



CHIEF EXECUTIVES – LEADERS: WHAT YOU REALLY THINK



Leadership Centre poll reveals a healthy appetite for leadership development

A MORI survey of 100 chief executives and 100 leaders tell us what they really think

Stop an ordinary member of the public in the street and ask them to nominate the leader they admire most in the country and you'd be hard pressed to hear a name from local government.

That is not to say there aren't any figures that have captured the imagination and achieved great things within their local authority area. But leaders in local government are simply less visible than in many other sectors. What's more, in comparison to the police and the NHS, the public have far less trust in local government.

Yet the leadership of local government is central to the government's vision for communities. In its strategy document *Vibrant Local Leadership*, the ODPM's vision of a flourishing, fair society where people have a high quality of life and good life chances, is intrinsically dependent on the local leadership provided by councils.

Effective local leadership, it states, allows a locality to identify its needs and route a map to move forward. And continual improvement requires strong and effective leadership.

The prominence of the leadership agenda is further boosted by the government's 10 year strategy for local government, the Efficiency Review, the Sustainable Communities Plan, the integration of children's services, emerging proposals for older people, public health, citizen-focused policing, and personalisation and choice across all public services.

So no longer can the development of leadership in local government be neglected.

The focus of developing leadership skills in local government – as set out in the Leadership Development Commission's strategy – paved the way for the emergence of the Leadership Centre for Local Government to take on this pivotal role.

Leadership Centre poll reveals a healthy appetite for leadership development

It is in this context that we sought to benchmark the prevailing views and climate in which the Leadership Centre will operate as a catalyst for equipping leaders and chief executives with the skills to transform their local communities.

In the first of a series of annual polls, we commissioned a MORI survey this summer in which researchers spoke to 100 chief executives and 100 leaders from single tier authorities and county councils to assess their awareness of leadership development and understand their priorities and concerns.

The poll follows neatly on from the recent MORI survey charting the drivers of reputation in local government and its correlating effect on public attitudes. In general local councils were poorly rated by their publics – adjectives included the following: ‘distant’, ‘high council tax’, ‘anonymous’, ‘faceless’, ‘bureaucratic’, ‘ineffective’ and ‘wasteful’.

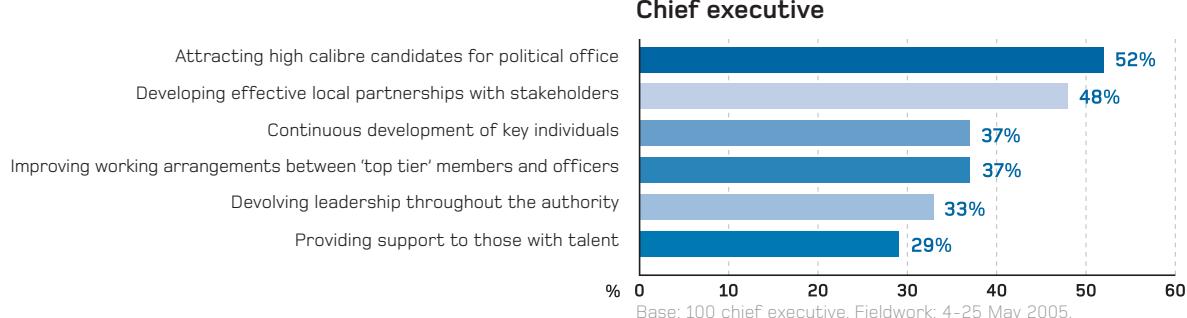
Patently some authorities have a very long way to go to persuade their communities if the government’s vision of vibrant local leadership is ever to come to fruition.

In this context, the results of our poll prove to be interesting reading and have helped to shape our work.

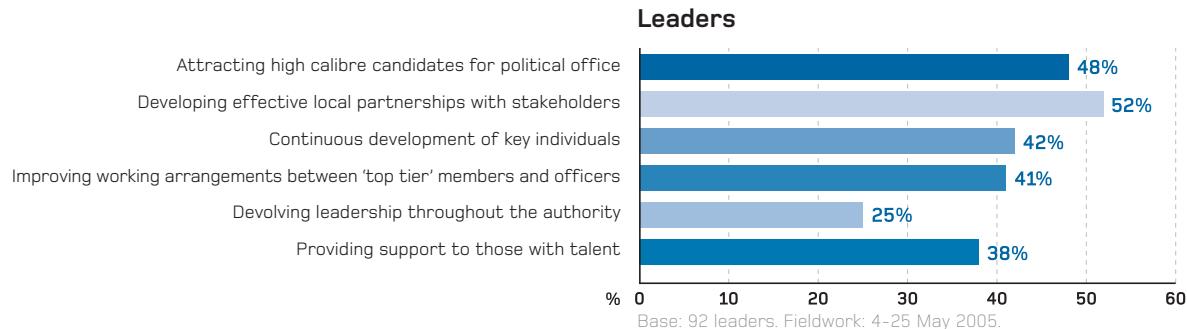
Attracting the next generation of politicians

