

Compulsory Training for Clerks in Local Councils

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This dissertation is submitted in partial completion of a BA Honours degree in Community Governance awarded by De Montfort University.

October 2020

DECLARATION:

**This dissertation is the product of my own
work.**

**I agree that it may be made available for
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October 2020**

Abstract

Local councils are the first tier of local government with 10,000 local councils in the sector in England. These councils are formed of councillors and officers and are responsible for local services. The diverse nature of the services provided inevitably results in the need for officers to understand the requirements of the role. The sector offers training and qualifications to these officers however this is not a requirement of the role. The Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) is a level 3 qualification covering the 5 main aspects of the Clerks role within the local council. The aim of the research project was to explore the issue of compulsory CiLCA training being introduced in the sector with local council officers and councillors.

Drawing on current research and schools of thought, training themes were identified namely effectiveness, participation, competency and transferable skills. These themes fed into the primary research methodology which consisted of a 10 question survey and interviews. The results showed that compulsory training was slightly more popular, current training was effective and that the majority of responders were motivated to participate in training. Most responders had transferable skills on appointment but these were enhanced following sector specific training.

The research identified issues with the cost of the training, particularly for those from smaller councils and the idea of training being subsidised was raised. The need for refresher training was highlighted to ensure those who had already been trained remained up to date. These along with other results from the research formed recommendations to the National Association of Local Councils, Society of Local Council Clerks and the sector as a whole to raise the standard and professionalism of the officers in the sector.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who has assisted me on the journey to completing this dissertation.

With special thanks to the following:

To Canewdon Parish Council for having the forward vision and understanding of the value of training and for supporting and funding me throughout my studies to the completion of this dissertation.

To my tutors, Elisabeth Skinner, Dominic Stapleton, Jonathan Bourne and Linda Roberts for your guidance and support throughout my studies.

To my fellow students for supporting me through the highs and lows of the process and for the friendships that we have made, long may they continue.

To my fellow Clerks and Councillors who have taken the time to respond to my surveys and take part in interviews.

Finally, to my husband Tony and my daughters Amelia and Evie. Thank you for supporting me through the last 6 years of study, I know it was difficult at times.

Contents

Abstract	3
Acknowledgements	4
List of Tables and Charts	7
Tables.....	7
Charts.....	7
List of Abbreviations/Acronyms	8
Chapter 1	9
Introduction	9
1. Introduction	9
1.1 Background.....	9
1.2 Aim.....	10
1.3 Objectives	10
1.4 Author’s interest in the subject	11
1.5 Research project.....	11
1.6 Summary.....	12
Chapter 2	13
Literature Review	13
2. Introduction	13
2.1 Training and Learning	13
2.2 Compulsory Training.....	14
2.2.1 Compulsory Training in Local Government.....	14
2.3 Training Themes	15
2.3.1 Competencies.....	15
2.3.2 Effectiveness	16
2.3.3 Participation.....	17
2.3.4 Transferable Skills.....	18
2.4 Summary.....	18
Chapter 3	20
Research Methodology	20
3. Introduction	20
3.1 Aims and Objectives	20
3.2 Research Strategy	20
3.3 Data Collection.....	21
3.3.1 Qualitative data collection.....	21
3.3.2 Quantitative data collection.....	22

3.3.3	Chosen Research Method	22
3.3.4	Research Limitations	23
3.3.5	Survey Design	25
3.3.6	Interviews	26
3.3.7	Respondent selection	26
3.3.8	Research bias.....	27
3.4	Summary.....	27
Chapter 4.....		28
Results and Analysis		28
4.	Introduction	28
4.1	Survey Responses	28
4.1.1	Responder profile	28
4.1.2	Compulsory vs voluntary	29
4.1.3	Effectiveness and participation	30
4.1.4	Competency and transferable skills	34
4.2	Interviews	35
4.2.1	Responders	36
4.2.2	Compulsory vs voluntary	36
4.2.3	Effectiveness and participation	37
4.2.4	Competency and transferable skills	38
4.2.5	Training in general.....	38
4.3	Summary.....	39
Chapter 5.....		40
Conclusions and Recommendations		40
5.	Introduction	40
5.1	Conclusions.....	40
5.2	Recommendations	41
5.3	Summary.....	44
Bibliography		45
Appendix 1 – Questions for survey		57
Appendix 2 – Interview questions.....		58
Appendix 3 – Summary of all responses to the survey		60
Appendix 4 – Interview transcripts		68

List of Tables and Charts

Tables

1. The Competency Domain Model (Sandwith, 1993:44)
2. Transferable skills (Nabi and Bagley, 1999)
3. Training themes with Survey Questions
4. County Associations targeted for research
5. Responses by County Association and role
6. Compulsory and voluntary training responses by County Association
7. Effectiveness of training by County Association
8. Effectiveness of training compared to the views on compulsory training
9. Effectiveness of training compared to the views on participation
10. Transferable skills on appointment
11. Competency upon appointment and after training

Charts

1. Responders by County Association
2. Effectiveness of CiLCA training
3. Motivation to attend training
4. Competency upon appointment

List of Abbreviations/Acronyms

CALC	County Association of Local Councils
CiLCA	Certificate in Local Council Administration
CPALC	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils
DMU	De Montfort University
EALC	Essex Association of Local Councils
IDB	Improvement and Development Board
ILCA	Introduction to Local Council Administration
NALC	National Association of Local Councils
RCN	Royal College of Nursing
RFO	Responsible Financial Officer
SALC	Suffolk Association of Local Councils
SLCC	Society of Local Council Clerks

Chapter 1

Introduction

1. Introduction

This chapter will introduce the research project and explain the aims and objectives along with the author's reasoning behind the subject chosen. It will also explain the purpose of the chapters that are included in the research project.

1.1 Background

Local Councils¹ are the first tier of local government representing their residents and providing services. There are approximately 10,000 local councils in England (NALC, 2020b) all comprised of councillors for collective decision making and officers for enacting those decisions. These officers should be

'...equipped with the necessary knowledge, training and skills to thrive within their role and best support their council and community' (SLCC, 2020)

Officers of local councils can access this training and knowledge via the principal authority², county association³ or via the SLCC⁴. These organisations provide both general and specific training, some of which results in a sector qualification. The starting point in this personal development journey is the Introduction in Local Council Administration (ILCA) a level 2 course which provides an introduction to the sector and the Clerks role. This leads on to the Certification in Local Council Administration (CiLCA), a level 3 qualification which covers all aspects of the Clerks role. The certificate is awarded once the candidate has created a portfolio of evidence that meets criterion for 30 learning outcomes within 5 units:

¹ Community, neighbourhood, parish, town and village councils

² District, Borough, City, County or Unitary Councils

³ County Associations are organisations that represent local councils in their county

⁴ The Society of Local Council Clerks are a professional body for local council clerks and officers promoting development of the officers that manage local councils

- ✚ Unit 1 – Core roles in local council administration
- ✚ Unit 2 - Law and procedure for local councils
- ✚ Unit 3 – Finance for local councils
- ✚ Unit 4 – Management for local councils
- ✚ Unit 5 - Community engagement

These learning outcomes are all specific to the Clerks role and demonstrate an understanding of the various areas of the position. Clerks will undertake training in order to assist them in successfully completing the portfolio and being awarded the certificate.

At present, there is no requirement within the sector to complete any vocational training. However, there is a requirement for a Clerk to achieve CiLCA in one area of local government. In 2011, the Government introduced legislation⁵ in an effort to give the sector more freedom to act, specifically the General Power of Competence. This power allows local councils to do anything an individual may do as long as it is not prohibited by other legislation. In order to be eligible to use the power, the council must meet two pieces of criteria⁶, one of which is a 'qualified Clerk'. One of the required qualifications stated within the legislation to be a 'qualified Clerk' is the CiLCA. For the purpose of this research project, this qualification was used as it is specifically included within the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

1.2 Aim

The aim of the research project is to find out whether local council officers and councillors believe that the CiLCA qualification should be compulsory.

1.3 Objectives

Four training themes were identified (DeFour et al, 2010) and these were used to create the objectives for the research, these were:

⁵ Localism Act 2011, s. 1-8

⁶ Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012

- ✚ To establish how many Clerks are CiLCA qualified and whether the training undertaken as part of the qualification was effective
- ✚ To establish whether Clerks were motivated to participate in training and whether the effectiveness of training affected the willingness to participate
- ✚ To establish whether Clerks felt competent to undertake the role on appointment and whether this changed following training
- ✚ To establish what transferable skills Clerks had on appointment.

1.4 Author's interest in the subject

The author provides training services to both officers and councillors via the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC), this includes training the CiLCA qualification. As part of this role, the author has experience of differing levels of understanding of the requirements of both the councillors and Clerks roles. The author often receives comments relating to compulsory training particularly from new Clerks and Councillors who believe that those who sit in all roles of the Council should receive compulsory training to ensure each knows what is expected of the role. Many who come from outside the sector are surprised that there is no requirement for training and are used to having to carry out compulsory training in their business roles.

1.5 Research project

The study has been split into chapters which will provide information relating to each stage of the project:

1.5.1 Literature Review

The literature review will examine and analyse secondary research carried out by practitioners, academics and professionals. The research was gathered from books, journals, websites, Government papers and policies and minutes. The literature review forms chapter 2.

1.5.2 Research Methodology

The research methodology will examine and analyse different research methods, the advantages and disadvantages for these methods along with their limitations. It will

also consider the design of the methods for the primary research gathered. It will then explain any bias and research ethics. The research methodology forms chapter 3.

1.5.3 Results and Analysis

The results and analysis will examine and analyse the primary research gathered using the research methods identified in chapter 3, namely survey and interviews. This analysis forms chapter 4, the conclusions from the primary research and suggested recommendations can be found at chapter 5.

1.6 Summary

This chapter has explained local councils and the training requirements of their officers. It has confirmed the aim of the research project and the objectives required to reach that aim. It has also explained the reasoning behind the chosen subject and provides an overview of the chapters to the research project. The next chapter will analyse the literature on training that is relevant to the aim and objectives of the research project.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2. Introduction

This chapter will analyse and review the literature on training in general, training themes and compulsory training before evaluating the identified training themes in more detail.

Hayward and Wragg (1982:2) states that a literature review demonstrates

‘...the writer has studied existing work in the field with insight’

It provides any background information along with need for the research whilst identifying any research that has already been gathered on that subject (Denscombe, 2017). This chapter will set out existing research on compulsory training and training themes.

2.1 Training and Learning

Training is required for understanding specific information or situations. Goldstein (1980:230) defines training as

‘...the acquisition of skills, concepts or attitudes that results in improved performance’

Learning is defined as

‘...a process that leads to that leads to change, which occurs as a result of experience’ (Ambrose et al, 2010:3)

Whilst Jarvis (1995) explains training as the transfer of knowledge allowing the student to undertake the skills that they have learnt, DuFour et al (2010) suggest that training consists of four themes:

1. Understanding learning needs (competencies)
2. Clear achievement expectations (outcomes and effectiveness)
3. Participation (motivation)
4. Lifelong learning (transferable skills)

Learning and education at school is associated with an academic curriculum with a variety of subject areas. As we progress into adulthood, we undertake vocational

based training directed towards learning the skills required to carry out the job we have (Jarvis, 1995). In some professions, vocational training is compulsory.

2.2 Compulsory Training

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) (2020) state that statutory training is required by law and mandatory training is deemed essential by the organisation

'Some organisations use the term[s]...compulsory training as a 'catch all' to cover both mandatory and statutory training' (RCN, 2020)

The University of Lincoln (2020) recognise their mandatory training programme ensures employee awareness of key policies; similarly, the University of Exeter (2020) state

'Areas of training...will be deemed to be mandatory from a legal or statutory requirement or from...a requirement imposed by the University'

Compulsory training is more apparent in medical professionals, ensuring the same standard of education and clarity in the role (Sprinks, 2009).

For the purpose of this research, compulsory is taken to mean both statutory and mandatory and this term will be used throughout this document.

2.2.1 Compulsory Training in Local Government

Compulsory training was introduced in The Philippines as the Government felt it would

'...result in stronger and more effective participation in our democratic processes' (Asia News Monitor, 2015)

In 2010, the Institute for Government thinktank published its views on new government ministers and the need for training, though compulsory training for the ministers may be beneficial.

'It is madness that incoming ministers are not given detailed training about running government departments'. (Wintour, 2010).

Similarly, the Institute for Government (2014) claimed that Special Advisors to ministers in Whitehall often

'...lacked basic information about how the machinery of government worked' and that '...civil servants did not always feel well equipped to manage some of the complex contracting arrangements that are now central to many public services' (Gash, 2012).

The principle is similar in local councils. The National Association of Local Councils, Society of Local Councils Clerks, Department for Communities and Local Government and Local Government Association recognised the importance of training and jointly established the Improvement and Development Board (IDB) in 2013. The core aims of the IDB include supporting the county associations and SLCC branches in delivering opportunities to improve and develop both councillors and officers in the sector to improve the sector (IDB, 2017).

2.3 Training Themes

It is suggested that there is a link between the person and the HR procedures in the organisation (including training) to overall performance (Sheehan, 2012; Boudreau and Ramstad, 2007; Collings and Mellahi, 2009). Development and education are required in all areas of work and should meet themes such as those identified earlier by DuFour et al (2010).

2.3.1 Competencies

Whilst training provides the knowledge and theory of a subject, competency is the ability to apply the knowledge to the situation (Santos et al, 2010).

Kalargyrou and Woods (2010:362) state

'Competencies are demonstrable characteristics of a person that...facilitate employees to efficiently perform'.

Sandwith (1993) discusses research into management competencies and found that a manager's role was made up of five types of activities shown in **Table 1**. Rae (2002) agrees noting some twelve competencies that fall within Sandwith's model.

Conceptual/creative	Understanding the role and investigating different actions
Leadership	Turning thoughts into action whilst influencing, inspiring and empowering others
Interpersonal	Effective interactions and relationships with others
Administrative	Personnel and financial management
Technical	The work of the organisation

Table 1: The Competency Domain Model (Sandwith, 1993:44)

Competencies can be applied to a role to create a job profile which applicants could be assessed to whilst identifying additional training needs (McDowall and Saunders, 2010). Implementing this theory in local government at the start of employment will ensure that the most suitable person is employed, the level of competence can dictate the training needs with the employee taking an active part in planning the training to ensure effectiveness (Rae, 2002).

2.3.2 Effectiveness

In local government, effective training is required to ensure that all aspects of the role are understood so the officer can carry out the requirements of the role with ease (NALC, 2020a). Training is most effective when the learning is transferred to the situation (Amitabh and Prashar, 2019), McDowall and Saunders (2010:609) state that

'...on the job training [is] considered most effective'

The United States Department of Defence queried the effectiveness of training initiatives (Pietrzyk and Handley, 2016). A one-off review found that the compulsory training was least effective at foundation levels and most effective at management level. Tomlinson (2002) discusses research results comparing compulsory training to voluntary training which found compulsory training produced lower outcomes in one year but no difference was found the following year suggesting that this varies from year to year.

Motivation to attend and participate in the training will determine how effective the training is (Amitabh and Prashar, 2019; Mathieu and Martineau, 1997; Carlson et al., 2000; Noe and Wilk, 1993).

2.3.3 Participation

Research carried out by Aziz and Osman (2019) into compulsory training found that it was effective as employees were

‘...willing and motivated to attend it’ (Aziz and Osman, 2019:210).

Kirkpatrick (1996) agrees that the participants will gain most benefit if they like the subject/training they are attending.

Curado et al (2015) argue that their research showed voluntary training is more effective than compulsory training, similarly Yardley (2003) found those attending compulsory training viewed the experience in a less positive way compared to voluntary training. Compulsory training sessions can have a higher rate of cancellations or non-attendance and training should only be compulsory in the following cases (Hubbard, 2005:100):

1. Training required for the organisation (procedural)
2. Training to prevent legal action
3. Training that management require (appraisals)

Some studies found that the decision to participate is essential for motivation and learning (Amitabh and Prashar, 2019; Blume et al, 2010; Curado et al, 2015; Eccles 2006; Gegenfurtner et al, 2016; Kirkpatrick, 1996) whilst others show that participation had little to no effect on the learning process (Jacot et al, 2018a, b; Baldwin et al, 1991; Dysvik and Kuvaas, 2008). Other researchers found that compulsory training had a positive effect (Tsai and Tai 2003).

The SLCC National Conference, a voluntary event, provides speakers and learning opportunities for local council officers. In 2019 the conference had attendance from 270 Councils (SLCC, 2019) representing 2.7% of the 10,000 councils in the UK (NALC, 2020b). This was a record attendance for the event but still lacks participation from the membership.

DuFour et al (2010) believe that those who see transferable skills in compulsory training will be more favourable to take part (Amitabh and Prashar, 2019).

