



The National Association of Local Councils

Survey Analysis for the National
Training Strategy

Monday, 15th March 2010



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Introduction

The National Training Strategy (NTS) was published in 2001 following the Government's Rural White Paper in 2000. The premise on which the NTS was founded is the ongoing importance of individual and corporate learning to progress understanding and effectiveness across local council working.

Much has been achieved over the last eight years. Including:

- delivery of the core qualification for clerks The Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) and its award to approaching 1,000 candidates;
- new training materials and courses for parish councillors and officers;
- a bursary scheme to support training clerks in smaller parish councils (which has benefitted over 1,140 local council professionals);
- training for trainers;
- an agreed approach to Continuous Professional Development (CPD);
- a delivery mechanism through County Training Partnerships (CTPs) which brings co-ordination and joint planning between training providers in some (but not all) county areas.

The NTS partners have now agreed to review the Strategy. They have established a group to conduct the review.

The objectives for this review are to produce a new strategy that will, amongst other matters, consider and develop:

- A continuing shared vision for training and development for parish and town councils of all sizes that all the NTS partners can agree to and can contribute to delivering;
- The new strategy will, where possible, include achievable and measurable objectives and it will also consider the future for national level management and co-ordination of training and development within the sector;
- Greater connection and integration of training within the parish sector and with local government sector in general;
- Financial issues underpinning the delivery of training and development within the sector;
- Strengthening delivery and co-ordination structures, particularly at the local level and achieving greater consistency and quality of training right across the country.

As part of the review, a survey was commissioned from Learning Pool to find the views of people within local government as to what the training needs of the sector are.

The key themes of the survey were:

- Delivery and content

- Council, Councillor and Clerk training
- Qualifications and Career Development
- Quality
- Funding sources

This report provides some high level analysis of the key themes in section one, and a summary of the results of the survey in section two.

Also provided, along with the report, is a download from the surveying software containing all of the response data, allowing the NTS review group to undertake further analysis.

Learning Pool also developed a social website for the NTS group, which can be found at <http://ntshub.org.uk>. This website provides a space for the group to blog, to canvas opinion, to promote the NTS and to showcase best practice, such as in the case studies page found at <http://ntshub.org.uk/case-studies/>.

This online resource will be maintained by Learning Pool through the process of the NTS Review.

PLEASE NOTE: this is a draft report, and a finalised version will be presented to the group at the meeting of 24 March 2010, where key findings will also be presented in Powerpoint form.

Section 1-Key Themes & Responses

An integral part in planning any training strategy is deciding the most appropriate way to rollout the training. The training method chosen should engage the learner in an interactive way to ensure their interest is maintained throughout the training and provide a higher level of retention. The necessary support for learners to re-visit this training should also be provided. However the training method should be cost effective to the organisation and allow them to train a large number of people over a short period of time.

In this section we have provided analysis on some of the key themes that have come from the survey responses.

View of Current Training Methods:

County Training Partnerships are well regarded, with half of all respondents having a positive view of their local CTP.

Its effectiveness as a training method is also valued, with just under 55% of respondents having a positive view of the CTPs as a mechanism for the delivery of NTS training in general.

Around a quarter of respondents were not aware of their CTP – which indicates that perhaps raising awareness of the CTPs should be a focus of the NTS.

Under NTS methods respondents currently consider to be effective, The Good Councillor's Guide Booklet (37.2%) and the Certificate in Local Council Administration (33.8%) received the highest ratings.

Format of the National Training Strategy:

The results of the National Strategy Training Survey supports the view that the learners who will be the primary target of the National Training Strategy – Council clerks and councillors would like the training strategy to be more effective than that of current CTP practices with one day workshops, e-learning and online training methods rated by respondents as the best way to do this.

- Face to face training is still the preferred method, with whole day learning events receiving an approval rating of over two thirds of respondents. Interactivity was highlighted as being important by 34% of responses.
- 50.3% of respondents stated their preferred method of receiving training is through e-learning as opposed to print based learning, with 34% choosing the latter.

- A third of respondents chose printed materials as being a preferred method of delivery.
- 91.3% of respondents said they would use the online directory of training for clerks and councillors which is currently being developed.
- In terms of how much time respondents would like to devote to training, the highest majority voted for training to take place over one day (73.1%) followed by 26.1% voting for training to take place over two hours.
- 77.6% of respondents think all specialist training should be tailored to reflect the different size of councils, which would be possible with both face to face training and e-learning in that the basic framework of a course can be created with additional information and council specific information added to the framework as necessary. It might well be more costly do this with printed learning materials.

Who Should Receive Training?

Respondents voted that NTS should mainly invest in the training of the following groups:

- County Association Staff (52.9%)
- SLCC trainers and advisors (60.7%)
- Parish Liaison Officers at principal authorities (63%)

Topics the Training Should Cover:

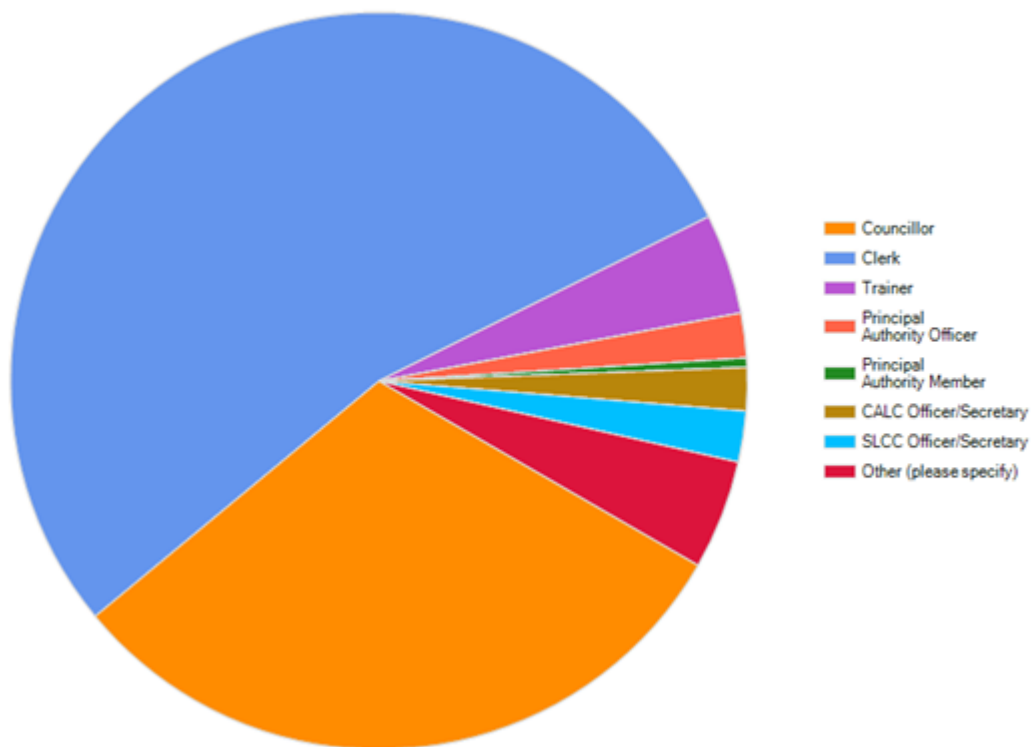
Induction was rated as the top area respondents would like to see incorporated into the NTS. There is plenty of both face to face and e-learning currently exists on this topic and can be easily authored to be specific for each council.