Improving the skills of today's members and attracting high calibre candidates to stand as councillors in the future are among the most important concerns for the present leaders in local government.

Q Thinking about the following leadership challenges facing local authorities, how important, if at all, is it in your authority to build capacity in each of these areas?



Fifty two per cent of chief executives named this as their number one priority.



Forty eight per cent of leaders named attracting high calibre candidates to political office as their number one priority.

These results vividly demonstrate an anxiety around attracting, retaining and nurturing political talent. Another clear concern that both chief executives and leaders share is the need to develop local partnerships with

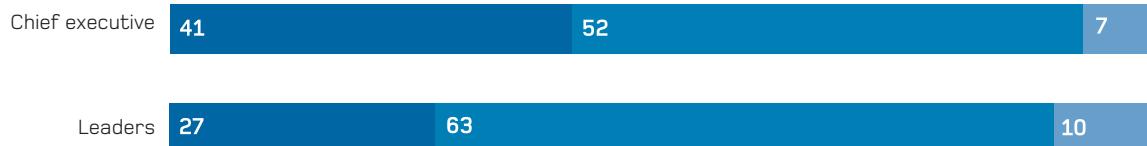
stakeholders. This reflects an acute awareness of the changing state of local governance and an understanding that different skills may be required in the future.

Honing members' skills

A staggering 91 per cent of respondents thought their local authority still needed to improve leadership capacity and skills among members – a serious indicator perhaps of this hitherto neglected area of leadership development.

Q Still thinking about your own authority, how much do you think you need to improve leadership capacity and skills among a) members and b) officers?

a) Members



b) Officers



Base: 100 chief executives; 92 leaders. Fieldwork: 4-25 May 2005.

And they still have a lot to do in improving leadership capacity and skills among officers (85 per cent for officers).

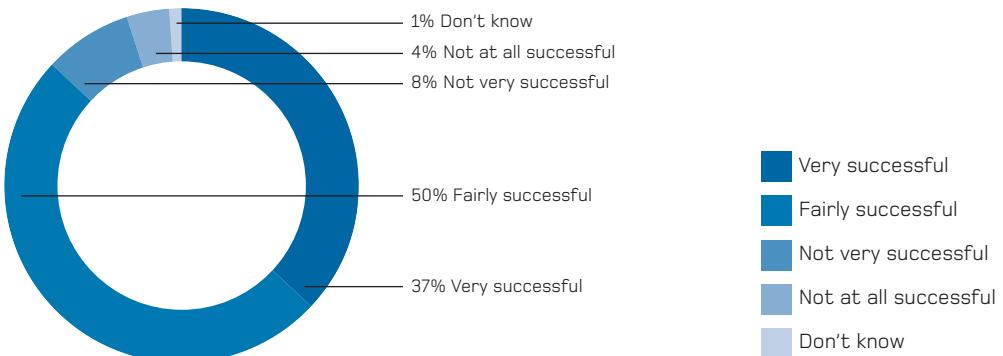
- A great deal
- A fair amount
- Not very much
- Not at all

Developing leadership capacity

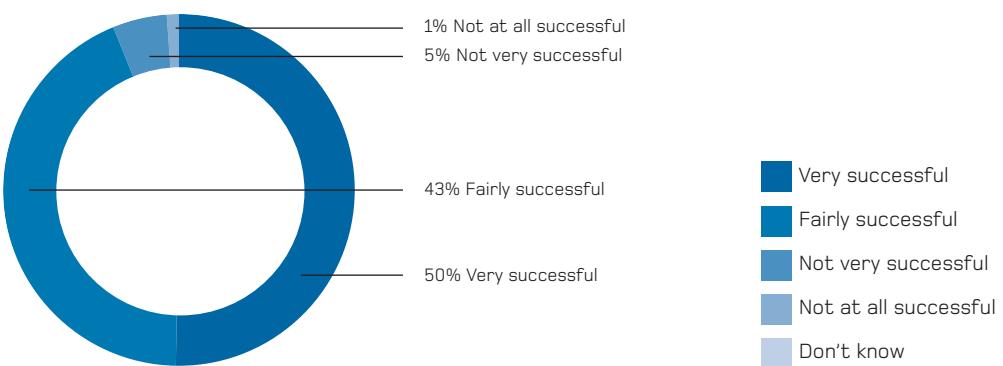
The survey gives some telling insights into the state of leadership development in local authorities in England. In terms of developing the leadership capacity of their organisations, most leaders and chief executives believe they are already fairly successful in improving the performance of top people in their authority over the past few years (90 per cent say fairly or very successful).