2.3.4 Transferable Skills

It is suggested that the effective learning whilst in school will provide transferable skills later in our working lives (Bowman, 1988, Hampf and Woessman, 2017). Skills can be applied to more than one situation or context (Kemp and Seagraves, 1995), Cryer (1998) states that skills are

‘...an ability to apply knowledge and understanding effectively and consistently’

Jacot et al (2019c) state that training can assist the individual in reaching personal goals, Nabi and Bagley (1999) believe that there are three different kinds of transferable skills:

Personal	Team working, time management and prioritisation
Communication	Written and oral
Problem Solving	Assessing and making judgements

Table 2: Transferable Skills (Nabi and Bagley, 1999)

Transferable skills are needed in recruitment (Nabi and Bagley, 1999) though Crebert et al (2004) state that there was some employer dissatisfaction with the level of transferable skills in the workplace. A survey of employers carried out by Nesta and the City of London Corporation (2019) in 2018/19 found that respondents prioritise transferable skills in recruitment demonstrating their importance, regular review of skills sets were required as new skills may be required over time (Greisler, 2008).

2.4 Summary

The literature review suggests that compulsory training helps to provide clarity of a specific role whilst assisting the effectiveness of the individual to carry out the role requirements. It is also suggested that having a choice of participation has an impact on training effectiveness and that a review process was required. Similarly,

identification of competencies and transferable skills early on ensures that the job requirements are achievable. These findings underpin the aims of the IDB in the local government sector and should be applied to Parish and Town Councils throughout the country.

This chapter has analysed and evaluated the literature relating to both general and compulsory training before identifying four training themes to underpin the research project. The next chapter will discuss and explain the research methodology chosen for the project.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3. Introduction

This chapter will explain how the research was conducted from start to finish along with the advantages and disadvantages of the selected methods and limitations involved.

3.1 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this research project is to investigate whether local council officers and councillors believe that CiLCA training should be compulsory for Clerks.

The objectives are linked to the themes from the literature review:

- ✚ How many Clerks are CiLCA qualified
- ✚ What qualified Clerks gained from the qualification and the *effectiveness* of it
- ✚ Whether Clerks felt *competent* to carry out the role upon appointment
- ✚ Why there may be a lack of *participation*
- ✚ Whether the Clerks had any *transferable skills* upon appointment

3.2 Research Strategy

The strategy is to understand whether local council practitioners and councillors in England believe there should be compulsory training within the sector and whether Clerks training has been effective in the role for those who have undertaken it.

It is important that any research project is carried out ethically with no harm caused to responders (DMU, 2016:6). For the purpose of this study the code of ethics from the Government Social Research (2007) was adhered to throughout the study. Participants were reassured that there would be anonymity for the quantitative research and confidentiality for the qualitative research.

The author enjoys learning and is a trainer for the local County Association and as such has a belief that all Clerks should be trained to a benchmark level in order for local councils to run effectively. This was considered throughout the entirety of the

research strategy to ensure objectivity and that the author's own opinions did not affect the research data. Denscombe (2017) states that objectivity

'...denotes research that is impartial and neutral in terms of the researcher's influence on its outcome'

3.3 Data Collection

Secondary research had already been gathered and has been evidenced in the literature review in chapter 2. Hox and Boeije (2005:593) define secondary research as

'...data originally collected for a different purpose and reused for another research question'

Jugenheimer et al (2015) agrees that secondary research involves using research that already exists to answer the research question.

Hox and Boeije (2005:593) defines primary research as

'...original data collected for a specific research goal'

Primary research is the collection data that has not yet been collected and cannot be found elsewhere Jugenheimer et al (2015). Data can be collected by the researcher in a variety of ways rather than looking through books and journals (Driscoll, 2011). Primary research will be collected using a questionnaire (see appendix 1) and by holding interviews with four Clerks (appendix 2).

Mixed methods of research is described as a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods which are used in primary research for better depth and understanding of a subject (Pluye et al, 2009:530).

3.3.1 Qualitative data collection

Qualitative research methods tend to take the form of words, i.e. written and spoken or of an observational capacity whereby the researcher observes their chosen subjects. Information and data gathered are not just of a numerical value, the spoken word is also classed as data (Guthrie, 2010). Similarly, Denscombe (2017:6) states

'Qualitative research uses words or visual images as a unit of analysis'

3.3.2 Quantitative data collection

Denscombe (2017:6) states

'Quantitative research uses number as a unit of analysis...associated with large scale studies'

Quantitative research methods collect facts, answers to specific questions posed by the researcher. The numerical information is then analysed comparing relationships, reasoning with the numerical data (Neuman, 2013) to provide generalised conclusions. Denscombe (2017) states that quantitative methods look at specific variables after the data has been collected without the involvement or influence of the researcher.

3.3.3 Chosen Research Method

Qualitative and quantitative methods were chosen to ensure a variety and encompassing of data collection. Research methods irrespective of the type have strengths and weaknesses.

Quantitative methods can be quick and inexpensive providing reliable results which can be analysed easily. However, this method can also provide hard data and not specific reasoning and depth behind the data. This method may also generate a low response rate and may not reach all areas of the chosen setting (Denscombe; 2017, Driscoll: 2011).

Qualitative methods produce in depth results providing insights to the data gathered allowing greater flexibility for investigation using minimal equipment. Data gathered can be easily checked for accuracy to ensure validity and as interviews can be scheduled, result in a higher response rate. Though this method ensures validity of data, it does not necessarily show what people do. There is also a risk that the interview may influence the data which affects the reliability of the information. Qualitative data collection can also be time consuming and costly if the researcher has to travel (Denscombe; 2017, Driscoll: 2011).

Denscombe (2017:163) states

'The use of more than one method can enhance the findings of research by providing a fuller more complete picture of the thing that is being studied'

Taking this into account, it was decided to use a mixed methods approach using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection to increase the chance of accuracy and validity (Hurmerinta-Peltomaki and Nummela, 2006).

A pilot of both the quantitative method (survey) and qualitative method (interview) was carried out to ensure that the tools selected worked in practice and to identify any problems (Denscombe, 2017). The author's fellow students were asked to trial the tools before they went live to the target audience. The following comments were made:



Along with these comments were some suggestions to add answers such as 'other'. These were incorporated before going live with the research tools.

3.3.4 Research Limitations

As a trainer for the EALC, the author was aware that there could be some familiarity within Essex which could impact the results gathered. In addition, the survey was sent to both officers and councillors which could affect the reliability of the results as the councillors may not understand what is required of the Clerks role and instead guess the answers.

The research was carried out between 8th July 2020 and 20th July 2020. This was during a worldwide COVID-19 pandemic where many local council officers were

extremely busy running volunteers schemes and food banks to help with the situation. This was in addition to the normal day job meaning officer time was precious, the response rate may have suffered as many officers did not have the time to complete a survey.

The survey was sent to the four CALC's however, there was difficulty in receiving approval from the Hampshire CALC. This resulted in Hampshire not being represented at all in the survey as it had not been circulated.

3.3.5 Survey Design

The survey consisted of ten questions which were based on the themes identified in chapter 2 to see if this theory was evidenced in practice.

Table 3 shows which questions referred to which theme.

Question	Participation	Effectiveness	Competency	Transferable Skills
What is your position on the Council?				
Do you think CiLCA training should be compulsory or voluntary for Clerks?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If you have undertaken CiLCA training, how effective was the training you received?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would you recommend the CiLCA training/qualification?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Generally, are you/is your Clerk motivated to attend training?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you feel you/your Clerk were competent to carry out the Clerk's role when appointed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Upon appointment, did you/your Clerk have any transferable skills that could be brought to the Clerk's role?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Any additional comments?				
County Association affiliated to				
Request to interview				

Table 3: Training themes within survey questions

Questions posed were mainly closed but some open questions were included to give the respondent some flexibility to give their view. Open questions provide a well rounded view but are difficult to analyse as they do not provide a suggested answer. Closed questions are easier to analyse as the respondent is given a list of options to choose from but do not give the respondent's full view which could cause frustration (Denscombe, 2017; Kumar, 2014). The survey questions were mainly closed whereas the interview questions were mainly open.

3.3.6 Interviews

The information gathered from the survey provides specific data but does not provide the reasoning and feelings behind the answer. Whereas the purpose of the interviews is to understand why the respondent feels a certain way. As with the survey, the questions for the interviews were written to understand whether the themes identified in the Literature Review are supported in practice (Sheffield Hallam University, 2020).

A list of the questions posed can be found at appendix 3.

3.3.7 Respondent selection

The survey was distributed via a link to Survey Monkey by the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) to officers and councillors of the EALC. The link was included within an email which explained who the author was and why the research was being carried out whilst confirming anonymity. This information was also placed on the first page of the survey itself.

The following County Associations were targeted as they represent the south east corner of the UK where the author is based.

The research could be extended to the whole country to give a full view. **Table 4** shows the total number of local councils in each county association area according to the county/unitary/district/borough/city councils.

Essex	280 Councils
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	226 Councils
Hertfordshire	125 Councils
Suffolk	422 Councils

Table 4: County Associations targeted for research

There are two ways to view the target audience:

- 41 County Associations in the UK (NALC, 2020b) so the target audience (4 county associations) represented 9.75% of the UK.
- 10,000 local councils in the country (NALC, 2020) therefore the target audience (1053 local councils) represents 10.53% of the UK.

The response rate to the survey will evidence the credibility of the research gathered (Rogelberg and Stanton, 2007; Baruch and Holtom, 2008). A good response rate to the survey is difficult to benchmark and it is suggested that the researcher should

compare their responses to a similar survey (Denscombe, 2017). After undertaking research into response rates, Baruch and Holtom (2008) found that the average response rate is 50%. Similarly, (Mellahi and Harris, 2016) suggest that a general guide for a good response rate is 35% - 50%. Hair et al (2015) suggest that low response rate can result in a biased conclusion as those who had not responded may have a different perspective that they could not voice in the research.

3.3.8 Research bias

It is important that the research and the subsequent results are not biased in any way, a way of mitigating against this is to ensure anonymity to allow the responder to give honest answers. There may also be bias where the responder is trying to please the researcher and gives answers they think the researcher wants to hear (Denscombe, 2017; Hair Jr. et al, 2015; Andrew and Halcomb, 2009). The interviews that were carried out for the research were not anonymous and participants were aware that the author was a trainer for the EALC.

3.4 Summary

This chapter has explained the research strategy and different methods used including limitations and ethical standards. It has also explained the process for respondent selection and bias. The next chapter will evaluate the results of the chosen research methods and present these findings.

Chapter 4

Results and Analysis

4. Introduction

This chapter will analyse the results from the primary research and provide an evaluation of those results whilst linking the findings to the themes identified in literature review (chapter 2). The findings will inform the conclusions and recommendations in chapter 5.

4.1 Survey Responses

The survey was live for 3 weeks from 6th July 2020 to 27th July 2020 and received 245 responses in total. A summary of all responses can be found at appendix 4. It is noted that some Clerks work for more than one local council, for the purpose of this research, those who took part in the survey or interviews responded on behalf of one local council.

4.1.1 Responder profile

There was an almost even split between responders from the EALC and SALC and a small response from CPALC, see **Chart 1**.

Q9 Please select your county association

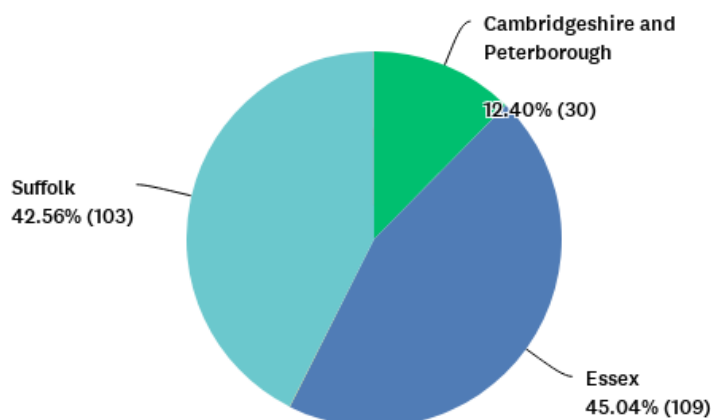


Chart 1: Responders by County Association

The survey was directed at both officers and councillors of local councils. **Table 5** shows the responses from each of the county areas. The majority were from Essex and Suffolk, there was delay circulating the survey link in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough which may explain the lower response rate.

Role	Cambridgeshire & Peterborough	Essex	Suffolk
Clerk	0	10.19% (11)	8.74% (9)
Clerk and RFO ⁷	76.67% (23)	61.11% (66)	70.87% (73)
RFO	0%	2.78% (3)	0%
Deputy Clerk	0%	0.93% (1)	0.97% (1)
Assistant Clerk	0%	0%	0%
Other office staff	0%	0.93% (1)	0%
Councillor	10% (3)	18.52% (20)	15.53% (16)
Chairman	13.33% (4)	2.78% (3)	2.91% (3)
Other	0%	2.78% (3)	0.97% (1)

Table 5: Responses by County Association and role

The majority of responses were received from those who were both Clerk and RFO .

4.1.2 Compulsory vs voluntary

The results show that there was not a clear favourite in the question of compulsory or voluntary CiLCA⁸ training with differing views in each of the counties. Responders from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough were split down the middle with 50% response for each option.



⁷ Responsible Financial Officer

⁸ CiLCA is the Certificate in Local Council Administration, a qualification that covers all aspects of the Clerks role. The certificate is awarded once the candidate has created a portfolio of evidence that meets criterion for 30 learning outcomes. It is a level 3 qualification.

Table 6 shows how these figures were broken down by role within the council.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough		Essex		Suffolk	
<u>Compulsory</u>	<u>Voluntary</u>	<u>Compulsory</u>	<u>Voluntary</u>	<u>Compulsory</u>	<u>Voluntary</u>
(Overall 50%)	(Overall 50%)	(Overall 59%)	(Overall 39%)	(Overall 40%)	(Overall 51%)
67% Clerks	87% Clerks	69% Clerks	83% Clerks	68% Clerks	87% Clerks
33% councillors	13% councillors	23% councillors	16% councillors	26% councillors	13% councillors

Table 6: Compulsory and voluntary training responses by county association

The data shows that the councillors in Suffolk and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough favoured compulsory training whereas the officers favoured voluntary. This is the same in Essex with the exception of more Clerks favouring compulsory training.

Overall, councillors are in favour of compulsory training and Clerks favour voluntary.

4.1.3 Effectiveness and participation

Responders were asked about their experience with CiLCA training, particularly the effectiveness of the training received.

Q3 If you have undertaken CiLCA training, how effective was the training you received?

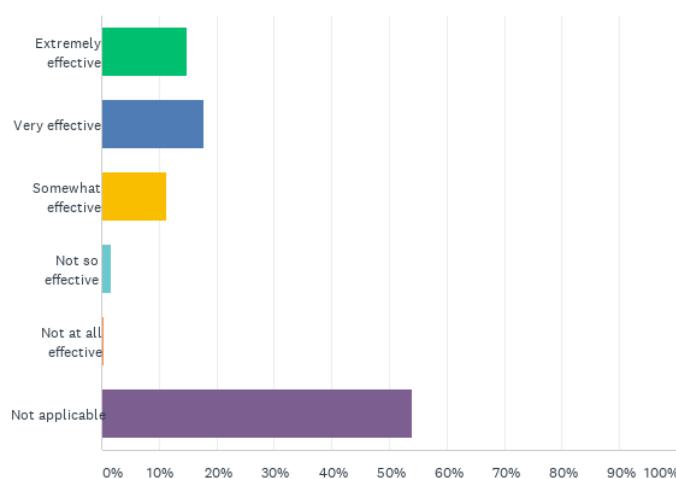


Chart 2 - Effectiveness of CiLCA training

Overall, 46% of responders had undertaken CiLCA training and 71% of those felt the training was either very effective or extremely effective. **Table 7** shows how this is broken down via area.

	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	Essex	Suffolk
Undertaken CiLCA training	40% (12)	56% (61)	36% (36)
Extremely effective	25% (3)	43% (26)	19% (7)
Very effective	50% (6)	33% (20)	47% (17)
Somewhat effective	8% (1)	21% (13)	31% (11)
Not so effective	16% (2)	2% (1)	3% (1)
Not at all effective	0%	2% (1)	0%

Table 7: Effectiveness of training by County Association

Of those who had received CiLCA training:

- 🚧 10 were Clerks
- 🚧 91 were Clerk/RFO
- 🚧 2 were RFO's
- 🚧 2 were deputy Clerks
- 🚧 4 were councillors

Responders were then asked whether they were motivated to participate in training generally. **Chart 3** shows the overall response to this question.

Q5 Generally, are you/is your Clerk motivated to attend training?

