipped in and out had a more fragmented experience.

Leicestershire councillors were more committed than those we have worked with in many other places, but there were still probably around 40% who took no part in the programme beyond those sessions which were compulsory for new members.

There was sometimes a little scepticism from service-based officers about the value of contributing to some sessions, but the results were so successful that this might not occur again.

6. What did we get from it?

The full evaluation process has shown that councillors very much enjoyed and appreciated the programme, but are happy to be positively critical in suggesting changes for the future.

I think that the programme has raised the expectation of many councillors about both the performance as councillors that they can aspire to, and the help and support that they can expect throughout a term of office. Many councillors have also been inspired to join national leadership programmes through, for example, the IDeA and the Leadership Centre.

The very thorough approach to evaluation has also ensured that Leicestershire councillors will continue to be at the heart of future planning for their own learning and development into the future.

If this is the biggest message which other councils would adopt in developing learning programmes for councillors then the outcomes will have been really successful for Leicestershire and the wider local government community.

Overall results

If you would like to complete the online tool for your authority go to www.21st.cc/tests. You can also download a the full checklist as a pdf.

Regional breakdowns including the 'top ten' authorities in each have been presented to the following Member Development Officer Networks:

London 26th November 2009

South East 4th March 2010

North West 14th April 2010

With further results due at the following MDO network meetings:

Yorkshire and Humber 18th May 2010

West Midlands 27th May 2010

East Of England 24th June 2010

East Midlands 30th June 2010

North East mid June 2010

If you have any questions about this guide, the 21st Century Councillor programme or would like us to send you the breakdown for your authority, please email Bridget@21stCenturyCouncillor.com or contact us at:

Leadership Centre for Local Government

Local Government House

Smith Square

London

SW1P 3HZ

Switch 020 7187 7388

www.localleadership.gov.uk



Local Government Association

The Local Government Association is the national voice for more than 400 local authorities in England and Wales. The LGA group comprises the LGA and five partner organisations which work together to support, promote and improve local government.

I&DEA **LACORS** **LGE**  **Local Partnerships**

Leadership Centre for Local Government
Local Government House
Smith Square
London
SW1P 3HZ
Switch 020 7187 7388
www.localleadership.gov.uk

Leadership Centre for local government

