



Local Leadership Framework for Councillors

Workbook

August 2023

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Council	Click or tap here to enter text.
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The Local Leadership Framework for Councillors



About this framework

This framework includes suggestions, prompts and further resources to help you think about the skills you use as a councillor.

We have produced this framework with the following people in mind:

- **Prospective councillors** – we hope this framework will give prospective councillors a good overview of the ways that councillors can make a difference and the skills that you might need when you get elected
- **New councillors** – we anticipate this framework will give new councillors a good starting point in their work as local leaders and help them to map out the things they might explore through induction and beyond
- **Experienced councillors** – this framework should be a useful tool for experienced councillors when they are thinking about their further development
- **Executive members, chairs and councillors in other roles** – we believe this framework will also be useful to executive members, chairs and councillors in other roles as they think about their development – many skill sets are relevant across different leadership roles, for example, within a council or within a party.

How the Local Leadership Framework for Councillors was developed

We are a research team from Riber Consultants Limited, and we developed this framework in the following stages:

- Review of relevant research and tools, such as the former LGA Political Skills Framework and the 2016 research report – [The 21st-century Councillor](#) – published by the Public Services Academy at the University of Birmingham
- Survey of councillors to which we received around 100 responses
- Three engagement events through which we had conversations with around 50 councillors
- Two roundtable events with LGA leadership experts to help us test out initial ideas.

We are grateful to our advisory group and everyone who spared time to help us – we have used many of their contributions in this framework.

Skill sets for the 21st-century councillor

The framework builds on the roles and skills set out in 'The 21st-century Councillor' research report – which sets out seven key future roles for councillors. These show how councillors are adapting to a series of new challenges such as perma-austerity, evolving citizen expectations, new technologies, different scales of working and the changing organisation of public services at local level. The leadership skills in this framework will enable councillors to fulfil the 'seven roles of the 21st-century councillor', identified in the research report namely:

- **Steward of place** – working across the local area in partnership with others
- **Advocate** – acting to represent the interests of all citizens
- **Buffer** – seeking to mitigate the impact of austerity on citizens
- **Sensemaker** – translating a shift in the role of public services and the relationship between institutions and citizen
- **Catalyst** – enabling citizens to do things for themselves, having new conversations about what is now possible
- **Entrepreneur** – working with citizens and partners to encourage local vitality and identify creative new solutions
- **Orchestrator** – helping broker relationships, work with partners and develop new connections.

Using this framework

The **Local Leadership Framework for Councillors** is intended to help you in your local leadership role as you work with local communities to make a difference. The framework has three layers:

- **Your councillor profile** – the framework positions the individual councillor in the centre and suggests that this is where any development conversation should start – with the aspirations, strengths and priorities of the person in the role
- **Foundation skills** – divided between knowledge-based and personal / practical skills, these are the essentials that councillors need to navigate their role
- **Leadership skills** – these skill sets are how councillors make the biggest difference and respond to the many challenges that they face in their communities.

Each layer is explored further in the sections that follow. There is no single right way to use the framework.

We have kept it as simple as possible so that it can be used flexibly. In the final section, we have set out some suggestions for how the framework might be used, for example as a skills scan or as part of mentoring or peer learning.

In the different sections we have included ideas and suggestions of what councillors may find helpful, based on feedback collected as part of the process of developing this framework. We have also suggested some further resources in case you want to know more. Of course, you will know best what might be useful for you.

Either way, a helpful first step might be to talk to your member support team who can let you know what resources are available from your council and signpost you to broader networks and support.

Research team

Dr Dave Mckenna

Professor Catherine Needham

Professor Catherine Mangan

Being a councillor

In this section we set the scene for the Local Leadership Framework. We think it will be helpful for prospective and new councillors, in particular. The section includes the challenges and rewards of local leadership, making a difference and the principles of public life.

The challenges and rewards of local leadership (Councillor Brigid Jones)

Local leadership has never been more important. The last few years have presented huge challenges for our communities, businesses and neighbourhoods – from the cost-of-living crisis to the war in Ukraine, all set against the backdrop of recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing impact of Brexit. Looking ahead, local government will continue to lead the response to some of the biggest challenges in our history, including tackling the climate emergency and spearheading the race to net zero.