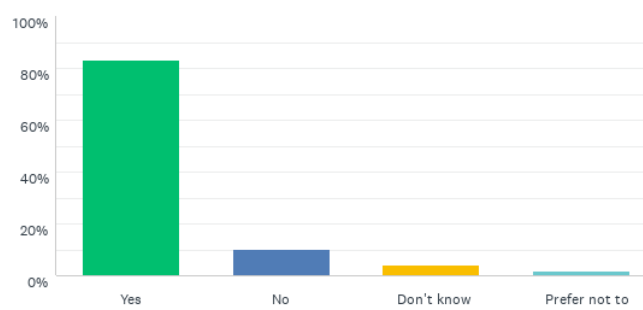


Chart 3 - Motivation to attend training

In response to motivation to participate, 83% (235) were motivated whilst 10% were not and 4% were undecided. In terms of county area, 87% (26) of responders from

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough were motivated to participate in training compared to 84% (88) in Essex and 82% (84) in Suffolk.

Additional comments provided by the responders suggested that Clerks of smaller councils did not require training as those councils did not have the same requirements as larger councils. These responders also felt that small councils were not bound by the same legislation as larger councils.

Further analysis shows that the effectiveness of training effects the views on compulsory training as show in **Table 8**.

In favour of compulsory training	
Extremely Effective (36 responders)	89%
Very Effective (43 responders)	67%
Somewhat Effective (25 responders)	41%
Not so effective (4 responders)	75%
Not at all effective (1 responder)	0%

Table 8: Effectiveness of training compared to views on compulsory training

Comparison via county area shows of those who felt training should be compulsory:

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

- 87% found training to be effective (compared to 50% who preferred voluntary training)
- 92% would recommend training (compared to 33% who preferred voluntary training)

Essex

- 98% found training to be effective (compared to 94% who preferred voluntary training)
- 93% would recommend training (compared to 72% who preferred voluntary training)

Suffolk

- 96% found training to be effective (compared to 100% who preferred voluntary training)
- 91% would recommend training (compared to 59% who preferred voluntary training)

The data shows that the effectiveness of training and the viewpoint of compulsory training has little effect in Essex and Suffolk but a greater effect in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Those who felt training should be voluntary in this county did not receive such effective training which impacted their decision to recommend training.

Interestingly, the results show that the effectiveness of training does not impact on an individuals motivation to participate in training as shown in **Table 9**.

Motivation to participate	
Extremely Effective (36 responders)	100%
Very Effective (43 responders)	100%
Somewhat Effective (25 responders)	96%
Not so effective (4 responders)	100%
Not at all effective (1 responder)	100%

Table 9: Effectiveness of training compared to views on participate

Overall, 87% of those who agree to compulsory training were motivated to participate.

The data for each county area shows that:

In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, 100% of those who believed training should be compulsory are also motivated to attend. In comparison, of those who believed training should be voluntary, 73% were motivated to participate.

In Essex, 85% of those who believed training should be compulsory are also motivated to attend. In comparison, of those who believed training should be voluntary, 80% were motivated to participate.

In Suffolk, 85% of those who believed training should be compulsory are also motivated to attend. In comparison, of those who believed training should be voluntary, 77% were motivated to participate.

This suggests that those who thought training should be voluntary were slightly less likely to participate, this is more apparent in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

4.1.4 Competency and transferable skills

Upon appointment 70% felt that they/their Clerk was competent to carry out the role.

Q6 Do you feel you/your Clerk were competent to carry out the Clerk's role when appointed?

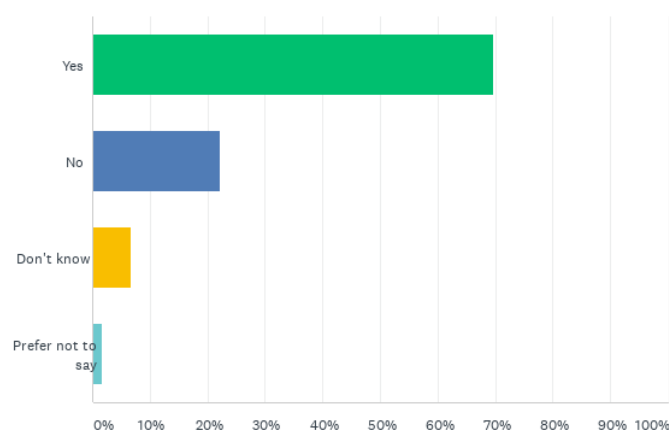


Chart 4: Competency on appointment

Further analysis shows that of those who felt competent upon appointment, 44% found the CiLCA training effective, 61% would recommend the training and 85% were motivated to participate in training. Comparatively, 52% of those who did not feel competent upon appointment found training effective, 63% would recommend it and 85% were motivated to participate. This data shows that competency on appointment has no influence on the effectiveness of training, the recommendation of training or the participation.

When comparing the data from the county areas, the competency level of the person made little to no effect on whether the person felt training should be compulsory or voluntary.

Of the 241 responses, 91% felt that they had transferable skills upon appointment to the role. This is broken down in **Table 10**.

Personal (e.g. team working, time management and prioritisation)	Communication (written and oral)	Problem solving (e.g. assessing and making judgements)
92% (207)	99% (221)	91% (203)

Table 10: Transferable skills on appointment

The research shows that competency had no bearing on the possession of transferable skills. Of those who felt competent, 86% had personal skills, 92% had communication skills and 86% had problem solving skills. Similarly, 89% of those who did not feel competent upon appointment felt they had personal skills, 94% had communication skills and 83% had problem solving skills.

Comparing the data for those who had undertaken CiLCA and those who had transferable skills, the research shows that:

- ✚ 95% had transferable skills on appointment

This was further analysed as

- 87% personal skills
- 95% communication skills
- 85% problem solving skills

- ✚ 95% of those with transferable skills found CiLCA to be either extremely or very effective

4.2 Interviews

As a qualitative research method, interviews were carried out as part of the research project. Following a request for interview, 77 survey responders offered to take part in a Zoom interview. The interviews took place on 2nd and 4th September a list of the questions asked can be found in appendix 2, transcripts of the interviews can be found at appendix 4.

4.2.1 Responders

Those who had offered to be interviewed were categorised⁹ according to the size of the Council in terms of turnover. As smaller councils can have smaller budgets, this could affect the ability to budget accordingly for officer training. The categories were as follows:

- ✚ Category 1 - Under £25,000 turnover
- ✚ Category 2 - Between £25,001 and £199,999 turnover
- ✚ Category 3 - Over £200,000 turnover

It was hoped to interview 2 responders from each of the categories whilst also representing the three counties. Of the 6 people approached, 4 agreed to be interviewed as follows:

- ✚ Category 2 – 2 interviewees (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and Suffolk)
- ✚ Category 3 – 2 interviewees (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and Essex)

As category 1 was not represented, it is noted that qualitative data had not been provided via interview though qualitative data was collected in writing. The data from the two respondents in this category has been included within this analysis.

4.2.2 Compulsory vs voluntary

All four responders agreed that there should be compulsory training for local council clerks and that ILCA or CiLCA should fill this requirement, one felt that CiLCA was too easy whereas another felt it was difficult. The main points in favour of this view were:

- There should be some form of qualification that Clerks should be expected to attain
- Good to professionalise the clerk role as it becomes more complex
- CiLCA gives the basics
- Training recognises the importance and professionalism of the role

All felt that they would have applied for the job even if there was a requirement to attend compulsory training. One responder felt that many Clerks lacked understanding 'some through ignorance, some through deliberate negligence' and that

⁹ Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities (2014) and the Local Government Transparency Code 2015

a compulsory qualification would 'root out those who don't want to do the job properly'. Others were not aware of what was included in the CiLCA training and did not know whether it would be relevant to them.

4.2.3 Effectiveness and participation

Three responders were CiLCA trained and had been for some time (at least 10 years), the other was in the process of undertaking the qualification. All felt that the training helped them in their role as Clerk and introduced them to what was expected from the role. Those who were qualified felt that the qualification was easy to complete, the responder currently working on it was finding it difficult.

When discussing the effectiveness of the CiLCA training there was both positive and negative responses. The current student advised that the whole portfolio had been condensed into a one day training session which was overwhelming and therefore lacked the effectiveness of the training itself. It was felt that drawing on experiences was more effective than providing information from legislation and books. Other training that this responder had participated in had also been rushed. The category 1 councils felt that the training undertaken was effective though there was an issue with the financial implications of such training. The general effectiveness of alternative training, such as those provided by the principle authorities¹⁰ was lacking. One responder suggested that the CALC's should provide basic training to the officers with the SLCC providing more in depth training that could be undertaken after the basic training had been completed.

All responders recommended training and suggested that training (not necessarily CiLCA) should be undertaken early on to ensure understanding of the role. The suggestions ranged from basic training such as roles and responsibilities to the ILCA¹¹ qualification. Similarly, all responders were motivated to attend training. They all felt that the type of training, whether compulsory or voluntary, would not impact their decision to attend training and believed that the effectiveness of training would influence their motivation to attend future training sessions.

¹⁰ District, Borough, City, County or Unitary Councils

¹¹ ILCA is the Introduction to Local Council Administration and provides introductory information to officers on the work of the council. It is a level 2 qualification that can be completed before CiLCA

4.2.4 Competency and transferable skills

Three of the responders felt that they were competent when appointed but only in specific areas (e.g. finance), the other responder did not feel competent at all. Referring to Sandwith's (1993) competency model, the following was discovered in relation to those competencies both on appointment to the role and following training:

Competency	Upon appointment		After training	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Conceptual/Creative	3	1	4	0
Leadership	2	2	4	0
Interpersonal	4	0	4	0
Administrative	4	0	4	0
Technical	3	1	4	0

Table 11: Competency upon appointment and after training

All responders felt that they had transferable skills when appointed which had been gained from previous employment, through voluntary work or from their personal lives. These skills were used daily in their role. The category 1 comments suggested that they had transferable skills on appointment which assisted them but further training was required.

Some responders felt that there should be a 'minimum level of competence for the Clerk' and that CiLCA assists officers to 'gain an all round level of knowledge and competence'.

4.2.5 Training in general

General comments included the importance of training as it gives the basic building blocks to success, one responder likened CiLCA to a theory test for driving, it provided the knowledge to do the job probably. It was generally felt that CiLCA should be the benchmark standard that all Clerks should be expected to reach. Many responders did not know what was involved in the qualification and how it could help them in their role. Others who had successfully gained the qualification some time ago felt that there should be 'refresher training' as new regulations have come into force.

All felt that the size of the Council has no effect on whether an officer is trained as the legislation is for the sector as a whole so it is important that these officers receive training. There were mixed views from the category 1 councils, some felt it 'was not relevant' or was too expensive and that 'there was no way that the Parish Council could pay' and that NALC and the SLCC should consider subsidising training. Others recognised its importance but stressed that 'one size does not fit all' and that there should be 'different levels of qualification' depending on the size of the Council. Some had not attended any training at all instead relying on other Clerks and their CALC.

Training was summed up by one responder a 'I learned what I didn't know I didn't know!'.

4.3 Summary

This chapter has analysed and evaluated the primary research gathered following the training themes identified in chapter 2. The analysis covered the opinions of officers and councillors and also made comparisons between the CALC's in Essex, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It also analysed whether the training themes identified previously impacted each other or the overall opinion of compulsory vs voluntary training.

The next chapter will provide conclusions from the research and suggest recommendations for the SLCC and CALC's and the sector as a whole.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

5. Introduction

This chapter will set out the conclusions from the training themes identified in the literature review and the results from the primary research that had been carried out. It will then offer recommendations to the SLCC and the NALC arising from the research project.

5.1 Conclusions

The results from the primary research show that there are slightly more people in favour of compulsory training compared to voluntary training, with Essex being most in favour of compulsory training and Suffolk preferring voluntary training. Those who had undertaken specific training for local councils had found it effective with the majority motivated to participate in training. However, training provided by higher tier councils was ineffective. The data shows that the majority were competent upon appointment with sector specific training raising that competency level; most had transferable skills that were called upon to carry out the role.

The CiLCA qualification is not yet compulsory so the data has been analysed with this in mind. Referring back to the training themes in chapter 2, the literature review, Pietrzyk and Handley (2016) found compulsory training least effective whereas the research results show that those who found training effective believed it should be compulsory. Hubbard (2005) believes enthusiasm and effective training enable participation, whereas the research showed those who had a bad experience with training were still willing to participate in further professional development. Sandwith's (1993) model suggests management competencies, the research shows that the majority of officers had at least two of the competencies rising to all following sector specific training. Crebert et al (2004) suggest that employers were dissatisfied with the level of transferable skills in the workplace, the research shows significantly high levels of transferable skills within the sector suggesting that this does not appear to be such an issue in local councils.

5.2 Recommendations

The research within this dissertation has reached its limits and as such the following recommendations are made to the SLCC and NALC:

Training of the CiLCA qualification

The research showed that the way in which CiLCA training sessions are structured can affect the effectiveness of the participants learning and their experience. The length of training sessions differs across the country (some carried out in 2 full days whilst others offering up to 6 sessions lasting 4 hours) which may have a negative effect on the learner. Allowing the learner adequate time to receive and digest the information from the training builds confidence as well as knowledge required in their role and to complete the qualification. It is recommended that the SLCC research the training methods across the country and survey those who had taken CiLCA to see whether a 'prime' course duration can be identified that can then be incorporated nationally.

The trainer would need to combine legislation with real life situations to enrich this training. It is recommended that the SLCC consider investigating this further to ascertain whether creating a training programme followed by all CiLCA registered trainers would add value to those undertaking the qualification. It is also recommended that further study is carried out into the training methods of individual trainers to identify the specific methods used as the research shows that effectiveness of training in some counties is higher than others. As mentioned, incorporating real life situations with the theory and legislation was found to be more effective from the responders surveyed.

Cost of the qualification

Many comments were received relating to the cost of the qualification particularly for a smaller council with limited resources. The majority of these comments were from councils with a precept of less than £10,000. Using the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities as a guide, the councils could be grouped by turnover (less than £25,000, between £25,000 and £200,000 and over £200,000) and different levels of the CiLCA qualification could be tailored both in content and financially to the size of the Council. Suggestions were also received that



the training could be subsidised by the NALC/SLCC. It is recommended that the SLCC investigate a tiered system to the content of CiLCA and the financial aspects involved in a new tiered qualification including grants to smaller councils (less than £25,000 turnover). Should the SLCC decide that the content of the qualification could not be altered, it should consider the financial implications to a council with limited resources. The current registration fee for the CiLCA is £410 (SLCC, 2020a) and the training required to complete the qualification is an additional cost to the council and varies throughout the country. The SLCC could consider reducing the cost of the registration to smaller councils and adding the shortfall to the councils with a greater turnover. The SLCC and the NALC could then consider subsidising the training courses for those councils with a turnover of less than £25,000.

Timing of completing the CiLCA qualification

Comments suggest that the timing of undertaking the qualification is important. Some suggest that this should be early on in a Clerks career, others suggest that a Clerk should be settled in the role for at least a year. It is recommended that the SLCC carry out further research to identify the views of the membership and the reasoning behind those viewpoints to see if there is an opportune time to undertake the qualification without adding any further pressure to the officer.

Training in programmes generally including refresher training

Many responders had undertaken the CiLCA qualification some time ago and felt that refresher training should be available as many laws and procedures would have come into force, been amended or repealed during this time. It is essential that the officer continues with their professional development and remains current with legislation and procedure. It is recommended that the SLCC investigate whether a smaller periodic refresher training module could be created to update those who have already achieved the qualification. Some areas of the CiLCA will not change often:

-  Unit 1 - core roles in local council administration and
-  Unit 5 - community engagement

However other areas will change over time with the introduction of new legislation and procedures and amendments to existing legislation and procedures:

- ✚ Unit 2 - law and procedures for local councils and
- ✚ Unit 3 - and finance for local councils

The SLCC and CALC could offer refresher training every 2 – 5 years on these key areas that are likely to change. Those undertaking refresher training could be given the option to attend training on all units within the CiLCA or specific units at a set cost per unit. The SLCC could specify that if the key areas are resat and passed, then a new updated CiLCA certificate is awarded to the candidate at a small cost (similar to the registration fee). The cost of the assessment could be set to cover the financial implications this would generate to the SLCC.

Specific training areas for the CALC and SLCC could be investigated following the suggestion that the CALC provide basic training such as an introduction to local councils, roles and responsibilities, law and procedures and community engagement to both councillors and officers whilst the SLCC provide more in depth professional training such as managing employees, project management and leadership skills to its membership.

✚ **Extend the research to cover the whole country for a wider perspective**

It is recommended that the research could be extended to the whole country to give a fuller view of the sector as a whole whilst raising the profile of the sector and the training available at a national level.