- 86% of respondents think induction training should be compulsory for clerks and 95.1% believe induction training is strongly recommended for councillors.
- Support was given to the idea of councillors having access to an optional qualifications framework. High support was also given to CiLCA being recognised within the Government's new Qualifications and Credits Framework (QCF).
- 92% responded that the NTS should invest in a national system to ensure the quality and consistency of training across the country.

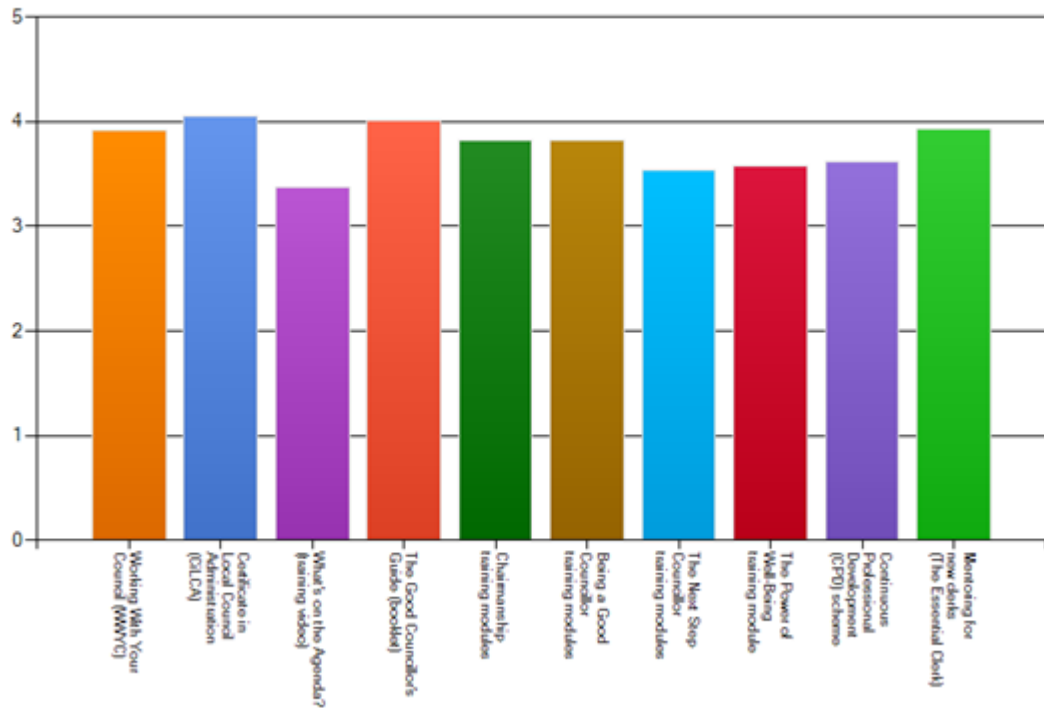
Section 2-Survey Results

In this section, we have pulled out some of the responses we feel are most informative for the NTS review. A full download of the response data has been provided for further analysis, if required.

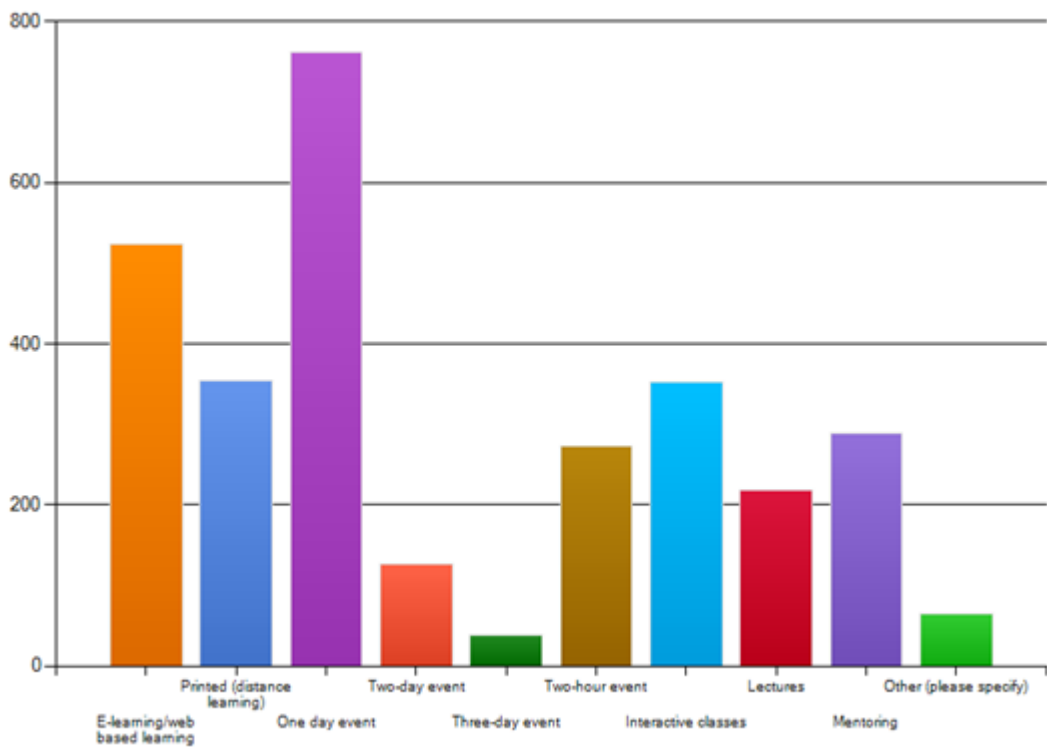
What is your current role? Please select all that apply.