Being a local councillor can be hugely rewarding. Councils touch every aspect of people's lives, from the cradle to the grave, and are responsible for providing over 800 different services to communities. As councillors, we can make a real difference to the communities that we serve, achieving meaningful change in areas as small as the design of a local pedestrian crossing, and as large as the transformation of entire health and social care systems. Our role is at once a huge opportunity and a huge responsibility – to improve people's lives, influence long-term policy, and make decisions that will continue to have impacts for generations to come.

However, being a councillor is also challenging, requiring levels of commitment and hard work that are often invisible to an outsider. Expectations from our residents are high – rightly so – at an increasingly difficult time of shrinking budgets and diminishing resources. As public figures who live in the communities they serve, councillors are experiencing historically high levels of abuse and intimidation, simply for carrying out their role. Women councillors, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and elected Members from Black, Asian or minoritised ethnic heritage face additional structural barriers and inequalities.

Being an effective local leader requires a unique combination of knowledge, skills and experience rarely seen in other (paid) roles. We are experts in our local areas and the issues that matter to our residents; we oversee multi-million pound tender processes and programmes; we are corporate parents for thousands of our most vulnerable children and young people. To thrive, and not simply survive, we must also develop our own personal resilience and practices of self-care, striving for a positive work-life balance.

It is rare to find training and development resources that truly encompass all the aspects of being a councillor. We hope that councillors find this Local Leadership Framework a supportive, useful resource that helps to guide their development and growth as a local leader.

Councillor Brigid Jones is the Deputy Leader of Birmingham City Council, and is the Lead Member for Leadership on the LGA's Improvement and Innovation Board

Making a difference

The purpose of this framework is to help you to use your role as a local leader to make a difference and to help you to think about the difference you would like to make.

In our engagement events and survey, councillors gave us examples of the changes they want to make. Councillors told us they wanted to:

- speak for individuals who need help from the council and support them to find a solution
- be an effective voice to national government and feed into national policy-making
- influence and change policy at all levels of their council
- get people together and encourage them to work better together for the benefit of the community
- encourage residents to have more of a say in local decision-making and make politics part of day-to-day conversations
- cut through red tape and bureaucracy
- support community groups and businesses to thrive
- get changes made that benefit communities.

As a councillor, you work with local communities to make a difference by engaging in a range of different activities. Depending on your role and the difference you want to make, you can choose to focus on some activities more than on others.

Councillor activities include (but are not limited to):

- council business and meetings
- casework
- community projects
- sitting on external bodies
- partnership meetings
- local campaigns
- responding to emergencies and crises.

The principles of public life

As a councillor, you will be required to adhere to your council's agreed code of conduct for councillors. Each council adopts its own code, but it must be based on the Committee on Standards in Public Life's seven principles of public life. These principles were developed by the Nolan Committee, which looked at how to improve ethical standards in public life and are often referred to as the 'Nolan principles'. They apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder.

New councillors should make themselves familiar with the principles. Experienced councillors should also review them regularly.

Holders of public office should uphold the following seven principles:

- **selflessness** – holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest
- **integrity** – holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work – they should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends – they must declare and resolve any interests and relationships
- **objectivity** – holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias
- **accountability** – holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this openness – holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for doing so
- **honesty** – holders of public office should be truthful
- **leadership** – holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour – they should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Councillor code of conduct

All councils are required to have a councillor code of conduct and all councillors should be familiar with the councillor code of conduct for their council.

Learn more

- [Model Councillor Code of Conduct](#) | Local Government Association

Notes

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Your councillor profile

There is no single right way to be a councillor. Everyone brings different things to the role and everyone's approach is unique. When developing as a local leader, it's helpful to practice self-awareness, to know your strengths and values, and to use this understanding to help you to thrive and develop.

The starting point for the **Local Leadership Framework for Councillors**, therefore, is the councillor profile – a short, positive summary of the most important things about you as a councillor, on a single page. This idea is adapted from the 'one-page profile' – a tool now used widely in education, health, social care and personal development.

Developing your councillor profile can help you to be clear about how you approach the role and provide you with insights into how you work. Sharing your councillor profile can help others understand you better and work with you more effectively.

You can see an example of a councillor profile later in this workbook.