✚ **The need for fully inclusive training**

The data shows that some felt that training is not important or relevant for smaller councils as they do not work to the same requirements as larger councils. Others were not aware of what the CiLCA qualification involved which could suggest that some Clerks do not know what is required both legally and procedurally. This shows a lack of understanding in the sector which needs to be addressed to ensure the professionalism of the sector. The financial implications on smaller councils needs to be considered to ensure that training is accessible to all to be fully inclusive. It is recommended that both officers and councillors within the UK

are consulted on training accessibility to identify the barriers to fully inclusive training. Once these barriers are identified, the sector as a whole can then plan ways in which to attempt to eliminate them allowing more councillors and officers to receive professional training to carry out their roles efficiently and effectively.

5.3 Summary

This chapter has drawn conclusions from the primary research in chapter 4 and made comparisons to the secondary research identified in chapter 2. It has provided recommendations for further investigations for both the SLCC and the CALC's but also the sector as a whole to deliver an effective training programme to local council officers. This will ensure the value of the training received by the officer whilst raising the professionalism of the role of Parish Clerk within the local government sector.

Word count: 8058

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Appendix 1 – Questions for survey

1. What is your position on the Council?
Clerk / Clerk & RFO / RFO / Deputy Clerk / Assistant Clerk / Other office staff / Councillor / Chairman / Other
2. Do you think CiLCA training should be compulsory or voluntary for Clerks?
Compulsory / Voluntary / Don't know / Prefer not to say
3. If you have undertaken CiLCA training, how effective was the training you received?
Extremely effective / Very effective / Somewhat effective / Not so effective / Not at all effective / Not applicable
4. Would you recommend the CiLCA training/qualification? Please explain your answer
Yes / No / Don't know / Prefer not to say / Not applicable
5. Generally, are you/is your Clerk motivated to attend training?
Yes / No / Don't know / Prefer not to say
6. Do you feel you/your Clerk were competent to carry out the Clerk's role when appointed?
Yes / No / Don't know / Prefer not to say
7. Upon appointment, did you/your Clerk have any transferable skills that could be brought to the Clerk's role?
Personal (e.g. team working, time management and prioritisation) / Communication (written and oral) / Problem solving (e.g. assessing and making judgements) / Don't know / Prefer not to say
8. Please add any additional comments you have about Clerks training.
9. Please select your County Association
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough / Essex / Hertfordshire / Suffolk / Other (please specify)
10. If you would be willing to take part in a Zoom interview at a mutually convenient time, please provide your contact name and email address.

Appendix 2 – Interview questions

1. Are you/is your Clerk CiLCA qualified?
 - (a) If no, do you/does your Clerk intend to obtain the CiLCA qualification?
 - (i) If yes, is this because the Clerk wants to undertake the qualification or is expected to (i.e. it is written in the contract?)
 - (ii) If no, why do you think this is?
 - (b) If yes, how has the training helped you in your role?
2. What do you think you will gain from the training?
3. Do you think all Clerks should be trained?
Please explain why.
4. Do you think Clerks should attend mandatory training?
Please explain why.
5. Before training, did you feel competent to carry out the role correctly?
If not, why not?
6. Which of the following did you have before training

Conceptual/creative	Understanding the role and investigating different actions
Leadership	Turning thoughts into action whilst influencing, inspiring and empowering others
Interpersonal	Effective interactions and relationships with others
Administrative	Personnel and financial management
Technical	The work of the organisation

7. Which of the following do you think you have after training

Conceptual/creative	Understanding the role and investigating different actions
Leadership	Turning thoughts into action whilst influencing, inspiring and empowering others
Interpersonal	Effective interactions and relationships with others
Administrative	Personnel and financial management
Technical	The work of the organisation

8. Did you have any of the following transferable skills that could be brought to the Clerk's role?

Personal (team working, time management and prioritisation)

Communication (written and oral)

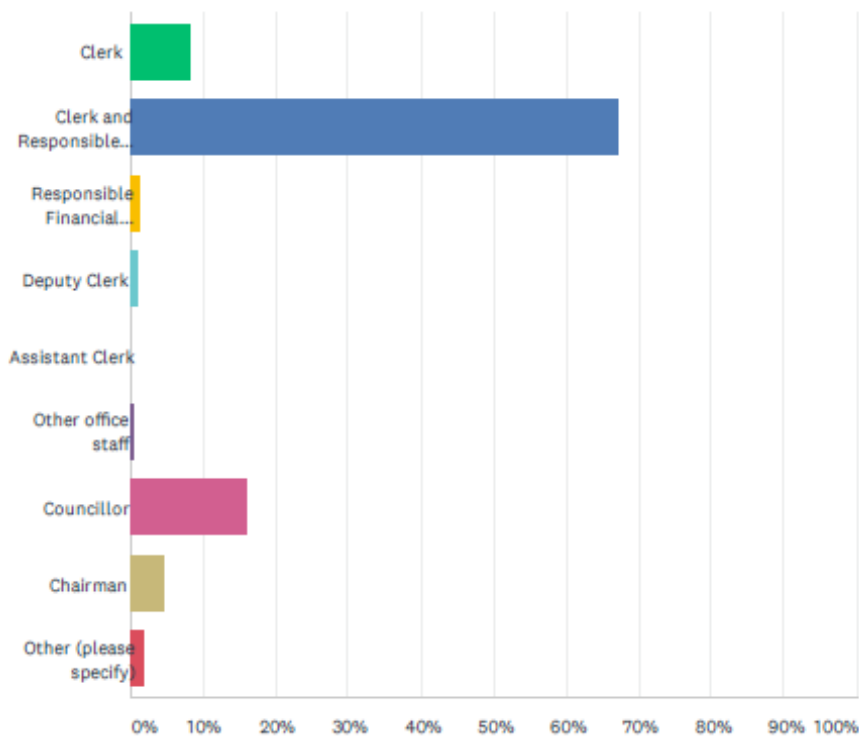
Problem solving (assessing and making judgements)

9. What sector specific training have you undertaken? (CALC, SLCC, DC, CC, fellow clerks, handover)
 10. How effective was the training that you undertook?
 11. Has sector specific training that you have undertaken provided you with any of the following transferable skills (personal, communication, team working)?
 12. Would you recommend the training?
Please explain why.
 13. Would you have taken the job if it involved mandatory training?
Please explain why
 14. Are you motivated to attend training?
 15. Would you be more likely to be engaged with training if it was voluntary?
Please explain why.
- ❖ Any points that you feel need to be covered that haven't been?

Appendix 3 – Summary of all responses to the survey

Q1 What is your position on the Council? Please select from the menu below.

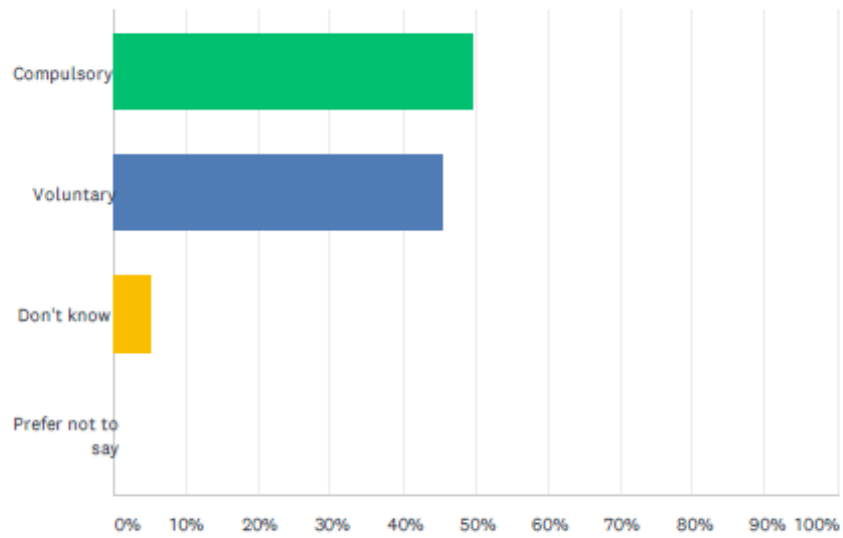
Answered: 244 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Clerk	8.20%	20
Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer	67.21%	164
Responsible Financial Officer	1.23%	3
Deputy Clerk	0.82%	2
Assistant Clerk	0.00%	0
Other office staff	0.41%	1
Councillor	15.98%	39
Chairman	4.51%	11
Other (please specify)	1.64%	4
TOTAL		244

Q2 Do you think CiLCA training should be compulsory or voluntary for Clerks?

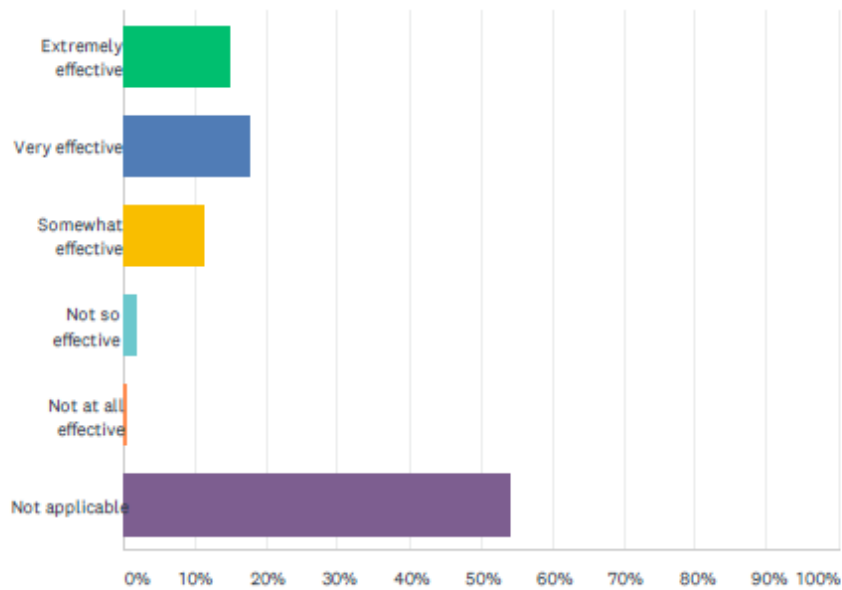
Answered: 244 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Compulsory	49.59%	121
Voluntary	45.49%	111
Don't know	4.92%	12
Prefer not to say	0.00%	0
TOTAL		244

Q3 If you have undertaken CiLCA training, how effective was the training you received?

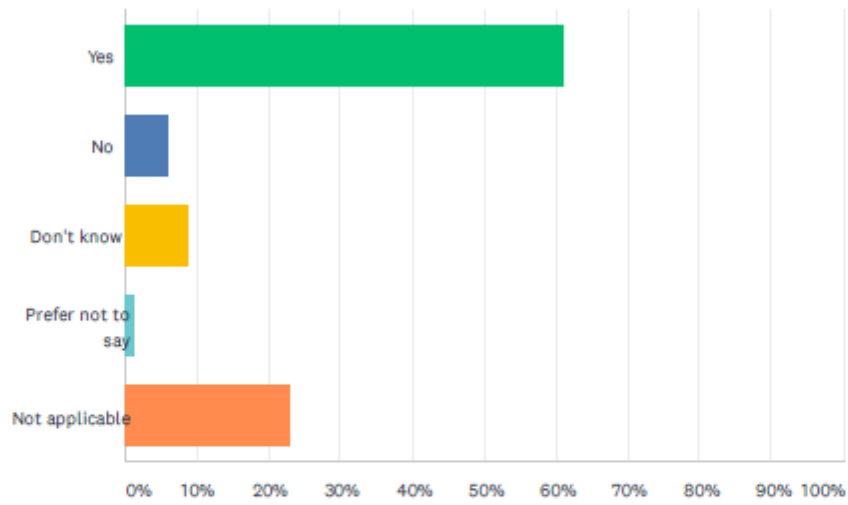
Answered: 241 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Extremely effective	14.94%	36
Very effective	17.84%	43
Somewhat effective	11.20%	27
Not so effective	1.66%	4
Not at all effective	0.41%	1
Not applicable	53.94%	130
TOTAL		241

Q4 Would you recommend the CiLCA training/qualification? Please explain your answer.

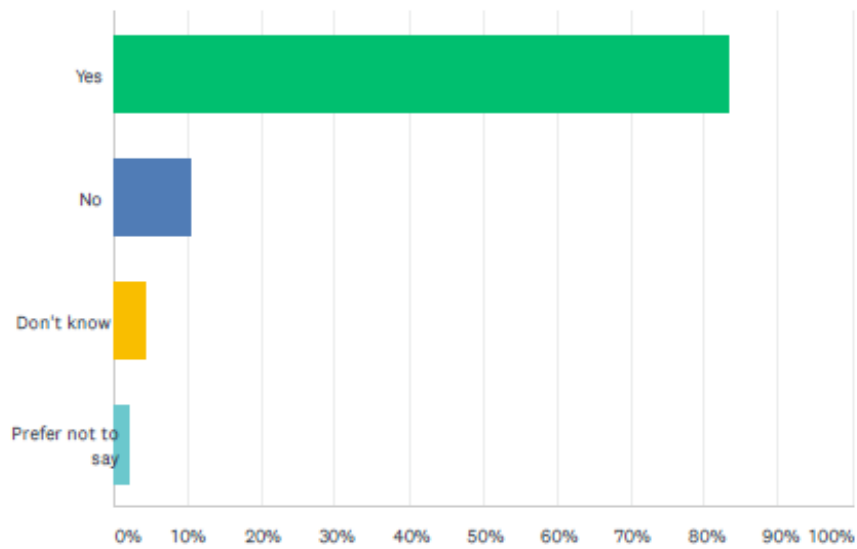
Answered: 239 Skipped: 6



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	61.09%	146
No	5.86%	14
Don't know	8.79%	21
Prefer not to say	1.26%	3
Not applicable	23.01%	55
TOTAL		239

Q5 Generally, are you/is your Clerk motivated to attend training?

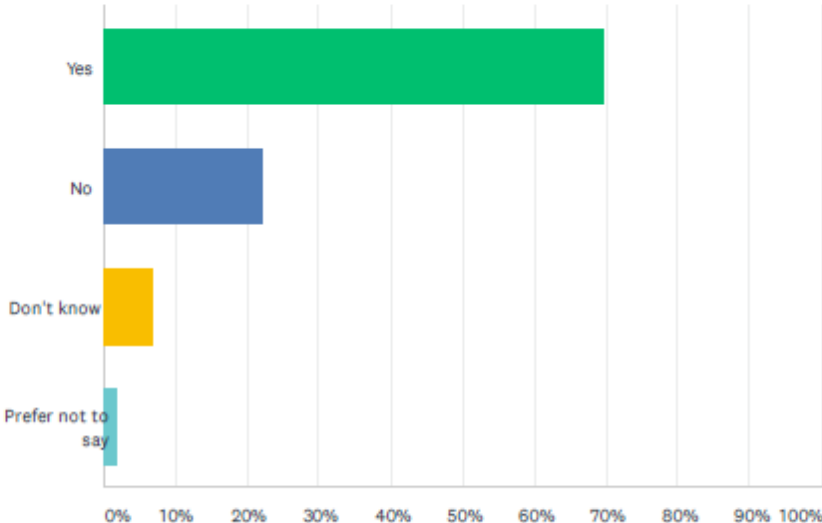
Answered: 240 Skipped: 5



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	83.33%	200
No	10.42%	25
Don't know	4.17%	10
Prefer not to say	2.08%	5
TOTAL		240

Q6 Do you feel you/your Clerk were competent to carry out the Clerk's role when appointed?