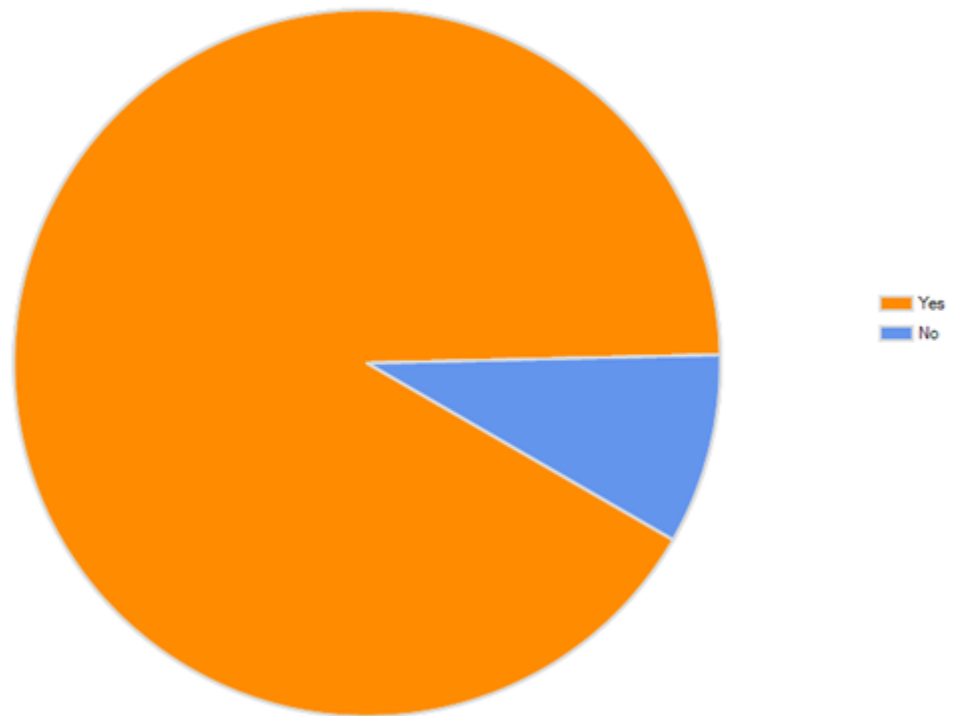
Which of the following NTS products do you consider to be effective? Enter a rating between 1 and 5 for each product - please select N/A if you are unaware of the specific product.



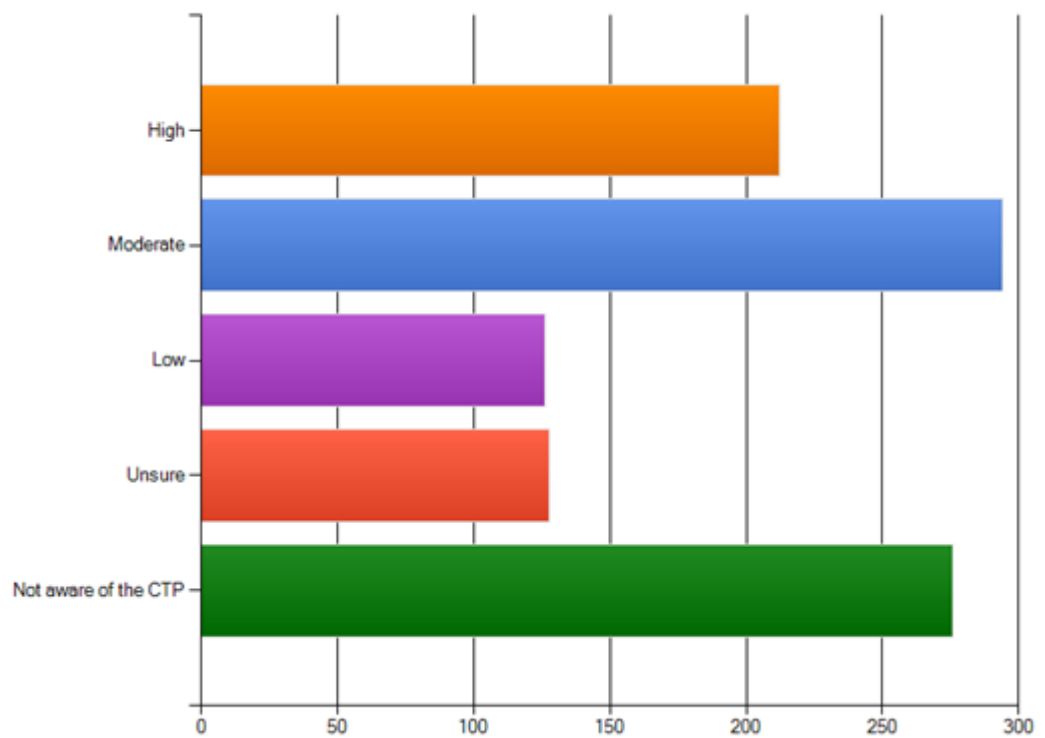
Which are your preferred ways of receiving or delivering training? Select all that apply.



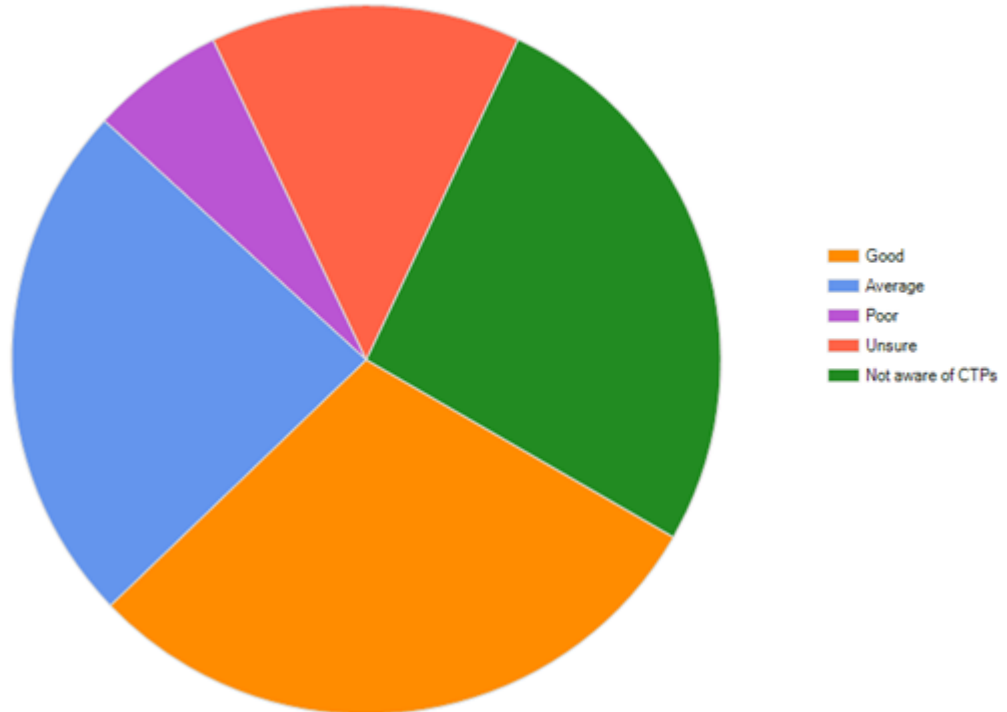
An online directory of training for clerks and councillors is currently being developed. Would you use this facility?