Q In your opinion, how successful or unsuccessful has your authority been in further improving the performance of its top people over the last few years?

Chief executive



Leaders

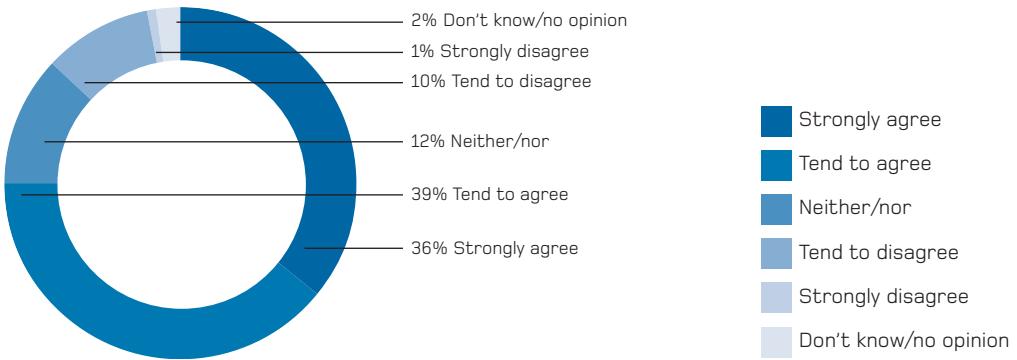


Leadership Centre lights the way

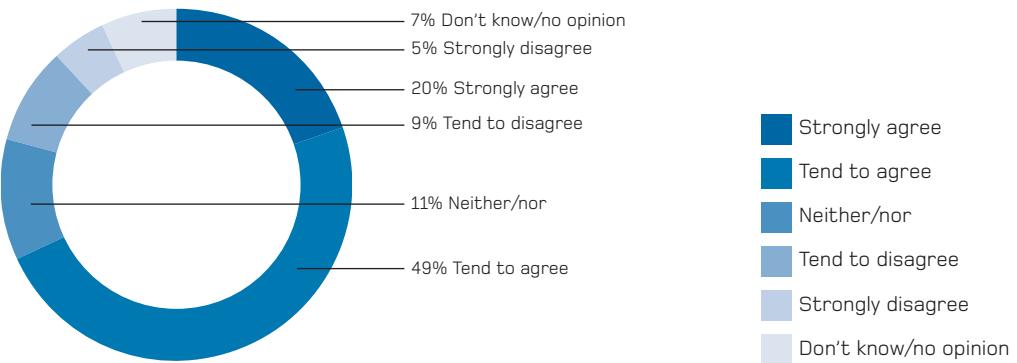
And a significant proportion – 72 per cent – agree the Leadership Centre can make a good contribution to the improvement of political leadership.

Q To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement about the Leadership Centre? I believe the Leadership Centre has the opportunity to make a significant contribution to the improvement of political leadership across the sector.

Chief executive



Leaders



Base: 100 chief
executives; 92 leaders.

Fieldwork: 4-25 May 2005.

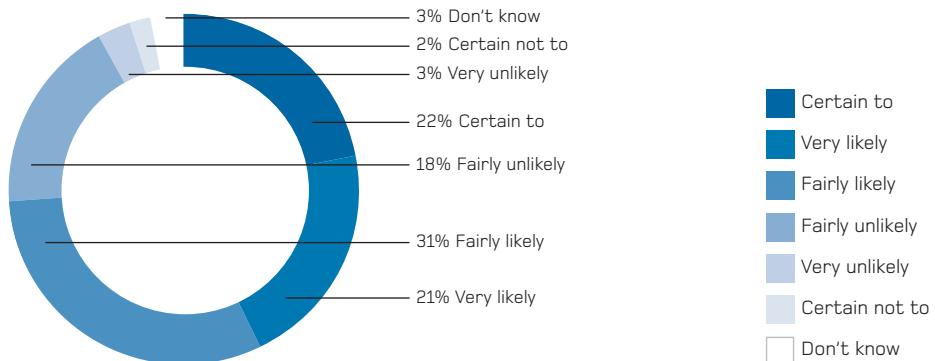
Leadership Centre lights the way

The survey demonstrates the Leadership Centre has already started to make an impact, with at least two thirds of leaders and chief executives already having heard quite a lot about it. There's obviously a considerable appetite for the services of the Leadership Centre, with two thirds of those responding believing it is very important - if not essential - to have an organisation that is dedicated to improving leadership capacity across local government.