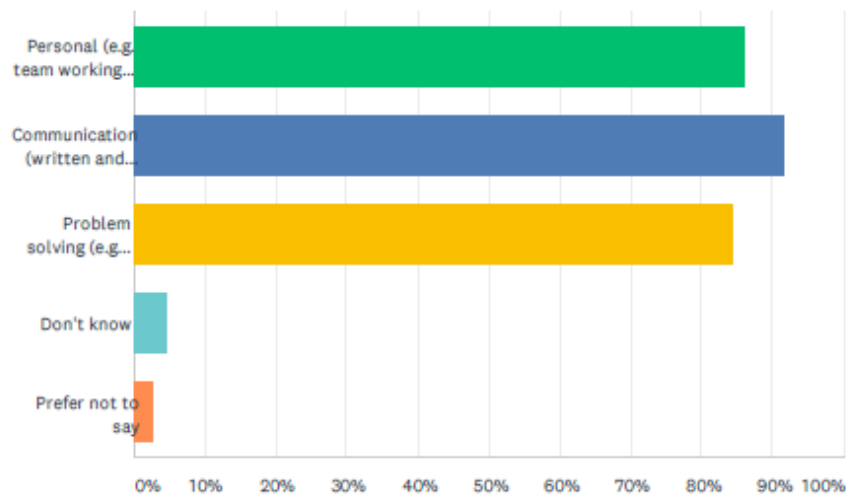
Answered: 240 Skipped: 5



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	69.58%	167
No	22.08%	53
Don't know	6.67%	16
Prefer not to say	1.67%	4
TOTAL		240

Q7 Upon appointment, did you/your Clerk have any transferable skills that could be brought to the Clerk's role? (please tick all that apply)

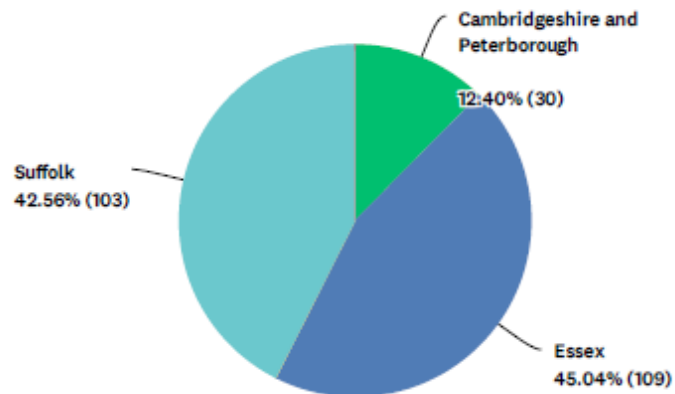
Answered: 241 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Personal (e.g. team working, time management and prioritisation)	85.89%	207
Communication (written and oral)	91.70%	221
Problem solving (e.g. assessing and making judgements)	84.23%	203
Don't know	4.56%	11
Prefer not to say	2.49%	6
Total Respondents: 241		

Q9 Please select your county association

Answered: 242 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (1)		12.40%	30
Essex (2)		45.04%	109
Hertfordshire (3)		0.00%	0
Suffolk (4)		42.56%	103
Other (5)		0.00%	0
Other (please specify) (6)		0.00%	0
TOTAL			242

BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	4.00	2.00	2.73	1.14

Appendix 4 – Interview transcripts

Interview 1 – 2nd September

Kelly

So the whole the whole point of me doing this for my dissertation was because you probably know that I'm very pro training.

OK, so I've got a few questions I've written down, but obviously if we end up talking about this stuff, that's fine.

The first question is, are you CiLCA qualified?

Responder

Yes, yes.

Kelly

So when, when did you become CiLCA qualified?

Responder

Oh, now that's a question.

Quite awhile ago.

Yeah, so I completed the degree.

Oh God.

Oh, I finished the degree two years ago. That took me 6 years. So that was eight years ago.

And then I did the CiLCA outside 10-11 years ago. Yeah, 10-11 years ago it would be 11 years. Roughly 11 'cause Jim is coming up 13. That would make sense, yeah?

Kelly

Do you think that what you learn in CiLCA helps you in your role as a Clock?

Responder

Oh, without shadow of a day or definitely.

Kelly

Yeah, different ways, would you say?

Responder

The only thing I don't like about CiLCA and I'll be honest and you probably know this from doing the Degree is I find the CiLCA are a bit of A and I don't mean to use this to not an idiot's guide, but what and always be like. Say for instance Rayleigh Town Council which just come up.

And I say we want to CiLCA qualified Clock and I just think if you compare CiLCA.

To a community governance honours degree, there is no comparison because what you do CiLCA was very good.

And it gave me the.

Um, the start. So I thought bright, uh, got a little bit of a calm.

But I by no means think the CiLCA qualification is almost good enough to be a clerk. If you see I think it is a stepping stone really, and that maybe that's just because of how my jobs involved, but.

Maybe if you're in smaller maybe, but at the same time now, because even though you're a smaller parish, do you still have the same responsibilities? Don't you? But it's just the one main but.

Um, I think I think it's odd like yourself. I love the learning and with CiLCA I just. It does infuriate me a bit. When you see a job advert and they say Oh CiLCA qualified or community governance degree equivalent and then just you can't even put them in the same box. You know it's.

I find it more of a stepping stone if that makes sense.

Kelly

Right, so do you think then the CiLCA needs to be looked at and be more in depth and or do you think they should be something between CiLCA and the committee governance?

Responder

Yeah, I don't to be honest. Yeah I don't. Um, I think for.

For Counselors who maybe think oh we're having a CiLCA qualified Clerk thinking right, we're gonna go places here 'cause she's got CiLCA qualification and it is great that they've got it.

But

I don't think it makes them the person that they think they might be getting as a result of having it. I think it's a bit like doing your theory for your driving. You know enough to muddle along, but you don't know enough to not have to keep.

Kelly

I've had quite a few responses from Clerks from the survey that have said smaller parish councils do not need to be CiLCA qualified or the Clerk doesn't need training cause they don't have the same requirements as other parish councils. What your thoughts on that?

Responder

No, no, if anything more I.

Ain't from being a smaller one. I did smaller before.

And now I'm obviously a town, and to be honest the problems I had here are probably on a bit of a bigger scale. But As for the day-to-day work, that's why in a

way I'd actually quite like to do a little parish. Again, the job was more rounded when I did a parish you do everything, whereas with here.

I've got finance officer and it's good, but it comes to me at the end and I do the income and expenditure. I'm not involved in the real day-to-day and I can't see and listen, not. And I don't mean this to sound rudely unless they're not doing the job properly.

What beats 'cause the maintainer sitting in a meeting standing orders, financial regulation or at maybe transparency code might differ slightly.

I can't see how they're any different really. I feel sorry for and bless them because their counselors probably don't realize what they should be doing, and that's the problem. You know we've had here in the party. They rubbish clog scuse my French counselors on paper they say Oh, they're very good. They were bank manager for 30 years. Not sure that makes him a good Clerk.

Kelly

Do you think then it's something like CiLCA should be mandatory for Clerks so that everyone is working to the same song sheet. Or do you think that it doesn't matter because people do their own thing even if they?

Responder

Do do CiLCA.

It I mean if they could all do it, it would be amazing for the simple reason. I think what can make it hard is.

Because there's no one really to not discipline them, but pull them in low in so you could go to a council that everyone says, oh, we were Fantastic Council without a clerk here for 20 years and we've been run perfectly. They might generally think they have.

But then when you go in and you look at it and you like Oh, where's this oh you don't need to bother with that. We've never done that whereas if everyone had to work to the same sort of standards as such. I think it would help us all and also I feel sorry for some of the clerks when you see the job advertised and it says.

You know parish clerk five hours a week.

You know 10 pound, 50 an hour, anything for that you're asking for an auditor and I don't think it helps almost other clerks because.

Maybe I base it on my own life, but I think there's almost this stigma that, oh, she's great.

Fall to do it because you know it fits in around the school and then she does a few little bit of minutes in the evening as opposed to paying you what you should be paid for your responsibility. If you see what I mean.

Kelly

I agree.

Sorry to kind of go back and what you said there so you're in agreement with having some sort of benchmark. Or do you think it would be better if everyone was just following a training program that they picked? Whether they did it or not?

Responder

Um Oh, I see what you're saying, yeah?

I think the training would definitely help, um, and I'll be honest, I did CiLCA twice when I started the job, I started CiLCA straight away and I was rubbish because I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't know about the job and then I did the job for a year to the best of my ability.

With choice of helping me with problems and then after a year I thought right. I feel like I know enough now to do CiLCA, so I think it's one of those. It would be hard to say. You gotta have CiLCA because it's not the sort of course should probably do a college.

They would be nice. I mean some town in parishes, say you know CiLCA qualified within two years.

I think that would be, you know, would be good, but benchmark. You know, having certain standards would be brilliant really.

Kelly

Before training, so I'm talking about in your current role as a clerk.

Did you feel competent carry out this the Clerks role

Responder

No, definitely no confidence whatsoever.

Probably be cause I think.

Counselors, the ones went to. All this is our current speak from my experience. When you start a new parish, generally the old Clerk is left under a bit of a cloud and you often find that the counselors that grab you straight away are normally the ones that have caused the problem to the old one.

So they will say, Oh, she never did this and she never did that. And then you want to please them? And when you don't really know the rules and regulations, you might not have to do a bit of minutes, but you don't know. I don't know, or I didn't know at the time. Well decisions could only come from a meeting. I thought this is the chair.

And the chair has told me I must do something and then I must do it. You know, because I didn't have the confidence, and that's actually probably where I fell out a bit with one of my Terrell parishes, because one of them was a district and County councillor an I thought she was God for a couple of years and everything she said was gospel and she upset all the other counselors.

I was frightened over and it was only after I done CiLCA that I realized no, you're not. You don't have to do this and I don't have to do this for you, and they're not. It gave

me the confidence to say all these are the uh and then of course she could have bear me because I wasn't her puppy anymore. She quite liked that.

But now I had no confidence whatsoever. No none.

Kelly

Thinking about like different types of skills you might had like communication problem solving. Do you think that you had some of those skills when you started?

Responder

Oh, definitely yeah yeah, um? 'cause I'd run committee meetings and things before and done a bit of charity work and then did account so I was OK. But before I had my children so I had that background. So I had those skills but it's the I don't know the small things like.

A quorum and you know working parties don't make decision and committees do those sort of things that were a little bit.

Just for the sector, really.

That you learn as you sort of find your way, and you make mistakes, and then afterwards they Oh no.

Kelly

So those those like transferable.

Skills is what I've called them.

Do you think you've got those in previous jobs?

Responder

Oh, definitely.

Previous employment and voluntary work, yeah.

So this is some these weird waffle at least.

Kelly

From doing the literature, you know from being literature reviews, I pulled out some information, so I'm just going to ask you if you had any of these that they're not the transferable skills I was talking about and their different ones, it says.

Conceptual and creative skills such as understanding the role that you're going to take on an investigating different actions. So that's when we took on the job. Do you think that you had the understanding the proper understanding of the role?

Responder

No.

No, and that was from the expert. It literally just originally said for some finance was nothing.

But my job role said when I said.

Kelly

About leadership skills, do you think you had those?

Responder

No, no, I don't actually know.

No, definitely not.

Kelly

Interpersonal skills

Responder

Oh, I probably sound a bit big headed, but yeah, probably have got those, yes

Kelly

Well, at administrative skills.

Responder

Yeah, yeah.

Kelly

So the ones you didn't have when you started, we just gone through. Do you think that training helped you to bring out that some of those skills? I just still feel like you don't have those skills now.

Responder

Oh, I certainly have nail that sounds a bit big headed, doesn't it?

That's the whole reason I never packed in because I literally sometimes if you do something and you get nothing from it, you think. Why am I wasting? I got so so much from it and I'm such a degree bore I. I mean, I know it's not CiLCA but.

I can't believe from doing it. How often I say when I did my degree and we did this, you know so much of that degree I use at South Woodham. It's and he said probably because each changed how I look at the job and how I serve the community.

Whereas before it was all you know, I rock up and take the minutes and I do the actions.

You know now if we were doing something like a playground, I'd say, well, how are we going to find out from the children what they want? How will we know? Is it what? Whereas before I'd never have thought of doing that really so it has changed how I think I do my job created a lot more work if I'm to be honest.

I do think it's better.

Kelly

Um, so I've got a just an easy question. So what sector specific training have you undertaken? So you've done CiLCA? When you've done the degree, do you do it?

Do you still do other trainings? And since you've done it degree, just have keeping knowledge up-to-date or everything?

Responder

Yeah, I generally I'm.

And I don't mean this week to joy.

SLCC

Our following I don't like the alc training, particularly um only, and I think they're following, and that's where I think the sector is so odd. You seem to get clerks that have just joined and the EALD is great. Oh, do roles and responsibilities out in laws and procedures and it does.

Give you that sort of.

Point in your fate.

Yeah, I think.

Once you've been here a long time.

It's, you know I don't know like the white paper on whether they're gonna get rid of district councils and things like that. That's the sort of thing Y else might attachment to a weekly bulletin. But SLC, say you go to conference it, it would cost me an arm and a leg, but I'll get someone there.

And I feel like when I come back from there, I can say yes, we covered this. I've got ideas, whereas a I will say I just think oh, it's Alan Smart again, you know, doing for yeah I just don't find 'em useful for me anymore.

I should I say so you see the Calc as more as a introductory training and then SLC spending more in depth for what you.

Kelly

Does your county or district offer any training?

Responder

Yeah, Chelmsford for two quite a bit actually a community resilience 'cause we're rest seem to hear they do. The odd one on planning we've had. Yeah, they're not loud, but yeah, the odd things that are currently quite good at.

And they they useful to you and your team members in your counselors.

Exceptional dial. They're lovely to work for Chelmsford, but they really are, yeah.

Kelly

I've got here. This is probably not relevant actually. How has sector specific training that you've undertaken provide you with any of the following transferable skills? So personal communication and teamwork? And you said you handled that when you started, so the training hasn't necessarily had any effect on that? Or has it? I?

Responder

Think I had interpersonal skills?

Um, but I didn't.

God certainly wasn't a leader when I started. No why was our leader, but from doing the degree, I think I'm a better leader because.

I've got confidence now in what I say is right. You know from doing it, whereas before I thought oh better ash joy, better you know. Better contact, joy do I know. And now even the only times I'll contact her she generally comes back with. I'm not sure are you with me there though. Sort of 1 how well you can read either way.

So it's definitely helped me speak in meetings. Actually, I've got interpersonal skills that I could speak to a counselor. I'm very good. Sounds like BKT done it, but you know, like if I spoke to you as a Clock, I talk in one way, but I've got some counselors at a very lovely. You know, she works in Esther as well as the community page.

Oh God, I start talking about localism. I'd Bora, but I'm quite good at changing so I tell her exactly the same thing without feeling silly really, you know and not degree is certainly helped with that and engaging people. Yeah it has. Yeah so that that detailed through that.

Kelly

So in general thinking about all the training that you've undertaken, would you be recommending it?

Responder

Yeah, yeah

Kelly

So we think back again to when you started. If the job advert you first looked at said, you must undertake CiLCA training. Would you have gone for the job?

Responder

I probably would it as long as it's sort of said, um, it gave you an idea of how long CiLCA was gonna take because that was I must admit that's when I struggled a bit with the degree. Actually, because I said to Elizabeth I fancy starting next year and she said, but Karen, the fees are gonna go through the roof. So if you don't start now.

You're not gonna be able to, and I said, well, how long is it gonna take? And I know it's that how long is a bit of string, um?

So I think if it said you know CiLCA training and there was maybe a link to the alc and it's sort of showed, you know this is expect 'cause that is Essex equals is amazing, isn't it? You know that's good. So just so you've got an idea of what CiLCA is. Because if you went to an hour interview and said to a counselor, what CiLCA? They wouldn't have a foggiest

Kelly

There is a lot more counselors are doing CiLCA now. Do you think we should just be clerks qualification or you do agree that counselors could do it?

Responder

Now I think it's a cool. Yeah, I do.

But there should be something specific with counselors.

Yeah, and I think it may muddy the water a bit.

I do know my job inside out and then they'll talk to someone there who and I don't mean this honey doesn't know the job and they said well so and so's told me that. And I just think you really undermined me. I've done this job for 12 years I think.

With the I mean totally different question, but I find this SLCC information I get is oh it's 100%. It's right, um, and I find it as good guidance, whereas EALC's well have I understood this question right. So what you're saying is this? Well, and then they'll tell your counselor.

Maybe something slightly different when you've updated your council.

With the information you've based that on, you know I just think if you're the officer then you are the officer, it's a.

How many headmistresses do you have? Are you with Megan that that's what I think? Kind of where some counselors almost lose respect because it's which has Arnold Baker. It's interpretation, isn't it? So yes, you can read it like that, but the same time. If Joy said this is how I've interpreted it, well, actually joy could be right.

But there's no sort of right and wrong, and I think sometimes if you've got bullyish natured counselors, they can say, well, joy told me this. I think sometimes counselors can have.

Too much of the wrong knowledge, really. If you see what I mean, but they're not the clerk, are they? You know they are a counselor sends over understand what we do. No.

I think they do, but they haven't got paid yet.

Kelly

Are you motivated to attend training?

Responder

Yeah.

Kelly

How have you found the training that you've done. You found it to be effective.

Responder

Yeah yeah have yeah but.

Generally, or is it some of it's been a bit rubbish and.

The majority of people.

Walk from all different places.

Yeah yeah hey yeah we wanna found rubbish and I don't think it was their fault. I think it was maybe run a little bit too early. Was the GDPR one that I did it?

And I've got nothing against the man, um, and I'd already done it in the SLCC

Uh, they, uh, I don't know. It's national conference or something like that.

And when I went to alc and he delivered it and a lot of it was wrong.

And I was quite worried about that because there was a lot of clerks in that room that took his word as gospel, and I thought that's not right what he's saying and it worried me that they had people.

Delivering a coves that probably own experts in that field, you know, like SLC, so if they're doing something on GDPR, they have someone.

You might pay £200 to go, but at least you're gonna get your questions answered, whereas yeah, that one wasn't great.

Precisely one bad experience I've had as well as we've got assigned course.