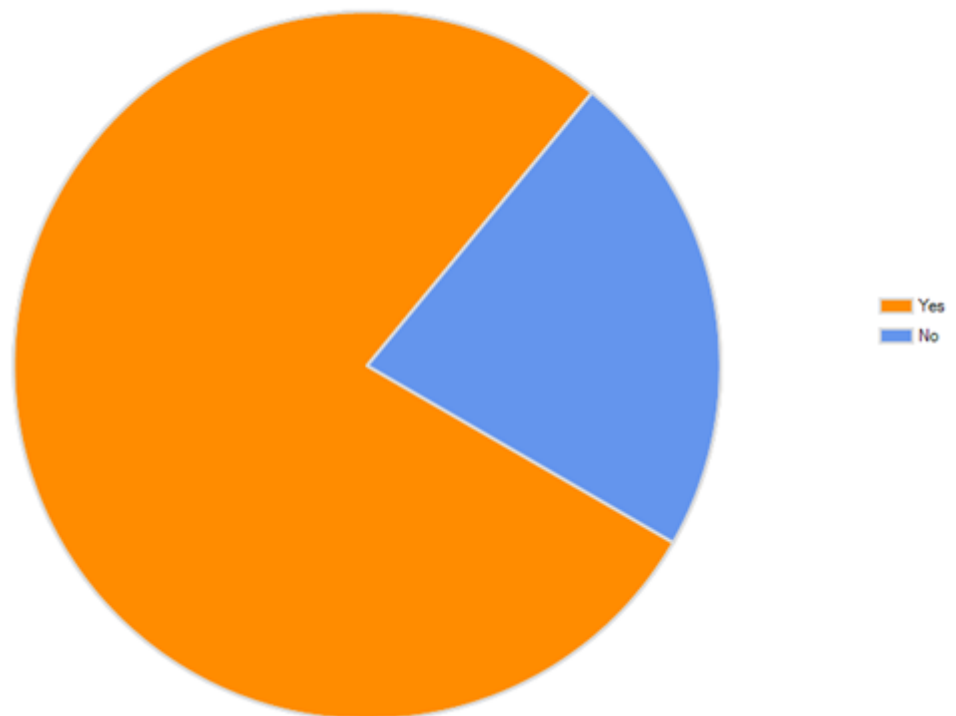
How would you describe the impact of your local County Training Partnership (CTP)?



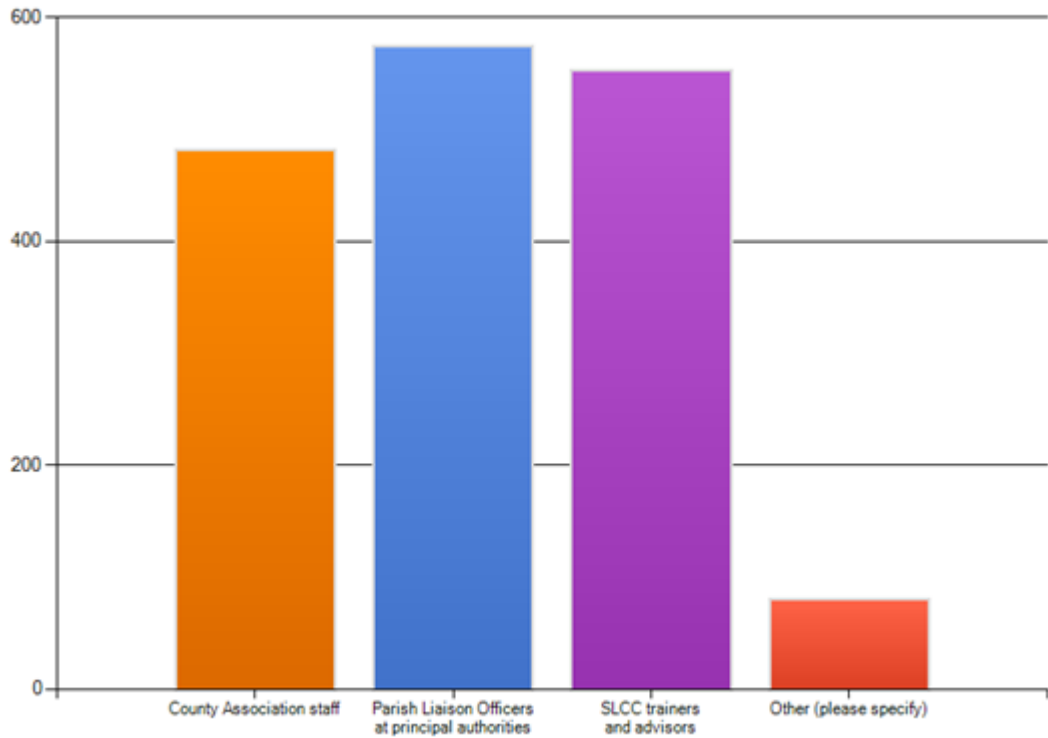
How would you describe the effectiveness of CTPs as an overall mechanism for the delivery of NTS training in general?