You could consider the following four questions for your profile:

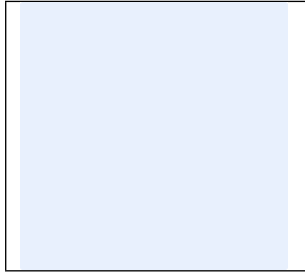
- What difference do I hope to make as a councillor?
- What do people appreciate about me as a councillor?
- What is important to me to me as a councillor?
- How can I be supported well in my councillor work?

My councillor profile

Name

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Image (optional)



What difference do I hope to make as a councillor?

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What do people appreciate about me as a councillor?

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What is important to me as a councillor?

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How can I be supported well in my councillor work?

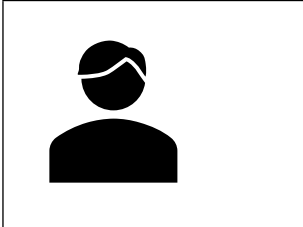
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Example councillor profile

Name

Councillor Smith

Image (optional)



What difference do I hope to make as a councillor?

- Helping residents to access services.
- Being a voice for residents in the council.
- Making changes to policies – particularly on climate change.
- Bringing people and groups together to clean up the high street.
- Cutting through red tape and bureaucracy.

What do people appreciate about me as a councillor?

- I do the things I say I will.
- I am persistent in following up on issues for residents.
- I always try and see the other point of view.
- I am not always too serious.
- I am a good listener and I make time for people.

What is important to me to me as a councillor?

- Feel like I've made a difference.
- See that everyone is respected.
- Have a chance to talk things through.
- Am listened to.
- Have time to unwind away from the council.
- Learn new things.

How can I be supported well in my councillor work?

- Let me know what's happening even if it's bad news – I don't like surprises.
- Please be patient if I ask a lot of questions – I'm checking I understand the situation.
- Keep things simple if you can – and don't assume I understand the jargon or acronyms.
- I'm happy to meet face to face or to work via email or Facebook.

Foundation skill sets

The foundation skills sets are the skills that every councillor needs regardless of role. There are two types of foundation skills:

- Knowledge-based skills
- Personal / practical skills.

Knowledge-based skills

There are some things that councillors 'need to know' to help them work effectively. The key skill here is knowledge acquisition – you don't need to know everything as a councillor; but, knowing where to go can be important.

For ideas on assessing and developing this skill, see the **Using this framework** section below.

Types of knowledge essential for councillors include:

- **Council knowledge** – about meetings, councillor code of conduct, the constitution and committee roles, performance data, scrutiny reviews, and so on
- **Understanding the role of officers** – including key statutory roles such as the monitoring officer, for example
- **Subject knowledge** – for example, housing, education, or the planning system
- **System knowledge** – 'how things work around here' and how to get things done
- **Understanding council finances** – the commercial context, how the budget works and other funding systems, for example, health
- **Knowing the local area you represent**
- **Keeping up to date** – 'having a finger on the pulse' and using horizon-scanning to gain knowledge of future events.

Learn more

- [Becoming a councillor](#) | Local Government Association
- [Councillor and officer development](#) | Local Government Association
- [Councillor hub](#) | Local Government Association
- [Councillor e-learning modules on a range of key topics](#) | Local Government Association
- ['Leadership Essentials' councillor training](#) | Local Government Association
- [LG Inform – access data on your local area with our data benchmarking tool](#) | Local Government Association
- Your council will provide training on the council's code of conduct and constitution.

Personal / practical skills

There are many personal and practical skills that people have before they become a councillor that help them in their councillor role. However, being a councillor involves unique and changing pressures that can affect personal wellbeing and confidence. It is important, therefore, to think about how you manage your role as a councillor in order to be most effective as a local leader.

Personal and practical skills useful for councillors:

- Personal resilience (for example, stress management)
- Personal safety
- Active listening
- Communication skills (for example, public speaking and working with different types of media)
- Working with officers
- Making use of information, data and analysis
- Meeting skills (for example, digital meeting skills and chairing)
- Being organised and keeping track of open issues
- Good time management and casework management
- Understanding what activities to prioritise and how to spend time to make the most impact
- Taking advantage of learning and development opportunities including mentoring and peer support networks.

For ideas on assessing and developing these skills, see the **Using this framework** section below.

