



governance
international[®]
Achieving citizen outcomes

nilga
northern ireland
local government association

NILGA

Leadership Development Programme for Councillors 2026



NILGA

web: www.nilga.org

X: [@NI_LGA](#)

in: uk.linkedin.com/company/nilga

NILGA Leadership Development Programme for Councillors 2026

What is this programme about?

The NILGA Leadership Development Programme provides a unique training and development experience for councillors in Northern Ireland to help them address the challenges of their role.

The programme is based on a tested and highly accessible model, which helps councillors to improve their understanding of:

- **Context:** how to adapt their leadership styles and practices to the context and challenges of their own place, people and systems.
- **Theory:** what knowledge, skills and capabilities they need to be effective, based on rigorous conceptual and theoretical frameworks.
- **Practice:** how to increase their personal resilience and improve their practical response to challenges.

The programme therefore enhances councillors' strategic leadership and decision-making skills, making more effective their Council role, community champion activities and 'personal brand'.

How will this programme benefit me?

The programme will help you to develop the practical skills necessary to be a more effective councillor, to highlight what roles you currently play and should look to play in the future, and to overcome the major challenges and barriers you face in playing these roles.

You will have the chance to catch up with the latest thinking on local government leadership and to develop new approaches to your work as a councillor.

The Programme is deliberately ambitious – it aims to enable you to take a strategic approach to identifying, balancing and addressing the needs in your local area and making more effective use of the assets of local residents, community groups, local business, your political party (if you belong to one) and the Council.

The programme is also designed to help you to deal successfully with the operational problems faced by your constituents. Case studies and discussions with visiting speakers who have directly relevant experience of the issues will introduce new approaches, so that you are assisted to think and act differently and have more impact in tackling the problems you face.

Finally, the programme is CPD-accredited, so upon completion you will accumulate CPD credits to demonstrate your achievement.

Programme of workshops

Modules

- **Module 1:** Programme Induction The Role of the Councillor
- **Module 2:** Leadership of Your Area
- **Module 3:** Leadership of Your Community
- **Module 4:** Leadership with Partners – We're All in This Together
- **Module 5:** Leadership of Place
- **Module 6:** Leading the Improvement of Outcomes
- **Module 7:** Leading the Improvement of Efficiency and Service Delivery
- **Module 8:** Developing Your Future Leadership Role

During the eight modules, we will be exploring the following knowledge and skill sets – and you will have a chance to identify your own strengths and 'learning opportunities' in relation to each of these:

- Local leadership (**All Modules**)
- Political understanding (**Modules 1, 2 and 5**)
- Partnership working (**Modules 3, 4 and 5**)
- Effective communication for influence (**Modules 3 and 7**)
- Scrutiny and challenge (**Modules 2 and 6**)
- Regulating and monitoring (**Module 6**)
- Effective use of digital technologies and social media (**Module 7**)
- Personal resilience (**Module 8**)

What commitment will the programme entail from me?

You will be expected to attend eight 3-hour workshops over 8 months, beginning 23rd January 2026, preparation is required for each workshop (reading a short article or blog and preparing the answer to some questions relevant to the session). You will then gain CPD credits for your attendance. In addition, you will get 12 extra CPD credits if you make a short presentation in one of the final workshops, focusing on how you are improving your leadership in line with the lessons you have learnt from the programme.

What other participants have gained

NILGA believes this programme brings major benefits for all participants. And previous participants agree here are some comments from councillors who participated in previous programmes:

"The programme has been brilliant from start to finish, I have learnt a lot from it and from that learning I can actually make better decisions and get more involved in my role as a Councillor as I no longer shy away from the big decisions."

"The use of data sources and the approach of identifying key skills in people where I do not have the strength in such. Also, the continual developing and learning in myself has been a great asset in both council and my professional role."

"As a newly elected councillor I am still very much learning in the role. Content in the Programme helped me gain a better understanding of process and how to achieve outcomes."

"... pushed me to make me even more self-aware ..., especially of my leadership style and how best to utilise this in different groups and situations. Particularly the power of influence and not control!"

"I found the course informative, and it helped me to understand my role as a Councillor and leader in my community. It was also really good to hear experiences and tips from Councillors in other areas."

Costing Estimate

The cost for the overall Programme, based on 2023-24 delivery and current forecasted requirements, is approximately £14,600 +VAT. Individual participant cost will be subject to the overall number of the cohort nominated for the Leadership Programme; based on a cohort of 20, we can provide an indicative cost of £730 +VAT.

There will be an opportunity for those Councillors who are interested in and committed to achieving CPD accreditation from the CPD Standards Office. This will involve additional costs to the figure provided above - indicative costs at this stage are a further £590 +VAT. Those who wish to register and commit to CPD accreditation will have a deadline within which to do so (typically, at the end of the second module).

**For more information and registration details, please contact Fiona Douglas,
NILGA Regional Development Manager, at f.douglas@nilga.org**