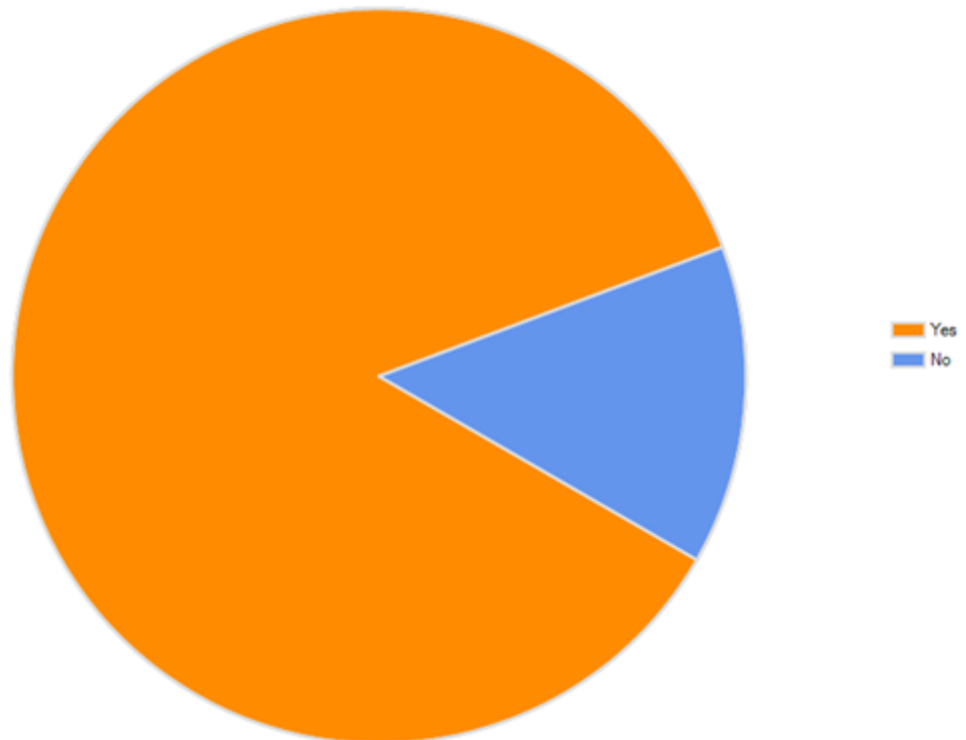
Should all specialist training be tailored to reflect the different size of councils?



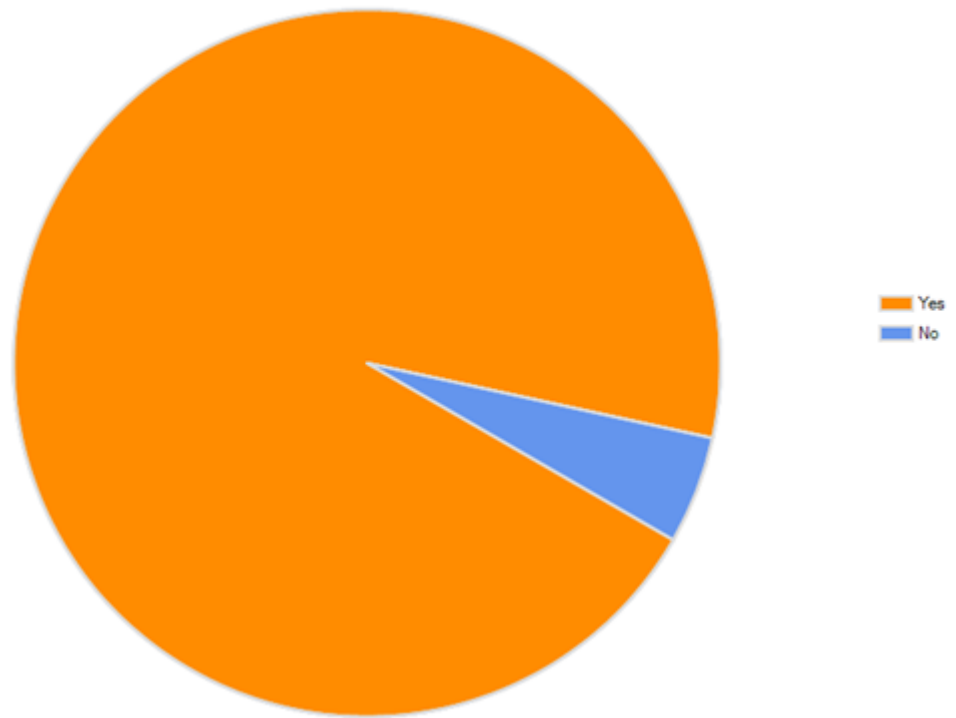
Should the NTS invest in the training of the following? Please select all that apply.



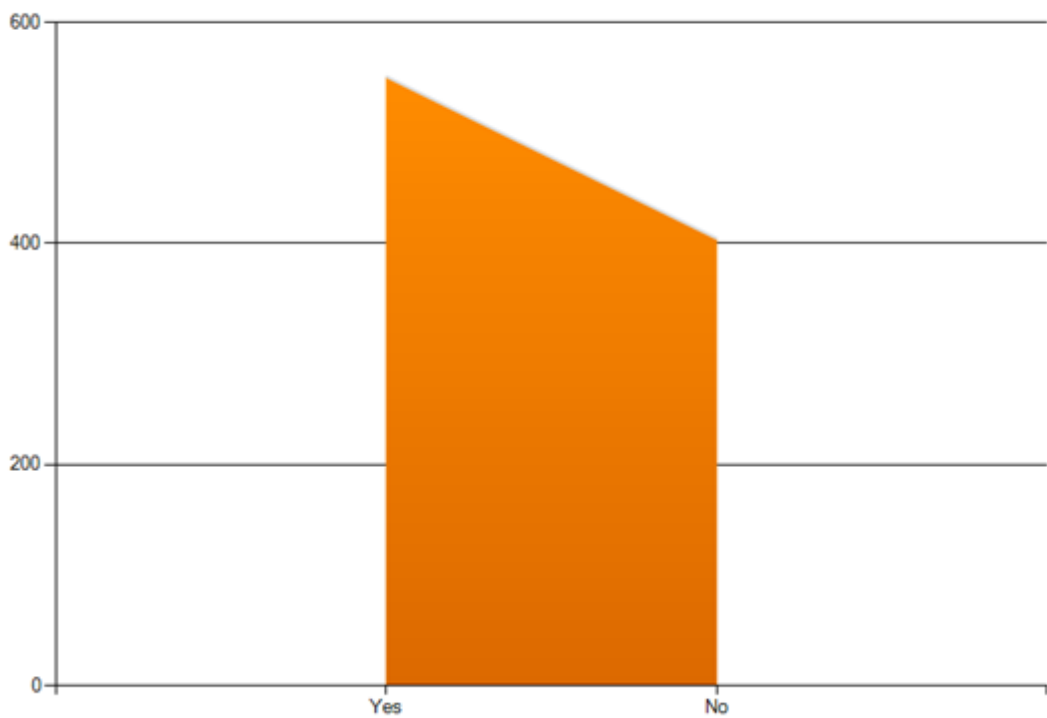
Should induction training be compulsory for clerks?