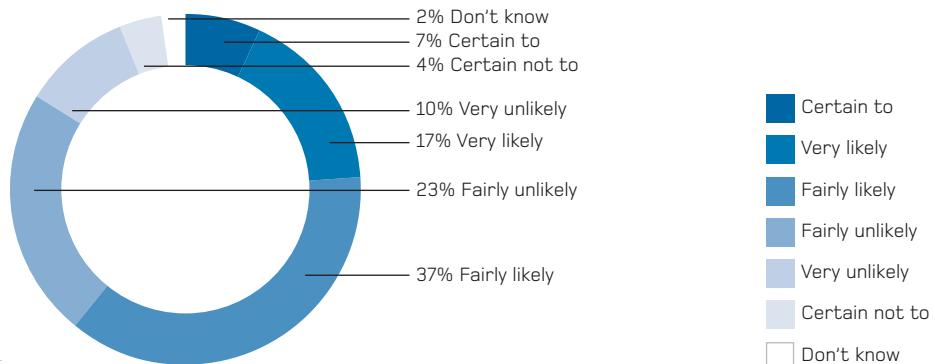
Similarly two thirds of respondents believe themselves likely or certain to approach the Leadership Centre for advice and information over the next 12 months.

Q How likely would you be to consider seeking leadership advice and information from the LCLG in the next 12 months?

Chief executive



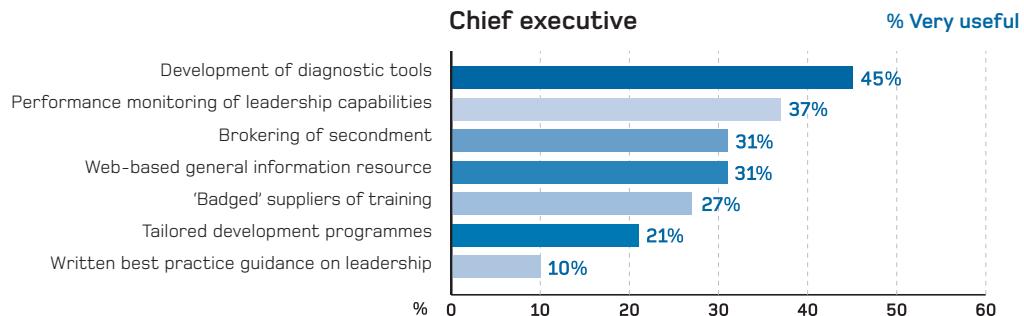
Leaders



Guidance required from the Leadership Centre

The survey has been extremely illuminating in helping to shape the future role and activities of the Leadership Centre in order to best fulfil the needs expressed. Both chief executives and leaders were almost equally concerned to develop diagnostic tools and performance monitoring of leadership capabilities. Interestingly while 31 per cent of chief executives thought the web was a good resource, only 15 per cent of leaders rated it.

Q Thinking about the following leadership challenges facing local authorities, how important, if at all, is it in your authority to build capacity in each of these areas?



Base: 100 chief executive. Fieldwork: 4-25 May 2005.