Learn more

- [Stress management and personal resilience \(councillor workbook\)](#) | Local Government Association
- [The Resilience Framework](#) | Boingboing (resilience research and practice community)
- [Councillor e-learning modules on a range of key topics](#) | Local Government Association
- [Handling abuse and intimidation](#) | Local Government Association

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Local leadership skill sets

Alongside the foundational skills that we've outlined, there are skills that, when grouped together, reflect what it means to be a local leader specifically. Being a local leader means working with local communities to make a difference. It means using soft skills and good relationships to get things done.

This list of local leadership skill sets builds on previous frameworks and the research for this framework:

- **network-building** – making the connections that others can't, bringing people together to solve problems they might not solve alone
- **political skills** – demonstrating good political awareness and understanding when working to achieve goals
- **resident engagement** – keeping up to date with local concerns and understanding local ambitions for the area, ensuring that all voices are heard
- **communicating with the community** – regular and effective communication with all parts of the community, using a range of different methods
- **influencing** – employing skills of negotiation and diplomacy to help get things done
- **challenging** – contributing to good governance, inside and outside the council, by acting as a critical friend and challenging discriminatory language or behaviour
- **bringing people together** – helping to resolve conflicts in the community and to solve problems
- **holding difficult conversations** – supporting residents, or people using services, who have complex, emotional or distressing issues.

We look at each of these skill sets in more detail below.

Learn more

- [Councillor workbooks on a range of key topics](#) | Local Government Association
- [Councillor e-learning modules on a range of key topics](#) | Local Government Association
- [Community leadership \(councillor workbook\)](#) | Local Government Association
- [The 21st-century Councillor](#) | Public Service Academy, University of Birmingham
- [Debate Not Hate campaign](#) | Local Government Association

Network-building

Councillors are uniquely placed to be connectors across the whole system within a locality, encompassing wider partner organisations. By bringing together officers, partners and the public, councillors can help find solutions to challenges that might not be obvious to individuals.

Network-building is key to councillors' **orchestrator role** because they help to broker relationships, work with partners and develop new connections.

Some examples of what councillors say helps them to make a difference

- “Working hard to support residents and link community groups, parish councils and the county council.”
- “Engaging with local people and organisations to work for the residents.”
- “Volunteering (for example, ‘in our local larder’) gives new connections with residents and partner agencies.”
- “Knowing what needs changing, make connections with other organisations to work in partnership.”
- “Being a 'super-connector', building relationships with officers, members and community.”
- “Working with others to change a housing association's plans for a site within the area.”

Network-building skills that you might find useful

- Working in formal partnership structures.
- Interpersonal skills (to work collaboratively to achieve shared goals, demonstrate trust and humility).
- Relationship-building across different sectors.
- Having a clear, strategic view of the full range of services in the community.
- Maintaining key relationships with officers, for example the monitoring officer.
- Network mapping to identify strengths and gaps.
- Engaging and galvanising partners..

For ideas on assessing and developing these skills, see the **Using this framework** section below.

Learn more

- [Being an effective ward councillor \(councillor workbook\)](#) | Local Government Association
- [LG Inform \(data benchmarking platform\)](#) | Local Government Association
- [Building stronger communities](#) | Local Government Association

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Political skills

Councillors work within a political environment and, so, they need to demonstrate political awareness and understanding when they are working to achieve their goals. Councillors also need to promote a healthy local democracy, civility in public life, and community engagement with local politics.

Political skills are key to councillors' **steward of place role** as they work across their local area in partnership with others.

Some examples of what councillors say helps them to make a difference

- “Collaborating with other parties for change, for example, health scrutiny.”
- “Valuing all councillors, of whatever party label, as helpful contributors to decisions.”
- “Liaising with other parts of the council to get things done.”
- “Encouraging all residents to have more of a say in local decision-making and making politics part of day-to-day conversations.”
- “Engaging people who might not otherwise think that politics or the workings of local government is for them.”

Political skills that you might find useful

- Working across boundaries – with MPs and representatives from other bodies, and across political divides.
- Communicating values and a political vision.
- Promoting public participation in local issues and politics.
- Balancing the needs of local people, the council and the party group (if a party member).
- Maintaining key relationships with officers, for example, the monitoring officer
- Lobbying and engaging with national policy-making.
- Understanding accountability (for example, for key services which may sit with external partners, or with other tiers of government such as a combined authority).

For ideas on assessing and developing these skills, see the ‘**Using this framework**’ section below.