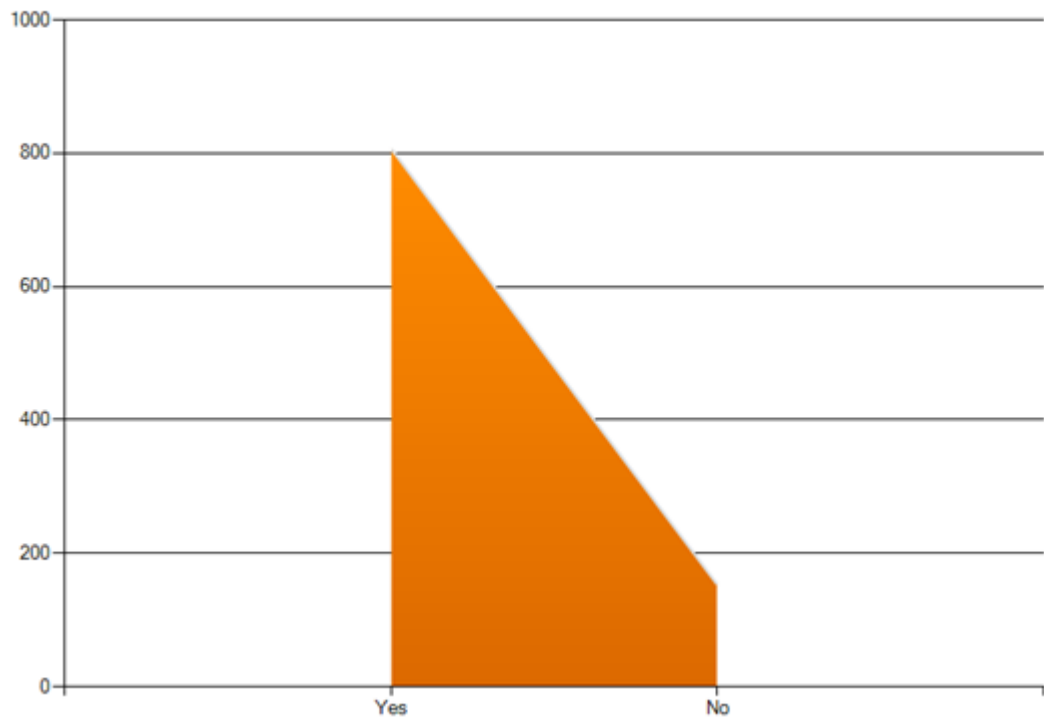
Should some level of induction training be strongly recommended for councillors?



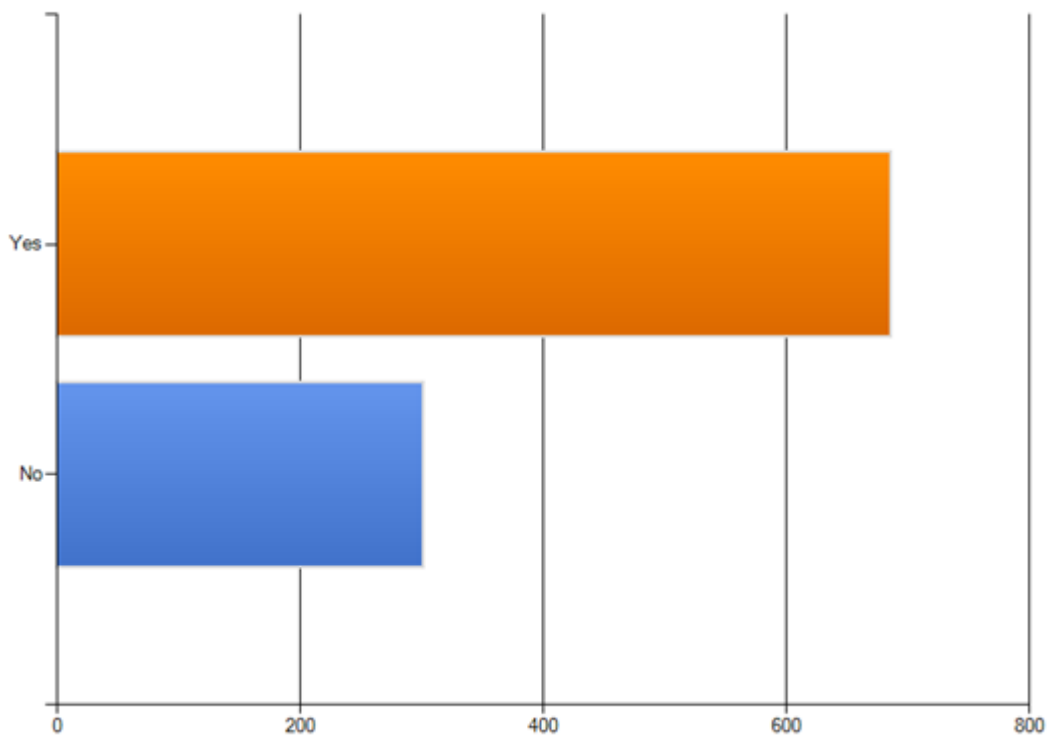
Would councillors find self-study workbooks or logbooks useful for recording learning and development?



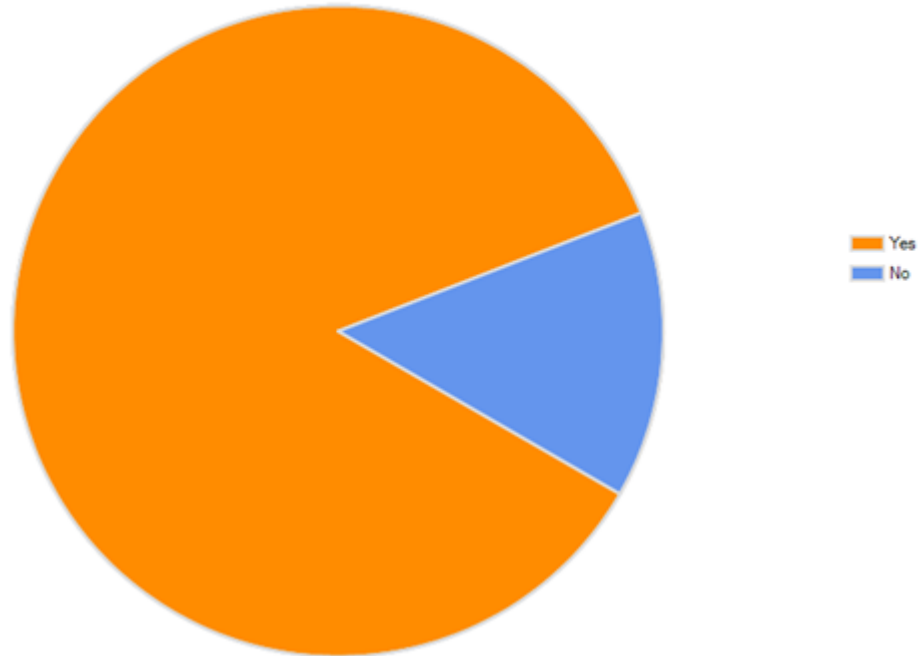
Would self-study style workbooks or logbooks be useful in supporting the existing Continuous Professional Development (CPD) scheme for clerks and other officers?