Kelly

Do you think that, um, if you've had a good experience training, it makes you more motivated to attend training? Or do you think it matters?

Responder

Oh it does from a It does. Yeah, definitely.

Kelly

Do things that you would be more likely to be engaged with training if it was voluntary compared to it being mandatory.

Responder

I think there's no real.

No, no, real different now.

I think there's no real.

Is there any other points that you think in relation to train that you want to make?

Responder

Just think maybe CiLCA.

Is good to do.

But if you're not gonna 'cause that is the trouble with the job, the job isn't it. No one leaves school thing. Cannot be a parish clerk today, you know, you just sort of evolve into the job.

An audit found. Maybe it's 'cause of how my life was, but for me personally to do the job for a year helped Maine. When I then did the CiLCA. Um, I don't know whether that was time I think it was knowledge to be honest. It's a bit like one of those things, isn't it? The annual meeting all the time, even now.

I I doubt myself on certain things and the dates are you with me, and when you've seen a whole year, I think because the job is so or my seems so different every month.

So we've seen one year through I think. Have you got an idea of the bigger picture maybe?

So that's the only thing I think.

Kelly

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me

Interview 2 – 4th September

Kelly

OK, right so my first question. I've got a list of questions, but we may well go off on tangents, but my first question is.

Are you CiLCA qualified?

Responder

No, I'm doing it at the moment.

Kelly

OK, so in that respect then how are you finding it?

Responder

Um, I am finding it quite hard, actually, um.

I think because it's portfolio based and um, I think well the first thing is that every time I do a unit.

I think I find all of these things that I think Oh my God, I should be doing this, that or the other which I haven't been doing. Um, which is fine. That's good. You know, that's really what it's about. But at the same time, it's sort of.

A couple of times I thought, Oh my, you know where am I going with this? Um, like for example when when I was doing the health safety unit?

We've got to be honest. We got very little at all. The only real work that I did on I've done on health and safety this year has been trying to get the playgrounds back into use.

Um, so I think it. It's it's really good from that point of view, but sometimes it does undermine, you know it can undermine your confidence a little bit.

Kelly

I completely understand where you're coming from. With that. I've got one lady list, has I've done all the training with them, but I'm now just trying to mentor to help her get through the portfolio and she's finding that she's thinking I'm not doing this. I'm not doing that and I said We don't need to concentrate on that. You know now where you're not doing it yet? It really feel portfolio and then you can implement it into your.

Accounts with all about a learning curve really. Yeah, you need to have done this. It's happened on this. If you haven't, then let's find ways that we can implement it so you can put in correctly, but quickly understand that that could affect your confidence, but hopefully it won't affect it too much.

Responder

No, it's um, I mean it. It's good, um.

Il got a bit slack to be honest, I start I started it.

Last June, but at the time I started it, they didn't have any. They didn't have any slope.

Rip introduction courses. So it was October before I got the introduction course. I lost three months to start with and then, um, my mom was diagnosed with cancer, so that has sort of slightly put the thing.

Responder

Beginning of December, which I think I should slow as I don't fail any units, I should be just about OK.

Kelly

Don't fail, it just gets referred for improvement. You don't fail, remember that.

So what training have you done? What was the you just mentioned in introductory training session? So you're part of Suffolk? Is that right?

what did you receive from Suffolk, in what way of training for yourself?

Responder

Uh, we had a we had like a day, a day where we the people had signed up got together and they basically just went through the portfolio guide. All in one day yeah yeah.

That's it, basically. I mean, we have got a mentor and I have used him a couple of times. I probably should get in touch with him more really. I think it would be useful. He has been. He has been helpful when I have, you know, throw my hands up in the air said I really don't know what I'm doing. I found the general power of competence quite hard. The examples that I came up with. Uh, I don't think they were.

particularly appropriate in in his view, um, but yeah, so.

I think Possibly I should have done a bit more research because I know SLCC actually do more.

Sort of days based around each of the modules and probably. On reflection it would have been better to to do it through them and pay for the courses and go and do it. You know, module course each time.

Kelly

Do you think that they put doing that the whole portfolio of one day was too much for you to take in?

Responder

Definitely, it was overwhelming.

Kelly

You said you tried ILCA and you found that quite helpful?

Responder

Yeah, I thought it was. I think definitely if you're gonna start clerking you should really do that before you know before you.

Kelly

So I had a couple of clerks come back to me from the survey saying that they don't need to do CiLCA, but they would like to do something else that isn't as expensive. Do you think Ilca fills that gap?

Responder

I don't think it fills a gap, but I don't think it should be seen as a substitute for CiLCA, I think you know it. It's part of a progression, the same way that you then go on and do the The Next One, but I think it would be. I think it would be a good thing to say to new clerks you really should try and do this before you start because there there was quite a bit of information in there which gave me the confidence to stand up to councillors right at the start. Yeah, and so some some of the things that I read on on the forum with SLCC.

I mean, I'm I'm probably really lucky 'cause I've got two good counsels. I don't get. I don't get a lot of bullying, but I think if you start and you're not sure.

It's probably quite hard to then claw that back and get that respect, so I think it's definitely worth having done the ILCC before I started.

Kelly

So did the training that you've had in the learning you've had from doing that, and also the training you've had from doing CiLCA and what you're learning through CiLCA.

Is that helping you in your role as Clark?

Responder

Yeah definitely yeah.

Kelly

Is it a case of you're finding things that you didn't know, or is it a case of you're putting policies in place we didn't have before?

Responder

If you come in with a qualification or have a qualification.

It does.

It just gives you a measure of respect for you. You've even started to open your mouth. Ever see what I mean?

Basically, I think all counselors should be trained because A lot of counselors who have done their training have come back and said, Oh, I never realized how much

was involved. And as a result they I find them more supportive. Then the ones who say they don't need to do the training.

Kelly

But funny 'cause when I was thinking about doing my dissertation, I have. I'm exactly the same issue. I think Clerk should be trained and I think counselors should be trained. But it's too big of a a subject heading for me to actually do for my dissertation. So I just take it down to the officer. But I think it counts as a train. Then half your problem goes away.

Responder

Yeah, I know what they're doing Most of them don't really understand what they're supposed to be doing or what you do.

No, no, I I sort of think.

I'm not sure what they actually.

Why they choose to come into it in the 1st place sometimes?

Kelly

Yeah anyway, yeah. So I do think I do think we should be trained. DO you think that training should be mandatory.

Responder

Yeah.

I think you should have a. I think you should have.

Like a qualification.

Um, 'cause obviously like the CiLCA, you can't really do it without being in the job.

I mean there in interest certain extent it it is almost mandatory if the councils want to get their general, um, you know the General Certificate of confidence because they can't have that without.

A clerk that's done their training.

It's difficult, I don't know how you would actually.

Unless you made that first element mandatory before people started because it's not mandatory at the moment that that would be some way towards it.

Kelly

Do you think that ILCA would be a better qualification for a clerk to get first than doing the CiLCA? If we if there's someone said right, we're going to make Clerks training mandatory would you say that the ILCA is better than CiCLA. Or would you want to see everyone CILCA trained?

Responder

I think I would say you'd have to do the. You'd have to make CiLCA mandatory and then.

I don't know how. I don't know how you would ever get CiLCA mandatory. Other than that General Certificate of competence is just not possible unless you're in the job.

Kelly

OK, so we go back so if you think about when you first started or you done any training, did you feel that you're competent to carry out the clock's role?

Responder

I thought I had the skills.

And I thought I had transferable skills.

Kelly

What skills do you think you had?

Responder

Um, 'cause I I did 20 years in local government so I I knew what counselors would like to start with God knows why I thought.

So I had that I had. I had managed to team, although I don't actually have to manage anybody's, an I've managed a team.

Through my licensing work.

Um, I had report writing. I had some budget.

Um budget control or no, although I've never done a cashbook or anything like that.

So I thought I had some transferable skills and I've done some work. You know, work supporting, um communities and things like that, um?

So I thought I had skills that I could transfer to the role, but I didn't think that. I certainly when I started I didn't think I was competent.

Kelly

I think we all felt exactly the same.

What was your, um, your job advert like? What did it say? Was it clear to what was expected of you?

Responder

But I think it was. Yeah, I think it was.

Kelly

I just I was told two other clerks an in relation to the dissertation and both of them said the advert they had was just a little bit of secretarial work or a bit of minute. A handsome accounts. It was really online, was exactly the same when I took on. The

role is really odd so I can easily do that. And then I got involved. So wow, there's a lot of legislation.

Yeah, yeah, that was quite a big learning curve, but yours most likely it made it clear what was expected.

Responder

Yeah, I think most of them were clear. Um, I can look them out and send them to you if that would help.

Yeah no, I think they were fairly clear, yeah.

Kelly

I'm still talking about skills, so on my survey I put different types of skills and I'm sure you had from what you've just said, you had some more but personal skills like team working and things like that. Communication and problem solving. Do you think you had all those when you took on the job?

Responder

Yeah, I.

The one thing I did find there was, um.

That I needed a lot more.

Face to face and telephone I needed to develop my face to face and telephone approach a lot more because that's that's what I found. They respond to best.

You can send all the emails that you want, but if I just pick up the phone or or go down to the parish and arrange to see two or three of them to deal with different issues, I get a lot further.

I'm lucky 'cause I'm not in the parish so I don't get pestered.

All the time.

Kelly

So you are lucky then.

There's a problem with the job if you Clock your own parish.

Respondent

Yeah, yeah.

I think the focus of the scales was different to what I was expecting.

Kelly

So going back to competences, I've done from my readings, left a literature review for your dissertation. I found a model from an academic which talks about a

competency model, and I just want to ask you. I'm gonna read off what he says these different type of competences one should have.

Um, I just want to know if you think you had them before you started training and if you have had you think he's gained them since you've done your training because the first one is conceptual and creative, and he's explained that as understanding the role and investigating different actions.

Responder

Um, I don't think I understood the role fully.

But I did have the the skills to investigate different actions, although probably didn't know all of the resource is that I could use.

Kelly

So where to look to find out that information? Yeah, yeah, do you think you've got that competency now?

Responder

I would say I'm probably well on the way.

These Accessibility regulations that cover all all of these things that come up at short notice and you you suddenly have to develop a whole new sort of.

Area of knowledge. Um, and the one thing I find I haven't got is.

I haven't always got the.

Motivation to do more than just trust, right, you know.

Do enough to get by.

Especially with stuff that I don't feel confident with so that it's stuff I don't feel very competent at, and so I only ever learn enough to get resolved the immediate problem.

Kelly

Um, what about leadership skills and competence? Isn't request, It is not skilled leadership, so he's just said that this is turning thoughts into action whilst influencing inspiring and empowering others. Have that when you joined.

Responder

That's probably not my strong point.

Kelly

OK, do you think that the training you've done the silver training or any other training days has kind of helped with that? Or do you think there's something that was lacking from the training you've had so far?

Responder

I think possibly that would be 1 area where if we had more workshops.

That would would help I mean, I haven't got the community engagement leadership part of the silky yet. So I'm I'm not really sure sort of where I am with it. But I think it's it's definitely something that I need to try and develop.

Kelly

Um, yeah. What about interpersonal so affective interactions and relationship with others?

Responder

Yep.

I think that goes to goes back to my retreating back to email when I feel.

Yes, I I it. It's another area that I could work on, right has always been.

I yeah, maybe that's always been so, like probably one of my weaknesses.

Compared to other.

People personality yeah.

Kelly

What About administrative.

Responder

Yeah, I would say probably I felt confident with that side incompetent at it.

Kelly

And technical, so that's in relation to the work of the organization that you're joining.

Understand what parish counts towards how I operated when you first joined.

Kelly

Probably what I started, I would have said I was probably only about 25% there.

Simply because you don't realize the whole scope of everything that.

Well, I think if they provided in in the job description a list of everything that you have to do.

When I come for the job, you.

Probably wouldn't get anybody with that.

Kelly

Yeah, but what about now? So he said that when you started about 25%, what about now?

Responder

Probably about between 50 and 75%.

Kelly

That's good you're making progress then yeah yeah, that part of confidence as well, doesn't it, yeah.

Responder

And and there's a lot of you know a lot of different things like one of the parishes has got. Cemetery is the other one that's got allotments.

It's a whole lot of stuff about, um, soul trustees that I've got to.

Kelly

Try and investigate.

Responder

Yeah, quite a lot.

Kelly

There is, yeah, but just think of all the skills you'll have at the end of it or when you know it, yeah.

Responder

I mean.

I probably went into it 'cause I thought.

It will be a nice role to have and and to be able to continue to work.

Past what you would consider your natural retirement age if you saw him. I mean, if you wanted to continue to work that, that would be a way.

Of doing it question myself on parish.

But yeah, so I think you know.

A lot of it does come with experience.

Um, I'm two years just two years in now, so.

Kelly

Hopefully always learning. I AM 12 years in. I'm still learning.

Responder

Accessibility and GDPR and all of those things. And um.

We're trying to one of the parishes wants to move to a.gov.uk yeah domain and trying to find out how to do that and all of the information they want for that.

Kelly

Just everyday it's something new, isn't it? You got, yeah, I have to do.

Have you had any other choice so you talked about your training apart from a calc and the SLCC training? So if you have any other training from pressure district or borough or your County Council?

Do they provide training sessions for you?

Responder

No, South Baton training, which you, um, which I I sign up for. Anything that you know relates to the job that I can get the budget for, but I haven't had anything from Oh yes, there was an elections thing when when we had the elections last year there was a little actions training session from the District Council.

Kelly

How did you find that?

Responder

Um?

It was quite rushed. It was quite rushed, but that's understandable 'cause they've got. You know, having many parishes they had to get through and.

Um, was it specific to the parishes, or was it just? This is how the district will work.

It was specific to the extent of what they wanted from us. Um, but but things things that would have been helpful after it would have been.

Around the Declaration of acceptance of office and and the Register of interest and.

Even just right, you know.

Where to send the information and things like that? 'cause it wasn't. It wasn't clear in the in the packs that they gave out and I actually I opted out of.

Having anything to do with the nomination papers.

'cause I know some parishes do that.

Kelly

So would you say that training was affective?

Responder

Partially effective.

Over is better than not going at all.

Kelly

Would you recommend any thinking of all the training that you've had? Is there any that you would recommend?

Responder

Don't know if the soap still active anymore, but there was a local government.

Is basically it was a company that did training for local counselors, councils and counselors and they had a couple of training courses on management symmetries OK, which was really good.

And they were, oh, they did um GDPR training as well, which was really good. And then I went to I did a.

They had some some stuff that you seen that has been really good and I would recommend this, yeah?

Kelly

So if we think back to when you first saw that job, advert if it had said that training was mandatory, do you think you would have applied for the job?

Responder

Yes.

Kelly

Yeah, so you have no issues, it's you wouldn't find any issues if they expected you to carry out specific training. Did you have something on your advert that says you must complete CILCA website within so many months?

Responder

That wasn't within so many months, but they did say they expected they expected the clerk to work towards CILCA.

But I I sort of had that anticipation that I would do it anyway.

So at the moment there was nothing there saying it was mandatory because it isn't.

Kelly

But do you think you would be more engaged if training is voluntary compared to mandatory? Or do you think it does not have any real bearing on you?

Responder

Well, I think the advantage of mandatory is that, um.

They recognize the complexity of the model.

And that, um.

They recognize that you need to put time into it.

Probably doesn't affect me in terms of engagement. 'cause I like training anyway.

Kelly

So you motivated to attend training?.

Responder

Yes, yeah

Kelly

So something that's come up from the survey responses. I had a couple of boxes where you could put comments in and I've had quite a few responses from Clarks to smaller parishes and by smaller I mean under £25,000 turnover. And they have said that they don't think clerks to small councils would need to be trained because they work to different Legislation and requirements to those of bigger councils. What are your thoughts on that?

Do you think that we're all governed by the same requirements?

Responder

Thing broadly, we are. I mean, they're the only thing.

So I can think of this different is the annual audit because you know weather and the transparency regulations are different depending on the size of the parish but.

Local Government Act. All of the other pieces of legislation that gives you the powers and the duties to to operate the parish council.

I unless I've got it completely wrong, I think they affect accounts or whatever size it is, so I don't see how you can use that argument. The only problem with training for possibly for A.

A smaller council is that.

The proportion of the budget that spent on.

The Clerk is much higher against the rest of their spend.

And I think sometimes the counselors find it hard to an.

Justifies spending even more money on on training when they when like my smallest parish, has got a precept of 8000 pounds.

And my salary takes probably.

Well over 1/3 of that, so there's not an awful lot. Not an awful lot of money after that. And then if you then you know.

You have to be clear about whether or not you're gonna expect the Clerk to, um.

Do that training at their own time, and some clerks are having to do that, but if they if they're not happy to do that, then that has a a financial impact on the Parish Council an or they have to decide.