Learn more

- [Political groups](#) | Local Government Association
- [Support for councillors](#) | Local Government Association
- [Political leadership development programmes](#) | Local Government Association
- ['New challenges, new conversations' guide to community engagement](#) | Local Government Association

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Community engagement

Engaging with the community is a key aspect of local leadership as it helps councillors to keep up to date with local concerns and understand local needs. As local leaders, councillors use a variety of consultation and engagement methods to reach all parts of the community and to hear multiple viewpoints. The aim is to effectively represent all voices within the local community, irrespective of their political views.

Community engagement is key to councillors' **advocate role** because they act to represent the interests of all residents.

Some examples of what councillors say helps them to make a difference

- "Talking to residents as much as possible."
- "Surgeries, attendance at all parish meetings and local events."
- "Good local networks / structures including residents' groups, local boards and community partnerships."
- "Public meetings where we can learn what is important to residents."
- "Visiting groups in the ward to identify needs or issues".

Community engagement skills that you might find useful

- Asking the right questions.
- Facilitating meetings.
- Social media skills.
- Digital engagement.
- Engaging seldom-heard groups.
- Engaging young people.
- Working with diverse communities.

For ideas on assessing and developing these skills, see the **Using this framework** section below.

Learn more

- [Neighbourhood and community engagement \(councillor workbook\)](#) | Local Government Association
- [Engaging with young people \(councillor workbook\)](#) | Local Government Association
- ['New challenges, new conversations' guide to community engagement](#) | Local Government Association
- [Social media guidance for councillors](#) | Local Government Association
- [Building stronger communities](#) | Local Government Association

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Communicating with the community

Regular and effective communication with all parts of the community, using a range of different methods, is a key element of the councillor role. As local leaders, councillors share important messages with residents and help people to make sense of new challenges and initiatives.

Communicating with local communities is key to councillors' **sensemaker role** because they help residents to understand changes in the role of public services and the relationship between institutions and residents.

Some examples of what councillors say helps them to make a difference

- "Prioritising good communications with ward residents in order to give them useful and helpful information."
- "Continuing to communicate with all residents through regular newsletters."
- "Circulating through the area helpful information that comes our way."
- "Explaining to local residents what the council is doing (or not able to do) and why."
- "Sharing important community information."

Communications skills that you might find useful

- Public speaking.
- Working with the mainstream media.
- Social media and digital communications.
- Narrative and storytelling.

For ideas on assessing and developing these skills, see the **Using this framework** section below.

Learn more

- [Councillor e-learning modules on a range of key topics](#) | Local Government Association
- [Social media guidance for councillors](#) | Local Government Association
- ['New challenges, new conversations' guide to community engagement](#) | Local Government Association

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Influencing

Councillors often need to employ skills of negotiation and diplomacy to help get things done on behalf of residents. This is particularly true in partnership settings where local leaders need to find ways to share power and resources. Similarly, in non-executive roles, councillors must draw on 'soft power' through the strength of their relationships and the credibility of their contributions to meetings.

Influencing is a key skill in councillors' **advocate role** because they represent the interests of individuals and communities – within their councils and to partner organisations.

Some examples of what councillors say helps them to make a difference

- "Contributing constructively to discussion of live issues such as planning applications at local and planning committee."
- "Raising issues in cabinet and council and looking for policy and process improvements."
- "Representing the views of residents when dealing with outside bodies."
- "Bringing residents' issues to committee."

Skills for influencing that you might find useful

- Negotiation.
- Diplomacy / interpersonal skills.
- Listening.
- Analysis and information skills.
- Constructive meeting contributions.
- Questioning.

For ideas on assessing and developing these skills, see the **Using this framework** section below.

Learn more

- [Influencing skills \(councillor workbook\)](#) | Local Government Association
- [Principled negotiation](#) | Harvard Law School
- [Listening skills](#) | Samaritans

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Challenging

Councillors contribute to good governance, inside and outside their councils, by acting as a critical friend and inviting decision makers to give a public account of their plans and performance. This involves providing constructive feedback and playing 'devil's advocate'. To challenge effectively, councillors need to be able to analyse information and make concise and meaningful contributions.

Challenging is a key skill in councillors' **buffer role**, for example, when they seek to mitigate the impact of austerity on residents by raising the issues faced by residents within their councils and to other service providers.