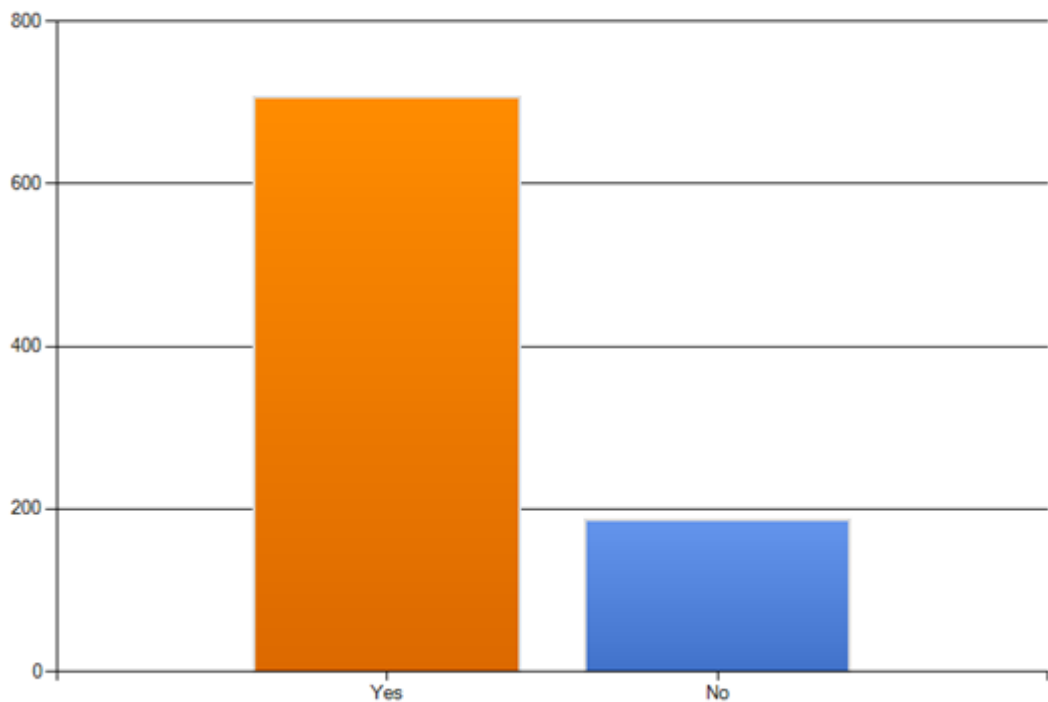
Should there be an optional qualifications framework for councillors?



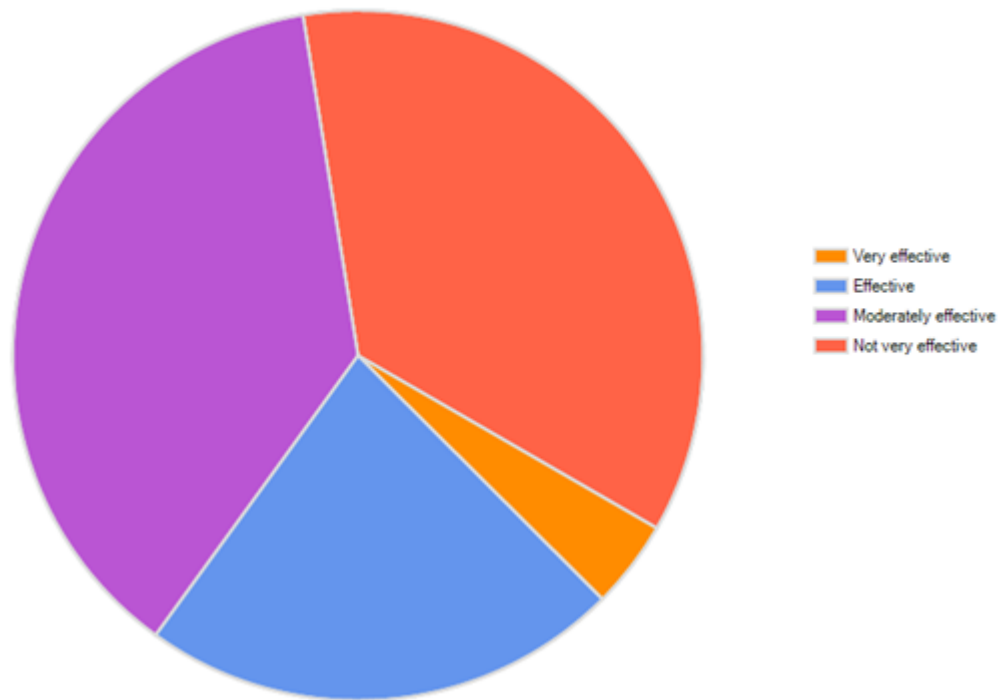
The government are revising the way they recognise and grade qualifications. If possible, should CiLCA be recognised within the Government's new Qualifications and Credits Framework (QCF)? This would offer CiLCA a recognised academic level to compare with qualifications such as GCSEs, A levels and NVQs (please see supporting document on the NTS hub in the 'Documents' section): <http://ntshub.org.uk/documents/> .



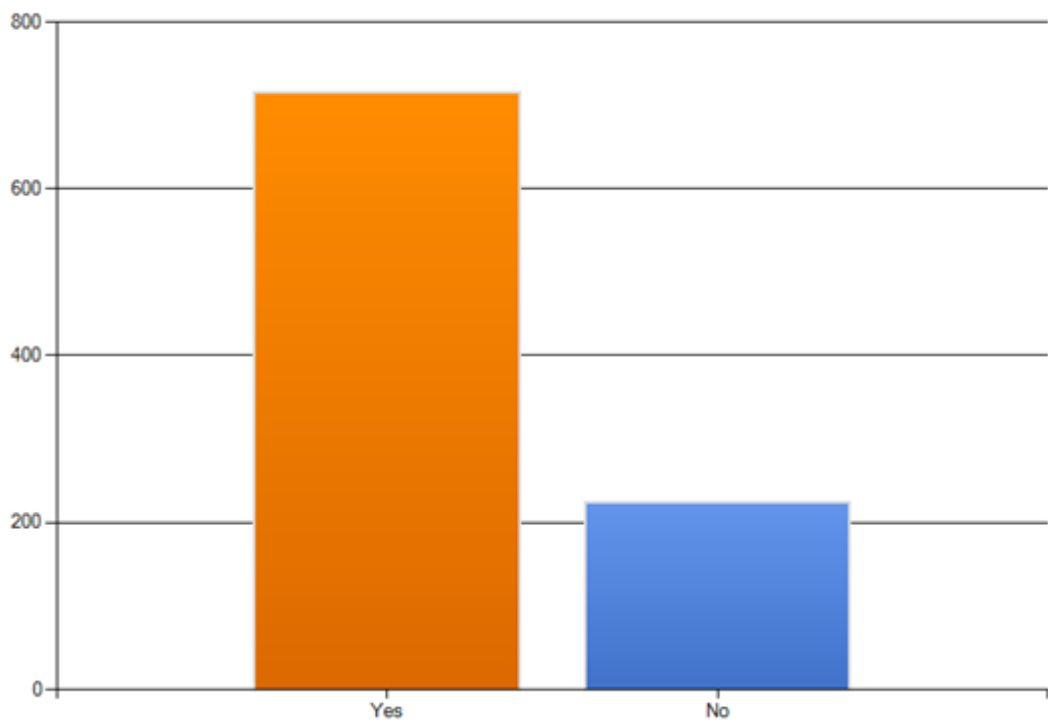
Tailored qualifications by sector stakeholders formally consist of CiLCA, managed by NTS stakeholders and the higher education programme in Community Engagement and Governance (formally local policy) run by the University of Gloucestershire. Do you believe this is sufficient?



