



# Developing Confident Leaders

Impact Report of NICVA's ILM Level 5 Leadership  
& Management Programme

**May 2026**

# Introduction:



**This report outlines how participation in NICVA's ILM Level 5 Leadership and Management programme translated into measurable improvements in leadership capability, confidence and workplace practice.**

It provides a snapshot of how participation in NICVA's ILM Level 5 programme translated into increased confidence, leadership capability and real-world impact across the VCSE sector. It compares findings from the ILM Level 5 Leadership & Management Baseline Survey (January 2026) and the End of Programme Survey (April 2026) delivered by NICVA.

The ILM Level 5 Leadership & Management programme findings demonstrates clear and measurable distance travelled for participants between baseline and programme completion, with strong evidence of improved leadership capability, confidence and real-world application.

## **Impact at a glance:**

- 82% of learners rated their leadership skills as high or very high by programme end (up from 0% at baseline)
- 91% reported high or very high leadership knowledge, compared with 10% at baseline
- Low confidence ratings were eliminated entirely, with 72.7% now confident or very confident
- Learners reported measurable improvements in applying learning to workplace challenges, including conflict resolution (72.7%), adapting to change (63.6%), and communication with teams (54.5%)



# Understanding the impact of completing the ILM Level 5 Programme



**This section summarises how learners' self-assessed leadership capability changed between baseline and the end of the programme.**

We apply an outcomes-based approach which focuses on the difference made for people as a result of an intervention, rather than simply the activity delivered.

For this programme, outcomes were defined around:

- Increased leadership and management skills
- Increased knowledge of leadership theory and practice
- Increased confidence to lead people and manage change
- Improved ability to apply learning in real organisational contexts

The use of a baseline survey at programme entry and a matched end-of-programme survey enables measurement of distance travelled against each of these outcomes. The comparison of baseline and end-point data shows clear, measurable progression across all outcome areas:

- Learners moved from predominantly low/moderate skill levels at baseline to high/very high levels by programme end
- Low confidence ratings were eliminated entirely by the end of the programme
- Knowledge ratings show a strong shift towards high-level understanding of leadership and management frameworks
- Qualitative feedback demonstrates application of learning, a key indicator of meaningful outcomes.





This progression is evidence that the programme did not simply deliver training, but enabled change over time, which is central to outcomes-based practice. Participants were specifically asked to rate their levels of skills, confidence and knowledge and the beginning and the end of programme.

The tables below clearly highlight the positive impact of completing the ILM Level 5 in Leadership & Management in all key areas. In practice, this means participants are now better equipped to lead teams confidently and to apply leadership skills in real workplace settings.

### Change in Leadership & Management Skills after completing the ILM

Skill Level rating	Beginning of programme (%)	End of programme (%)	Change
Low	30.0	0.0	-30.0
Moderate	70.0	18.2	-51.8
High	0.0	54.5	+54.5
Very High	0.0	27.3	+27.3

The table above clearly demonstrates an outcome of Improved leadership and management capability. This can be measured in the distance travelled of participants because of completing the programme. A shift from no learners rating themselves as highly skilled to more than four-fifths doing so by programme completion.



**It has strengthened my leadership skills, particularly in strategic thinking, decision-making and managing teams effectively.**



## Change in Leadership & Management Skills after completing the programme

Knowledge level rating	Beginning of programme (%)	End of programme (%)	Change
Low	30.0	0.0	-30.0
Moderate	60.0	9.1	-50.9
High	10.0	63.6	+53.6
Very High	0.0	27.3	+27.3

Learners moved from primarily moderate understanding to a strong majority reporting high-level knowledge by programme completion. This indicates increased understanding of leadership theory and greater ability to apply learning in practice.



**I can now apply leadership theory directly to practice in my role.**





## Change in Confidence to Lead and Manage after completing the programme

Confidence Level rating	Beginning of programme (%)	End of programme (%)	Change
<b>Not confident</b>	10.0	0.0	-10.0
<b>Slightly confident</b>	40.0	0.0	-40.0
<b>Moderately confident</b>	30.0	27.3	-2.7
<b>Confident</b>	20.0	54.4	+34.5
<b>Very confident</b>	0.0	18.2	+18.2

Confidence showed the greatest distance travelled, with all learners progressing beyond low confidence levels and the majority reporting confidence or high confidence. This reflects increased readiness to lead teams, manage challenges and take on greater responsibility.



**I have gained confidence in myself and feel more able to lead and manage my team.**



# Application of Learning to Real-World Challenges

This section demonstrates how leadership learning was applied to practical workplace challenges. Learners moved from identifying challenges at baseline to demonstrating measurable improvements by the end of the programme.

Workplace Challenge	Baseline: % identifying as a challenge	End of Programme: % reporting improvement	Distance Travelled (What changed?)
<b>Conflict resolution</b>	60%	72.7%	Shift from a major challenge to the most improved capability area
<b>Adapting to change</b>	30%	63.6%	More than doubled improvement, indicating increased resilience
<b>Communication with teams</b>	—	54.5%	Emerged as a key applied skill supporting motivation and cohesion
<b>Team cohesion &amp; workload balance</b>	—	45.5%	New strengths developed through applied leadership learning



Learners moved from identifying core people-management challenges at baseline to demonstrating measurable improvements in applying leadership skills to real-world situations by the end of the programme.

Some areas (such as communication, team cohesion and workload balance) were not identified as challenges at baseline, and it is assumed these were not initially recognised as priority development needs; by the end of the programme, learners increasingly recognised their importance, with reported improvements reflecting increased awareness and capability developed through learning and application in practice.



**I can now deal with conflict and change more confidently, and communicate more effectively with my team.**

In practical terms, this means learners are now better equipped to lead teams, manage conflict and respond to organisational change with confidence.

### **Learner voice take aways**

**“I have gained confidence in myself. I feel more able to lead and manage my team. I feel ready to take on more challenges.”**

**“It has gained me confidence in leading a team and leading change within my organisation. I feel I can apply the theories to practice to be more effective as a manager.”**

**“It has strengthened my leadership skills, particularly in strategic thinking, decision-making, and managing teams effectively. It has increased my self-awareness, confidence, and ability to communicate and adapt in different situations.”**



**“I have increased my knowledge and confidence in motivating people, in building team cohesion, in the various leadership strategies that might work well in my workplace.”**

**“It's helped me to be much more aware of how I approach my leadership style and how I communicate with my team.”**

These qualitative insights provide depth to the quantitative data and are a critical element of outcomes-based evidence, showing how change is experienced and applied by learners.

# Conclusion

The ILM Level 5 Leadership & Management programme delivered through NICVA demonstrates clear distance travelled across all intended outcomes. Baseline and end-point data, supported by learner testimony, show meaningful improvements in skills, knowledge, confidence and leadership practice.

This combination of quantitative progression and qualitative learner voice provides strong evidence of an outcomes-based approach, with measurable benefits for individuals and the organisations they lead.

Overall, the evidence demonstrates that NICVA's ILM Level 5 programme supports meaningful progression from uncertainty to confident, applied leadership practice. For VCSE organisations operating in complex and changing environments, this growth in leadership capability contributes directly to stronger teams, improved decision-making and organisational resilience.



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