Some examples of what councillors say helps them to make a difference

- "Asking important questions at scrutiny panels."
- "Effectively scrutinising council initiatives."
- "Successfully challenging council department decisions on residents' behalf."
- "Being persistent."
- "Guiding residents regarding petitions and presenting these to full council and cabinet."
- "Challenging toxic culture and modelling positive behaviour."

Skills for challenging that you might find useful

- Constructive feedback.
- Interpersonal skills, such as communicating and interacting positively with people.
- Listening.
- Analysis, data and information skills, including skills in financial oversight.
- Constructive meeting contributions.
- Questioning.

For ideas on assessing and developing these skills, see the **Using this framework** section below.

Learn more

- [Scrutiny \(councillor workbook\)](#) | Local Government Association
- [Centre for Governance and Scrutiny](#)
- [Listening skills](#) | Samaritans

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Bringing people together

Local leaders will often become aware when there are tensions between different parts of the community they represent. At the same time, councillors may want to bring people together to solve a particular problem. Either way, councillors will need to demonstrate a good understanding of what is happening, appreciate different viewpoints and be able to help people to work together for the benefit of all.

Bringing people together is a key skill in councillors' **entrepreneur role**, for example, when councillors work with residents and partners to encourage local vitality and develop new solutions

Some examples of what councillors say helps them to make a difference

- “Bringing together community groups, local authorities and other partners to facilitate positive local change.”
- “Meeting regularly with local police.”
- “Working with local heritage groups in the development of an overall borough strategy”
- “Helping groups to raise funds and given money to create solutions”
- “Promoting... and encouraging black, Asian and minority ethnic communities to engage in the political process.”

Skills for bringing people together that you might find useful include

- Interpersonal skills.
- Facilitation and capacity-building.
- Conflict resolution.
- Mediation.
- Listening.
- Solutions-focused questioning.

For ideas on assessing and developing these skills, see the **Using this framework** section below.

Learn more

- [Facilitation and conflict resolution \(councillor workbook\)](#) | Local Government Association
- [Building stronger communities](#) | Local Government Association
- [Community cohesion, inclusion and equality](#) | Local Government Association
- [Listening skills](#) | Samaritans

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Having difficult conversations

Councillors may often find themselves talking to residents, or people using services, who have complex, emotional or distressing issues to deal with. These difficult conversations require local leaders to provide time, attention and respect and to demonstrate good listening skills. Councillors can also help by making referrals in a sensitive way.

Holding difficult conversations is a key skill in councillors' **catalyst role** because they help residents to do things for themselves, signpost sensitively and have conversations about what might be possible.

Some examples of what councillors say helps them to make a difference

- “Being approachable and visible, showing solidarity, supporting and linking them to others.”
- “Signposting residents in need and supporting them through difficult times such as referring people struggling with the cost of living crisis to local resources and council services.”
- “Directing residents to relevant contacts or information and escalating their issues when required.”
- “Just 'be there'.”

Skills for holding difficult conversations that you might find useful

- Interpersonal skills.
- Listening.
- Sensitive signposting.
- Empathy – solutions-focused questioning.

For ideas on assessing and developing these skills, see the **Using this framework** section below.

Learn more

- [Supporting residents with complex issues \(councillor workbook\)](#) | Local Government Association
- [Listening skills](#) | Samaritans
- [Conversations with vulnerable people](#) | Samaritans

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Using this framework

There is no single correct way to use this framework. You will know what works best for you and your council. We suggest you start with the one-page profile before moving on to reviewing your foundation and leadership skills.

Here we offer some suggestions that you might find useful in doing that. While this framework can be used for self-reflection in a number of different ways, we know that many councillors find it helpful to discuss these things with others – either as a one-to-one conversation or as part of a group. The framework might also be used strategically to support member development.

Skills scan

A skills scan is often used when someone starts a new role or job. The purpose is to identify a starting point for learning and development by working through a comprehensive list of required skills.

This framework can be used in the same way. Review the foundation and leadership skills and consider each of the eight local leadership skills sets in turn.

For each, decide whether they are:

- S – strength
- D – area for development
- K – need to know more
- N – not important for me.

This could be a start to a conversation about what might be the next steps.

Mentoring

Many councillors find mentoring helpful. A mentor could be another councillor or an officer who, from their experience, can communicate what the councillor role is as well as its benefits. They can provide both support and challenge and help you to work through issues professionally and confidentially.

We offer councillor mentoring as part of our [peer-supported improvement programmes](#).