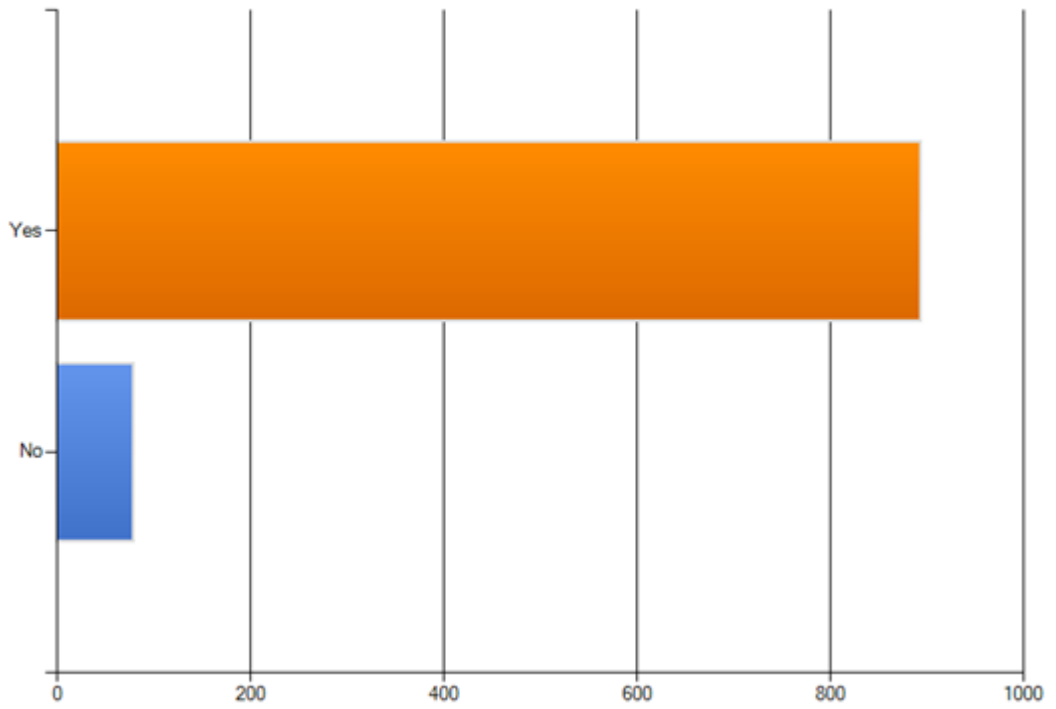
How effective has the NTS CPD scheme been in terms of encouraging career development through completion of development plans and records?



Should membership of professional bodies such as the Institute of Local Council Management (ILCM) be promoted as an active way of engaging in professional development?



Should the NTS invest in a national system to ensure the quality and consistency of training across the country?



The management and delivery of training is funded by councils (mainly through fees and membership subscriptions to NALC and the SLCC) with additional support from Government. Please rate the following as either high, medium or low priority for the potential investment in training.				
Priority for Investment				
Answer Options	High	Medium	Low	Response Count
NTS booklets (eg Good Councillors Guide)	629	259	39	927
Training for trainers	546	290	50	886
Modular training packs for local delivery through training events	543	307	68	918
Mentoring support with parish and town councils	529	319	84	932
CiLCA training (eg induction training such as WWYC and other support tailored support packages delivered by CTPs)	516	286	87	889
CiLCA administration and quality assurance	418	364	105	887
E-learning	401	389	134	924
Contribution to training fees (bursaries or payments)	385	353	154	892
NTS training linked to the national CPD scheme	207	502	174	883
Videos/DVDs	188	438	287	913
NTS management and coordination	158	504	212	874
Advanced qualifications	150	456	291	897
Development meetings of CTP partners	144	437	294	875
Webinars or podcasts (live or recorded presentations via the internet)	121	297	472	890

Conclusion

The survey has revealed some extremely interesting results, which should help inform the direction of the review of the National Training Strategy. It was completed by a considerable number of people in the sector – estimated to be over 1,000 when the final analysis is done – of which the vast majority are either council clerks or councillors themselves. This provides an excellent basis on which the NTS review group can base their strategy.

One clear outcome was that in terms of delivery, the preferred methods are full day workshops and electronically delivered learning. This is all about making the best use of people's time. Full day workshops means that the most can be made out of the time that delegates give up, rather than shorter sessions which may interrupt the flow of the working day.

Likewise, e-learning is incredibly flexible, and allows for learners to undertake learning and development activity at a time and place which suits them. Using modern e-learning technology and rich multimedia, it is possible to create engaging, effective e-learning that can provide all the interactivity of the classroom.

Another significant finding is the importance people in the sector ascribe to effective induction training, with very large majority votes in favour of induction training for both clerks and councillors. Ensuring that those in vital roles in local councils are fully aware of the environment in which they operate is key to effective delivery of service and a strong induction will help achieve this.

An overwhelming majority of respondents also favoured the NTS setting standards for training and learning activity in the sector, through the development of a national system. This is a clear mandate for the NTS group to take this idea ahead and to ensure consistency throughout the country.

This also ties in with the findings of the survey that a large proportion of respondents had a low awareness of their County Training Partnership. Overcoming this low profile may be easier for a nationwide system.

We hope that the findings of the survey have been useful for the NTS review group and that they will help ensure the next revision of the NTS meets the growing learning and development needs of the sector.