Rank order based on CEx

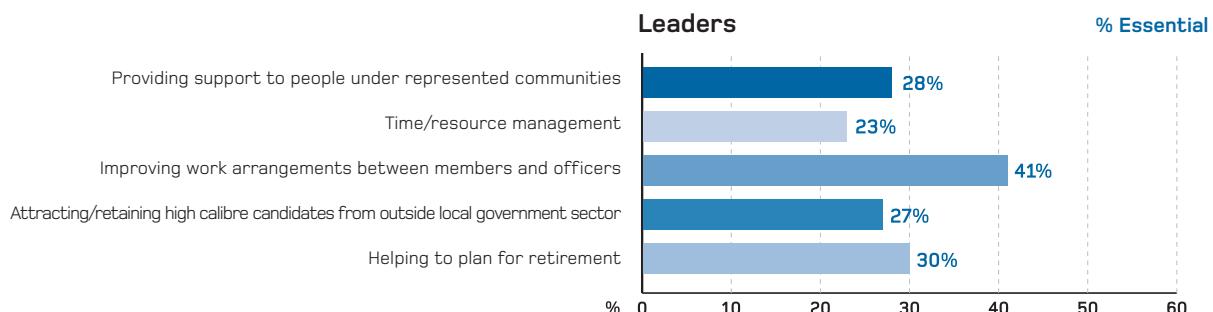
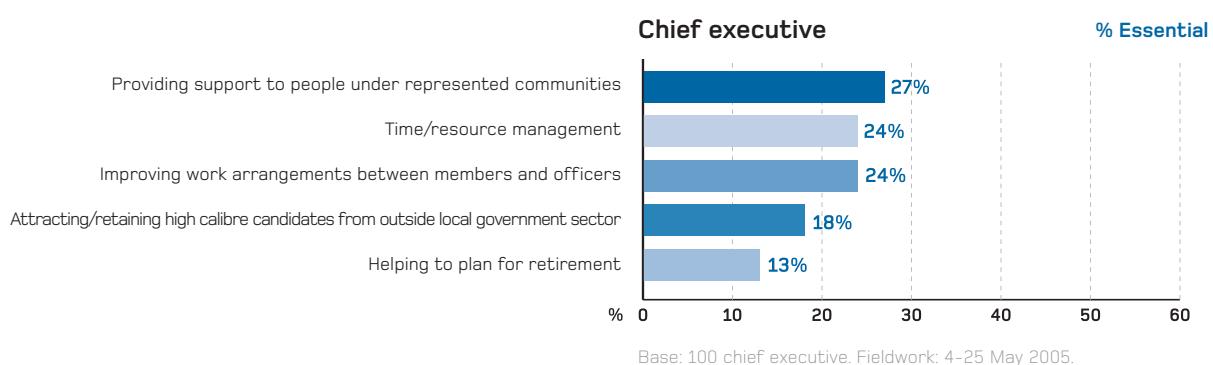
Base: 100 chief executive. Fieldwork: 4-25 May 2005.

Lesser priorities

Also interesting are those areas of work deemed lesser priorities and the differences in opinion between chief executives and leaders. There is a marked difference, for example, between the rating given to improving work arrangements between members and officers – only 24 per cent of chief executives believed this was important while 41 per cent of their political counterparts thought this was a priority. Equally 30 per cent of members thought planning for retirement was important in comparison to only 13 per cent of chief executives – in fact this proved to be the least

troublesome of priorities for chief executives – an indication of the insecurity of the politician's lot compared to that of an officer.

Q Thinking about the following leadership challenges facing local authorities, how important, if at all, is it in your authority to build capacity in each of these areas?



Rank order based on CEx

Buying in development

Equally important from our perspective has been to collate evidence on factors that affect decisions to purchase capacity-building. Top of the list was a flexible, tailored package designed for the local situation delivered by people with credibility and a good track record. Demands on time, formal accreditation and location were the least important factors when deciding whether to buy-in services.

Q What **single factor** is the most important in the decision whether to buy?



Base: 100 chief executive. Fieldwork: 4-25 May 2005.

Conclusion

The results of the survey have been invaluable for us, supporting our single purpose – that of developing the leadership capacity of local government. It is heartening to see that politicians and managers are not just aware of the significance of leadership development if they are to succeed in improving the quality of life of those who live in their authority areas, but – more pertinently – that they are ready to develop the skills they need in order to make this happen.

The Leadership Centre has focused its early work on the critical interface between political and managerial leaders in local government top teams, equipping them with the skills and understanding they need to work together more effectively in order to deliver real leadership to their communities. The Leadership Centre has also made it a priority to work with elected members to address the imbalance in leadership development that has so far been available to political leaders. The MORI survey confirms that these are both the right priorities for the Leadership Centre over the next two to three years.



Leadership Centre for Local Government
18th Floor
Westminster City Hall
64 Victoria Street
London
SW1E 6QP

Telephone: 020 7038 9353
Email: info@localleadership.gov.uk
Website: www.localleadership.gov.uk

Survey data copyright of MORI 2005, not to be reproduced without the prior written permission of MORI.

Fieldwork dates: May 4 2005 to May 27 2005
Respondent Type: Chief Executives and Council Leaders
Source: Market & Opinion Research International (MORI)