Will pay will pay your hours to do that training, but recognize that if you do the training, you're not going to have those hours to do work on the parish.

So that that's that's the problem with the small parishes.

Kelly

Yeah, that was some of the comments came out in that same. We just can't afford to do it because we're such a small parish. But it was the ones that came forward and said, well, we're a small parish so it doesn't apply to us and I was just.

Flabbergasted is likely to say we're all governed by the same rules and legislation.

Interesting, the information you get back from when you do a survey. It really is, yeah.

Kelly

Um, they have a question I've gotten here is, um, do you think that there's a link between your experience of previous training and the effectiveness of that training, and whether you would attend future training, so is there a link between the effectiveness of training and your motivation to attend training?

Responder

Yeah, I think so, if you.

If you know, for example, that there's a particular organization, that or trainer that is really good and engaging, then be more likely to.

Sign up for that.

I used to manage a team and he used to send him on licensing training courses and you can't they come back and say how was your day. Oh, the food was awful.

But I know it. I know you laugh. But then when I try and book them on another course with that organization, they say I'm not going because the food was awful.

Literally, that they they remember their experience of that training.

Was completely overshadowed by their comfort level.

Um, so just you know whether it's the training or the OR the venue or the food or anything it. It does affect people's motivation.

Kelly

That's a good point, actually. I hadn't really thought of it like that, but yeah.

Kelly

This is well, so is there anything else that you want to say to me in relation to training that we haven't already talked about? Or do you think we've covered everything? Your thoughts on training?

Responder

I think maybe I don't know whether SLCC have some more free webinars for when you're going through, um, CiLCA even said like on demand. So if they were there so that you could actually go, you know pick it up when you get to that point in the training and actually just go through that too.

Maybe just get a different perspective on it was or something, something I think that.

That might help some Clerks if if you got the motivation to spend the time.

Doing something like that that.

Kelly

They would they would. Would you want that to be like we're talking now? A live webinar would you? Would you be happy about being a pre recorded?

Responder

Like a pre recorded one so that you could delete, she just go and pick it up whenever you needed it. And also then I think if you if you have that pool of.

Webinars.

It might be a way of actually encouraging new clocks to sign up for the training, 'cause if they know, then they've got the whole you know body of webinars that they can. They can source if they hit a particular problem. It might not answer all of the things, but it might. It might actually act as a motivation to getting them to sign up in the 1st.

In the first place.

Kelly

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me and good luck with your CiLCA.

Interview 3 – 4th September 2020

Kelly

I'll just, I'll just quickly introduce myself so I am a parish Clerk to two councils in Essex, an A village council which we've got receptive about just under 60,000 and a bigger parish council and that precepts around about 300,000.

I've been a Clerk for 12 years and I also trained from my local calc and part of that training is the CiLCA training. So I'm really passionate about training.

And the whole point of it is really is I have I. I know I'm biased and I've made a point of putting it in my dissertation that I think that all clerks should have some form of training so they can understand the role. But I was interested to find out if.

I've got a few questions that I've just written down, but with from the other interviews I've done. We have gone off on tangents, which is fine, but you know idea of what I'd like to chat to you about an are you happy for me to record the session so I don't have to write notes as we go through?

Responder

Yeah, no problem.

Kelly

It will be, um, I'll just use it for reference for when I'm writing my.

Results and analysis chapter which I will be the whole dissertation, has to be submitted in October. So as soon as I've done that, I'll be deleting all the recordings. OK, fine, but I will make sure that Confidential Everything is kept confidential, so I won't use. I won't name you, but I might use a couple of things you say as a quote and I'll just put.

One of the interviewees said, whatever it was I want.

Kelly

Are you CiLCA qualified?

Responder

Yes. I came, I moved down here from Scotland in 2004 and my husband's job. OK, I I'm I had a 2 year old and then I wanted to I my previous life for children was I was a personal banker for Bank of Scotland. So what do lots of big branches in Scotland in the northeast?

Covered Aberdeen and I was was very hot on training.

Yeah, when I moved down here I didn't. I could have taken a 6 year career break and got the same job back at the same level after six years.

But I didn't want to do that. I wanted to work from home so this the the day we moved into here was to be the advert appeared for the parish council and we would optimize and boxes and then move over. There just wasn't a possibility and then it was really advertised. A month later if I applied, got interviewed and got the job.

So at that point in time it was 18 hours a week which fitted in family life.

But the job has grown significantly, but I had come from a banking background. So in Scotland you don't have powers in town councils, it's completely different.

Scott County and district or yeah, they have unitary so yeah so didn't have what they had done. He didn't have towns and parishes so the whole concept. I mean it was quite knew that may interfere. They provided me with a job description of all the things you have to do. It was like pages long.

I kind of thought well all these things will happen in one day. You know, I know why the rules I have ever started in the bank. It would be paid just long as well, but you don't do everything in one day. You know things as different tasks you have to do.

So I was quite keen to do training from day one because I had no knowledge about polishing town Councilman and very good at Finance. 'cause That's my background. Yeah, um, regarding the Cemetery where I used to deal with all the deceased accounts or the family. So I've dealt with that part of it. A different part of it for the same process, so didn't miss Cemetery work for dealing with the families.

It's not an issue for me.

Um, training is paramount. I think you need to know the basics to learn.

And when I.

Joined my predecessor, it was like what he said there wasn't any training.

He was he was retired and it was, it was another little job for him, yeah, and I've seen signs that things that he told I had like a month hand over things, he taught me when I did my training.

Things to work may be passed on bad habits, not intentionally. Yeah, and I think it's really important to have training so you don't pick up other peoples bad habits.

There was no training at all. Cannot believe having come from my work place. That was very much training driven.

Yeah, I asked for it, but had no. Nobody objected at all.

So I had no issues and then the groundsman at that point in time. He said over don't do training either, but.

But the web courses available for they are courses available for programs, maintenance and things. You just have to look for them. So I put him in all all the courses that that relevant, so he did all that training.

But he sadly he died last year. We had an issue and he got signed off for a chest infection on one day and he died Wednesday afternoon very suddenly.

And it was really horrendous.

So we had to rely on Sydney town council, which is a big town council 2 miles away. Be helpful site quite a lot till we decrypt it and the guy really cricket had been made redundant someone else and had no knowledge of various maintenance and we said

well don't worry we will be just quite passionate and we will get you trained up. So we he's done all the courses in 12 months.

So when I wanted to play it so um, last year it listed all courses? Uh, it's. I can't believe we've done all this in 12 months.

And the training little.

Yeah, that really makes it easier.

And give you the confidence to.

Do the job well.

Kelly

But just out of interest, because I've had this conversation with all the clerks I've spoken to was the job advert as you would expect a clerks job advert to be or was it quite misleading.

Responder

It was on the notice board.

In the village I was going to deliver my change of address is later on the day we moved in and and I hadn't applied for a job in the bank. At 1718 year state from schools I had never applied for any other jobs that didn't quite know what to expect.

Kelly

The two other ladies that I've spoke to today actually and they said they got over sort of an advert in the paper. They got something through the door that said Parrish Clark wanted just a little bit of a minute taking and a little bit of financial work.

Responder

Yeah, but I didn't know what to expect because I had only been here a few days and then no knowledge. Suddenly I just thought, well I can do finance. I can do so much stuff. I'm sure I could learn it if there seems to be a bit more than you would be capable of doing it. Knowing what I did in the bank and you actually probably do.

Kelly

So do you remember the the training you had for CiLCA?

Responder

I did it as soon as possible. I think I must be in the job, maybe five months, four or five months. I went straight into it.

And I didn't have six Saturdays at the CPALC office. It was one Saturday a month for a whole morning.

And they did 2C modules.

Um, and then what? What I set myself a target that by the next training session I have all those modules done and dusted and completed.

'cause I wanted the whole training done in six months. I didn't want it dragging on for months and A and I wanted it done and out the way.

Yeah, but in my mind 'cause my son was into the half I did every Tuesday and Thursday night I just concentrated on CiLCA work and got it all done.

Until it was finished.

Kelly

The actual training you have you can remember was it. Was it good? Did you find it effectively to help you in your role?

Responder

The trainer we had was absolutely brilliant. She's actually an auditor. She doesn't often come all the time and she just told so many different scenarios that have to other kind souls. How to deal with it. What sort of things to be looked at in the portfolio? Remember to do there. Still do that. And I thought she was brilliant. I couldn't have done it without are basically.

Or like.

I think had I not had that, I would have struggled doing it. Doesn't work. What she said wasn't in any booklet or trading information list or anything.

Kelly

Do you think that helps you more? But by using her experience?

Responder

Absolutely.

Kelly

Um, what are your feelings about clocks being trained? Do you think we should be trained?

Responder

I think to be a professional you have to be trained.

We might might banking background I'm attracted by in car. I did five years doing back exams and that's where you want to progress in the bank. But that's what you had to do. You have to have your exams or you wouldn't go anywhere.

But I think a number. I'm a professional. I think if you could adopt or severe or lawyers professional qualifications the proof of content.

And I think that's really important.

Kelly

So do you think that the training should be compulsory?

Yes, I think it should be.

Kelly

Do you think it should be CiLCA or something else?

Responder

Anything, anything that provides all the appropriate. I think the CiLCA is a starting point. It does give you the basics and I think when you start a new client coming into the into the sector, you need that.

Kelly

Some of the feedback I've had from the survey has been that CiLCA Isn't really an entry level? Um, training session for some clerks they feel it's a bit harder than that. They think that there should be something else available before you do CiLCA do kind of agree with that you think would you find it OK to be doing?

Responder

No, that's fine. That's absolutely fine, I thought.

I actually got it quite easy.

Here's what my banking sounds like. I thought it was quite easy.

Kelly

OK, so when you first again thinking back to when you first started before you had new training in the sector, do you think you felt competent to actually carry out the role?

Responder

I felt confident with the finance 'cause I understand this and that stuff.

Other things I didn't that the Cemetery stuff.

I did get.

Passed on bad habits.

Once I did the Cemetery training that I realized a lot of things happened with our Cemetery. Um, we had to do topple testing, which opened a can of worms and we had to write to everybody and everything was filed in D order. So if you wanted to find a memorial for Mr Smith, you'd have to find out what did she that was installed. It was like it was like it was a nightmare.

So I had a team in Kansas in the village whole afternoon, sorted all the Cemetery stuff and everyone put in plot number order.

So for part one, everything with part one, the purchase intent law was all failed together and we did that for everything at the Cemetery and it took six of us to sort it out in the whole afternoon.

And then then then I want software reviews at HIT design just here we use an their epitaph. Software kind of talked it through your other procedures. So I had to go through every single file to put it on the database.

So you find all the missing information. I find out things. It was quite a good learning curve 'cause they were quite good at training as well. You did it in stages so there's lots of information miss saying I had to troll back through your stuff and the registers were written up as it should have been so I had to backdate stuff.

So I think training is important.

And I think you need to have different training providers. I mean CPALC couldn't give you all the detailed.

Cemetery knowledge you need to bring people in that are. There are specialists to do that.

I've done the SLCC training.

I've done quite a lot.

Kelly

Yeah, how did you find that?

Responder

I've done most of the branch stuff or things that you go to seminars or I haven't done any of the online stuff that we have time to do the online stuff, but I don't go to many as opposed to cut in the area.

If it's miles away if it's within 20 miles, I'll.

Do it, but I'm not gonna go.

To conferences it's too far away. I can't I can't justify.

Going topic conference for two days.

I couldn't do that.

Kelly

What about district and County, district or borough or County? Do they put on training sessions that you can go to?

Responder

The district, do they do not planning seminars in the evening, which I don't think they're very good ones. I've been just kind of spoke up the legislation that will give you any indication.

Of how to look at time or how it works or comments you expect to receive or how toward them. We just spoke to the legislation which doesn't not really helpful.

Kelly

OK, so um, as part of my literature review for the dissertation, I had to look at different themes in relation to training, and one of those things that came out was in relation to competences. An I found a an academic's idea of a competent concept competency model and part of that is they've given.

Five different competences that is required just to do, sort of like a managerial type role, which is like our roles.

So I'm gonna give you all five if you can just let me know if you felt like you had them before you were trained an if you feel like you've had them or they've grown your abilities grown since you've had your training. So the first one is is called conceptual and creative. An it says his way of describing that is understanding the role.

So when you first took on the role, do you think you understood?

Responder

Probably didn't understand fully what is involved or what I was allowed to do because of my previous role. I had a lot of responsibility and a lot of authority, but in here Evelyn Committee stage even like, you know, I could sign off. I had a like I did a lot of personal lending so I could lend up to 100,000 'cause I.

Then the cancellation spend 100 times are crippling over.

Well, if it's like extremes.

Yeah yeah yeah, you have got the two extremes there, I mean.

You know I was signing off things like foreign payments for a million in 7 million everyday several times a day, and then you have, you know, to spend £50 in scope parts, you know?

That is all committing stage and I find that quite hard. You can just go and do something in the steps to follow and I found that that that is what it's like. But I did find it hard to begin with.

Kelly

Course, I understand that.

But then comes a conference waiting. You know, with the rule become more confidence. You know what you can and can't do in how far, not sufficient.

Kelly

And did you? Did you learn what you could and couldn't do from training or from on the job and talking to other clerks?

Responder

Probably maybe getting things wrong.

Not not, not mentally general, but you learn. You think you do something like that. So K then somebody doesn't want you to do that or like things that to me that are quite trivial. That kind of just want to be involved in.

I think going to their source in meetings and speak to other clients that little workers.

And getting that experience makes a huge difference in it, you know.

I was I did feel my own all the time to begin with and the chairman for the first 8 nine months I would see him at the meeting who stayed a little bit but nothing in between. There's nothing.

I then got a new chairman was completely different than he was very much hands-on into training. He was a trainer himself in the military, and he wanted to change things and shake things up and he was absolutely brilliant and he was driving it forward. So we kind of walked together really well.

Kelly

That sounds amazing. I would like to have that in my accounts or something like that.

Yeah, OK So what about? I think you've already answered this, but leadership skills.

Responder

I think I had that.

With my previous job already.

Kelly

Yeah, I presumably that have they kind of, um, do you still use them as much as you?

Responder

All the time. Yeah, I think so. So when we have a bank, you know I'm very much in charge of Yeah but bigger boat. Next week I'm in charge of it and I have a router of all the duties to be done on. The jobs were done and I allocate people.

To do the jobs I thought did I got that disable. We've done that. Come back to me. I'll give another task. So now I'm doing the bigger beds. I'm not actually doing the learning about bounds of delegation. After that I make sure everything is done.

Kelly

OK, what about um? Interpersonal skills?

And dealing with other people.

Responder

I think I was had at school already was blocking the bank. You have to Add all that really though, it was just for moving the bank to hear it wasn't any issue.

Kelly

That we have to deal with lost with counselors. The general public members of staff is. Yeah, having interpersonal skills don't know really. Yeah, really basic. One administrative skills.

Responder

Well, quite, I had that before, yeah.

Kelly

And then the final.

One that they have given us is technical skills, which is understanding the work of the organization itself.

Responder

So I think it probably.

Took me awhile to workout what the council did.

Good where we are now. We we work that is completely different 'cause I don't do very much to be honest.

We do still.

Much, I think we have a lot of new terms as it moved into the village at the same time as I joined and we were quite driven to do what we wanna Master. Master Project which brought. They'll walk to the really strong team.

And it just once the ball starts rolling, people just keep joining and want to take part.

So, uh, yeah, I think I don't have any issues at the moment.

I love it here.

Kelly

I'm sure it is best having those. Those forward thinking counselors. I need some of those online. They're all stuck in their ways.

Responder

Yeah, we've just finished A5 year business plans. He worked out a pre set the next five years and all the projects are going to do.

And then some projects like what will apply for loan funding next November an for the budget. Want to build another proper office for me 'cause I work in the garden shed. This is the garden shade. OK, it's not big enough. I don't need an assistant but end of walking back for us because we've got to do a consultation. But God had a plan. Information regarding the architects drawing books. I was going to go to work backwards.

So we knew how to get there next year.

So the planning that next Enderun starting now I'm doing a big Cemetery extensions. I mean little quite good. I've got really good team at the moment.

Hang on just as long as you can, yeah.

Kelly

OK, so you mentioned earlier about having transferable skills, which was part of my survey. You would have answered some of those questions in relation to it so.

From the three that I found were personal transferable skills, communication and problem solving. Do you feel like you had all those probably coming from your bank? Yeah.

Responder

I think so yeah, yeah.

And appointed after that question and lost to that question.

Kelly

Right, so going back to talking about training again so you think about all the training you've done, would you if you were talking to a brand new Clock, would you recommend the training that you've undertaken? Is there someone would say definitely doing some who say don't do that?

Responder

I would say do as much as we possibly can as quickly go, don't.