This framework can be used as part of mentoring conversations – as a checklist or a prompt for discussion.

Councillor development strategy

If the council has a councillor development strategy, then the framework can be used as part of that in order to map out, corporately, areas of strength, areas of weakness and areas for development in terms of local leadership skills.

[Writing a councillor development strategy](#)

Scales

Scales is a simple solutions-focused technique described by BRIEF Solutions. It can be used for self-reflection or as part of a coaching conversation. This technique can help you to notice what you are already doing well, build confidence, spark new ideas and support improvement.

One version works like this:

- Choose a skill set or skill that you would like to work on
- Think of a scale where 10 is the best you could possibly be and zero the complete opposite – where would you say you are on that scale?
- Spend a timed five minutes making a list of all the things, however small, that you do that made your score that high and not lower – if you run out of things gently ask, ‘what else?’ and keep the list going
- Review your list and see what stands out – what did you realise as a result of using this technique and what new ideas do you have?

Training needs analysis

Member support teams will often undertake a training needs analysis, in other words, research into the knowledge and skills that members have that can be used to help plan training programmes and availability.

The **Local Leadership Framework for Councillors** can be used to help frame this analysis and provide a structure for surveys and interviews, for example.

Councillor induction

Induction programmes are designed by member support teams to ensure that new councillors have everything they need to get started in their councillor role.

The **Local Leadership Framework for Councillors** can be used as a checklist to help with the design of induction programmes, particularly as it draws attention to the foundation knowledge and skills that new councillors will need.

Other aspects of councillor induction that programme designers have found helpful include:

- Recognising the knowledge and skills that new councillors bring with them

from other roles

- An interactive approach that provides new councillors with opportunities to engage with each other and experienced councillors
- Involving experienced councillors in the process to share knowledge and provide support and encouragement
- Taking a 'just-in-time' approach so that new councillors receive training just as they need it, for example, scrutiny training just before their first scrutiny meeting.

Self-reflective framework

The Political Skills Framework, produced by the LGA in 2013, invited councillors to work through a set of core skills using a framework for self-reflection. Many councillors found this really helpful, and you can use the same approach with this framework.

Choose one of the skill sets, perhaps one that you personally feel it would be helpful to look at, and work through the following questions, jotting down the answers as you go.

- What are my particular strengths for this skill set?
- What are the examples of things I've done over the past year that illustrate these strengths?
- How confident do I feel about each of the skills listed for this skill set?
- Which skills would I like to improve and how?

Continuing professional development

Continuing professional development (CPD), refers to the activities undertaken, both formal and informal, to gain skills and experience for a particular role. Usually this is a structured process, which involves regular conversations with a supervisor and includes the recording, tracking and review of any relevant activities. You may already be familiar with CPD for a role outside of the council.

Councils may provide support for CPD specifically aimed at councillors, in which case this framework might be used to structure a development plan or as an agenda for a development meeting.

Coaching

Many people find it helpful to employ a coach to help them with their professional career and the same is true of being a councillor. Different coaches have different approaches, and you should take time to find one who is right for you, one who has the right qualifications and one who you feel comfortable with. This is why, typically, people will have taster sessions with a few coaches before deciding who is right for them.

Some coaches will specialise in working with councillors although many will have a generic approach that will work equally well with the councillor role. Either way, you can share this framework with your coach and see if it might be a useful focus for your conversations.

Peer networking

Many councillors tell us that one of the most helpful ways to develop in their role is by talking with other councillors, particularly those from other councils.

If it's helpful, you can use this framework to provide conversation prompts when networking with peers.

One suggestion is to choose a skill set and ask each other to 'talk about a time when you have used this skill set and been pleased with how things have turned out'. Follow up by finding out more about what happened and what helped things to go well.

We provide peer networking opportunities relating to affinity groups, leadership positions and subject areas for local government:

- ['Focus on Leadership' training series for councillors](#) | Local Government Association
- [Leadership Academy](#) | Local Government Association
- ['Leadership Essentials' training series for councillors](#) | Local Government Association

Your Local Leadership Framework for Councillors

How do you, or your council, plan to use the Local Leadership Framework for Councillors?

- Skills scan
- Mentoring
- Councillor development strategy
- Training needs analysis
- Councillor induction
- Self-reflective framework
- Continuing professional development (CPD)
- Coaching
- Peer networking

Notes

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