Wait months and months to get on the talk. I get it done 'cause once to me the soccer was the ground day and gave you the basics. So how we tackled it wasn't the first one was about and I had some standing order something. So then we did our standing orders and pronounce legs here 'cause it hasn't been done for donkeys years.

So each each each module.

I change back to cancel. It was on the agenda.

Each month, this is what we've done. This is what we had to look at and brush up on and tidy up on.

And I'm not work.

Gets back up super. We should have been.

Kelly

So it sounds like you're you're very similar to me. When I took on the role, I had started CiLCAr within, I think three months of taking on the role 'cause I didn't have a clue what I was doing. CiLCAwood got me through 'cause it taught me what I had to do.

There's something say, believe that you should be in the job for a year before you do so.

Responder

That's right, absolutely not.

On the same issue, I always say no. We should be able to start as soon as you want. 'cause some plots need that to get them through it with others like to kind of find their feet before they do it.

But then you can you run the risk of falling into bad habits if you sit there for a year. I think doing it.

Yeah, I think she's too many things can go wrong in a year.

I think you should get it done as soon as possible.

Kelly

If when you got that job advert when you saw it in the notice board. If it said I think I know the answer to this. If it says the drop involved compulsory training, do you think you would have seen applied?

Responder

Yeah, definitely yeah. Well, I guess that for me for.

Me that that I would I would I would expect it.

I'll be alarmed with a set of new training. I think this teenage you have to have training.

You know, I still have to do CPD for my banking clams. I still have to do the third actor at least 35 hours a year to keep my charter banker status. So that's too long to me. Training never stops. It's always ongoing.

You're always learning new things, aren't you? Yeah, you think scope of every day that you haven't dealt with before. You have to look into and research and deal with.

Kelly

So you're quite motivated to go to training now.

Responder

Yeah, very much.

Kelly

Do you think there's a link between, um, someone's experience with training and how effective it was, and whether they're motivated to actually go on training.

Responder

Yeah, I think if you had bad training or bad experience it pretty rough. I had a bad experience to hear music arrived, went translator branch and I previously I said was to go on an advanced Excel course. Excel just being dealt with it just come again.

Um, they didn't want to pay the cancellation fee, so I was sent on it and I had never done Excel in my life.

So my understanding course and it was some way above my head and I felt that would come to watch 3DS cheating. I've ever done anything. It was so demotivating 'cause people were streets ahead of me. I hadn't a clue how to. The simplest of things.

So I will. After that I went and did an evening class for the whole winter on Excel just to learn the basics just to get up to speed, but I think having that bad experience of training would could people if the team is not right or it's not set at the right level. It could people put people off.

Kelly

Would you be more likely to be engaged with training if it was voluntary compared to if it was mandatory?

Responder

I love training so would attend either way.

Kelly

What size is your council?

Responder

Are precepts 120,000?

I think the electoral's about just over 4000 electoral role would have got 15 councillors.

Interview 4 – 4th September 2020

Kelly

OK so I Clock for two councils in Essex. Ones are smaller 1 ones and medium size 1 I'd say.

An I also train the variety of different things for the Essex Association and I also am a CiLCA training trainer for the Essex Association, so I'm I'm very passionate like you about the sector and I'm passionate that I I. I know I've got a bias not in that way. I think that Clock should be trained to do the job.

But I just want to find out everyone's views, really officers views in particular in relation to compulsory whether we should have compulsory training in the sector or not for the officers.

But I've got a few questions I've written down, but if we go off on a tangent then I haven't got an issue with that. Um, I did one on Wednesday and it took about 40 minutes, but that Lady was very chatting, so it's as much as you wanna tell me and how how quickly it's got done. Really OK.

First question is which after what you just said is going to probably be a bit irrelevant, but are you CiLCA qualified.

Responder

Certainly am I like, but actually I did the AQA which was the original 1.

So you probably haven't even heard of it, but.

And it was very.

Very bespoke, like if you uh, your annual meeting had to be absolutely correct, whereas now if if you annotate your annual meeting and you've got something in the wrong order, like you haven't elected the chairman first, you could annotate that and say next year we'll do it right.

But back then it had to be 100% right? Or you it was out an. So yeah I did that in 2005.

And I put myself along with some other clerks in the um County here two other clerks.

They both did the degree as well on a a Guinea pig course as we call it, so that was about 2000 two 2003 when they were first experimenting with it, if you like.

So so I passed one in 2005 when it was a QA, so Elizabeth would remember that of course, Yeah, an then subsequently updated Section 7 with the power of well being and then again Section 7 when it changed to the general power of competence.

Responder

So I call it CiLCA 'cause nobody knows what.

Responder

Thank you a is and I'm a CiLCA trainer as well.

It sounds like that was probably a hoarder because you had to tell everything perfect when you submitted it.

'cause I think like sites CiLCA is more of a learning process now. Don't major going through. Yeah, it's like it's.

Much, it's much more useful now.

You know?

Kelly

Like when you did, you actually do a training session to do the AQA? Yeah, yeah through through the calc? Yeah, OK? Did do you remember? What that training was like? Yeah, it's very good, she's now my internal auditor rather bizarrely? She's left the count, but but yeah, I know she was really good.

Kelly

Yeah, I mean you learned. I know this is obviously a long time ago. Everything she taught you and you learned from doing the AQA. Did that help you in your role?

Responder

Yes, definitely because. Um, I hadn't even heard of parish councils, let alone a parish clerk. And I was cleaning out the fireplace. Had the local news.

Paper on the floor to put the ash in and I saw this advert and I thought oh I could do that. So I applied for the job and blank my way into it really.

But Oh then thought I've got to do a load of training and there wasn't much training about then at all.

Responder

And I'll leave it to see you and you can tell me what you think of it, but it's quite shocking 'cause you don't need to know anything really, really, apparently. And I, I think it's a very misunderstood role.

Frequently by counselors.

And the general public.

And the general public, and my experience quite recently, and this is going to sound really bad is if you are a female in that role.

Then you are a secretary and you don't know what you're talking about. If you're a man, they seem to have more respect for you, and I that annoys me intensely and I don't know whether I'm just.

Thinking too much into that, but that's how I feel.

Kelly

Actually something, uh, a question. I wish I'd asked in my survey is are you male or female?

Because I think that does influence, I genuinely think that influences counselors opinion of you.

Kelly

What are your opinions on clerks being trained?

Responder

I definitely think 100% they should be trained.

I think it is a professional role. There is so much to know and learn.

Um, and you learn everyday, don't you? You never stop learning.

That thing is always learning.

And if you get it wrong, it can be disaster.

That's where the importance of training probably comes in there, Yeah.

Kelly

What are your thoughts on mandatory training for clerks?

Responder

Yeah, I'm afraid I'm all for it. If we talking literally bout CiLCA you know, then yeah, I'm all for it. I don't.

Uh, I'm thinking now for this. My area is how can we get people counselors and everybody to recognize the importance of the role and the professionalism of it.

Which is quite.

Dismissive, I think people are quite dismissive with it.

Kelly

OK, so when you first started as a clerk, did you feel that you were competent to carry out that role correctly?

Responder

Good question.

Um, I was supposed to have a, uh?

Well, I did have a two or three week crossover with the previous Clerk.

Um, but every time I asked him a question, he'd say to Maine. It's all up here. Oh well, that's no good to Maine, because if it's all up there in his brain, that's not gonna help me. So simple things like earmarked reserves and stuff. It took me quite some time for him to actually write them down. We had no computers.

It was a typewriter.

So everything well.

Uh, they would type 2 minutes.

Um, so he although were supposed to have the crossover because he never had a crossover. He said it was down to me to find out. Well, that's not really the point, is it, um, so I did feel quite inadequate, which is why I then went to the Calc.

And and said, what training have you got and and put myself on every bit of training I could, which was quite sparse in those days. It's got vastly better.

Kelly

When I was doing my research so it's one of the things I was looking at in the in the my own research is in relation to competencies and his suggested that.

To be well rounded in our jobs when it have different competencies. So, um, my question too. I'll read them out what he said, but is. Do you think you've had them before? What you were trained and do you think you have them now? You have been trained?

So the first one is, it says conceptual creative and it says understanding the role and investigating different actions. So when you first took up the job to do fully understand what is expected of, you know. So obviously we're all exactly same boat there since training do do you feel like you have that understanding now?

Responder

Yes, definitely yeah.

Kelly

What about leadership skills?

Responder

Um, I feel I had them anyway because I, um, had been in a management role for the previous two jobs I had. So, um, I feel I had them anyway.

Kelly

Interpersonal skills

Responder

Um, yeah, hopefully I'm OK on the interpersonal skills at. You know, before and now, yeah.

Kelly

Administrative skills.

Responder

Yeah, I'm a bit of a bore on that.

Uh, yeah, like um certainly had them before hand. And, uh, I actually thought I failed my interview. If you like because I was telling them how they should be doing their work.

Uh, 'cause I worked for a benardos, a field fundraiser, and, uh?

Uh, used to manage people on that as well, um?

And so some of the processes we had there for that.

Could easily be inserted into the Clock roll and be make it much more professional way of doing things. And because I was telling them how they could be doing things better, I thought cracking they're gonna not want me here. 'cause I just sound a bit too bossy. So um, yeah.

Quite like things to be orderly and know what I'm up to. Know what other people up to. And I if I don't know I will find out.

Kelly

And the last one that has come forward was technical skills, so it's more in relation of the work of the actual organization you work for.

Responder

My um, I have to say I'm pretty much self taught on.

Computer stuff.

Yeah, never did it in school, 'cause there's no such thing as computers didn't even use.

Oh, that makes me sound really old, doesn't it? Calculators not allowed to use a Calculator at school, so we never had anything like that, so any.

If this is what you're talking bout computerized skills websites, all of that stuff, pretty much self taught. Um, panic stations ask my children my big children.

The only course I put myself on a couple of years ago was an Excel Spreadsheet Course 'cause I thought I really need to get to grips with formula.

Yeah, it's been very, very useful. I'm now thinking of doing an advanced one that sounds really boring, doesn't it? But actually.

It's so useful, isn't it? When you got this spreadsheet and you can get alter all the back pages and it changes the summary at the front. Love it, you know you got all your formula right? Yeah, that's the thing, isn't it? What, Yeah, but at least you can see if the figure looks audio thing and that doesn't look right. Do you know about main you can.

Kelly

So now, well, so when you first?

Took the job one did you, did you know what Parish Council was?

Responder

No.

Like you found out, actually on the job, if you like.

I did yeah yeah, not a clue, didn't even know we had one in our parish and now 20 years old I'm still the Clock.

So we built it up quite considerably really.

Kelly

So it's amazing how many clerks say exactly the same thing that we got. Those that we saw a job advert and it said someone to write the minutes in a little bit of finance.

Responder

Nobody mentioned finance to Maine.

Oh, now I think this is a problem. It's a lack of understanding, isn't it? Went right back to that lack of understanding of the role and what's required and what.

Happens in a job. I always think my counselor should have a day in the life of the office as a bare minimum to see what we do, but nobody's ever taken me up on it in all the time.

Typical example trying to get. I've got time bank coordinator. I don't know if you know what a time bank is.

Best Buy.

Uh, so I was trying to get Katie and you laptop I um and I had to go back to the council to get permission. I've got a scheme of delegation in now because this just drives me nuts.

Went to the council, only did 600 quid within our budget.

I guess so a new laptop.

And they were trying to tell Maine, uh, that what I needed to buy for her was a desktop unit, 'cause it's much better.

Now they've never been up in my office, which.

Katie's already got a desktop up there, but this is for being out and about.

Going to a various meetings and stuff so she needs a laptop, a working laptop and that sounds so fundamental in it and silly, but they don't understand the role. They don't understand why.

She needs what she does. They're not willing to listen and spend 15 minutes telling me why I shouldn't be buying a laptop for her. You know, um, it's frustrating. So there's a I don't know. One waffling, now I'm sorry, but.

Yeah, when I talked with Manly I said to them at the end of the day this isn't precepted money. This is Money fundraised by Katie in order to carry out the work.

So subsequently I thought I've gotta get that scheme of delegation in 'cause it's just ridiculous.

Kelly

So, we talked that about competence is now I'm talking about skills which are very similar and it was in the survey as well that I talked about transferable skills. So personal transferable skills like teamwork in time management, things like that, communication quite.

Office written, oral and problem solving skills. So did you have any of those skills when you first became a clerk?

Responder

Um, so skill. What skills did I have for the admin side of things and project managing?

Um, ordering.

Sounds very boring, isn't it a fund raising?

And I think you go to any event, whether it's in SLC, you can see event wherever is, even if you pick up one thing from that event or somebody's brilliant idea of doing something. I think it's it's worth it.

Left the money in the time you've invested, isn't it? Yeah.

Kelly

So would you say that you're motivated to attend training?

Responder

Yes.

Kelly

So would you be more likely to be more engaged? If it was voluntary compared to mandatory, or do not think it would have any difference.

Responder

No difference to me

Kelly

I have had a couple of the responses in the comments in my survey saying smaller parish councils do not need trained clerks because they don't have the same things to deal with.

Do you agree with that?

Responder

Ah, I could say very rude word about that. I don't agree with it at all. I mean, I think unfortunately, whatever size your counsel, the same legislation, rules, govern guidance, whatever it might be applies to everyone.

It makes no odds.

Kelly

I found that quite surprising I've had more than one comment saying I clerk a small parish so I don't need to do that because it doesn't apply to, well council, and I'm quite astounded to some of some of the comments.

Responder

Yeah it is. Yeah, uh, it doesn't surprise Maine, but it's it's not. It's not right as it and that again is something I'm I'm looking at. How do we tackle that for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and and guess everybody to understand. I'm going right back to this advert I'm gonna send you in a minute.

Getting them to understand this is important. Whatever Size Council you are, you get it. You get it badly wrong. You get it wrong. I said I've got a small council.

Uh, didn't want to do zoom meetings or any form of remote meeting they haven't met since January. And guess what?

Obviously the whole council is gone because, yeah, they haven't met for, uh, six months.

And they didn't realize that, and I've got another one on the brink of that as well.

Just just 'cause you're small, you know it's not relevant.

That's a massive challenge that needs to be done nationally, doesn't it?

Kelly

So I've just talked about that as well. So the last thing I want that would just kind of get your opinion on was Do you think there's a link between um?

If someone's had really good previous training and then motivation to attend training in the future.

Responder

Yeah, like good training, you'll think. Well, actually you know, going another training session, whereas if it's bad you think I don't think I want.

To go in on it, yeah.

Yeah, definitely. I think if you get good quality training.

It makes you think about what you're doing and what you can put into practice and.

And think, yeah, actually I would like to to carry on there. I do have people who are regulars that you know you can virtually guarantee they'll come to training in in the same way that you have those you know will never turn up. But um.

Um, but yes, if they're not going to sit there and be bored. Somebody gave me some stats last week which I'm not going to remember properly, but I think if it's just PowerPoint then the retention is something is very low, or, uh, is something like 20 or 30%? Because people just mentally switch off.

Um but.

If the training is more engaging than the retention is more than 40%, I believe. I don't get the stats off them again, but.

Yeah, so I think it has a lot to do with the way things are presented, yeah?

And personal experience makes sense.

You don't want to be talking at people all the time, do you?

And you can see their eyes glaze over if you do.

That yeah sit back arms folded and yeah, yeah.

Kelly

OK, um that's all the questions that I've got. Is there any points that you want to cover that we haven't already spoken about in relation to training and their offices and the importance of it?

Responder

Not really, I'm just absolutely all for it. I think clocks should as a minimum have CiLCA.

And if not work towards it.

An ILCA is very good, but then you gotta have some background knowledge before you can even do ILCA happened. Yeah so.

Kelly

From having seen it, this is actually brought up another question. Now, some of the comments I've got back from my server have said there needs to be some as CiLCA takes too long. It's too expensive for my small parish. There needs to be something else available. Do you think ILCA is that no?

Responder

It's good basic, but I don't think it'll curse that.

Uh, my personal view is this. Maybe there should be a mandatory budget. I don't know if you can't do that. Can you for training, but um.

They should put money aside for training in order to incorporate the extra time it's gonna take the Clock when they haven't got stuff in place in order to do.

Put it in place for the portfolio as well as the training. I mean, there's a guy, isn't it? On page 6 or whatever? How many hours is gonna take a rough guide so you and my thoughts are you must budget for that and must budget for the training and the registration fee and the clocks time. I think you absolutely need to do that.

But I I.

So when somebody says to me oh, 100% passed for CiLCA.

It's not, uh, you know, can't other exams that don't require 100%. But if you look at it, I can't see what you could take out of there to say it's OK if you fail on that, can you? I can't see any section in there that I can't would be OK to fail on. Can you like just?

Now you need to be as possible, but to know what you're doing in your job.

Yeah.

Kelly

Well, thank you very much for taking the time to talk to me today.