

ILM LEVEL 7 CERTIFICATE IN STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT - 10 DAYS

6 x In-Person Days + 4 online sessions (including 1:1 Executive Coaching Session) COHORT 1

Who is the course for:

For current and aspiring senior leaders in local government and public service organisations. This programme offers the opportunity to enhance strategic leadership capability, drive impactful change, and deliver high-value outcomes for communities and stakeholders.

The programme leads to nationally recognised qualification at postgraduate level supports managers who are committed to strengthening their personal leadership profile while creating meaningful organisational impact. Participants will refine their ability to shape long-term strategy, influence across complex stakeholder landscapes, and lead innovation with confidence and clarity. The learning will be underpinned by practical and applied research and the application of theoretical frameworks at the leading edge of management and leadership practice. It will be a requirement of the course that delegates identify, research, analyse and create a plan for an improvement at a strategic level within their organisation.

By the end of the course participants will:

- Recognise their own strengths and leadership and management development needs in the context of a senior level role within local government services and the wider community.
- Build the skills and confidence to apply evidence-informed approaches that enhance public service leadership and decision making.
- Have the knowledge and skills to develop, appraise and champion high-level strategic business cases.
- Strengthen their personal leadership brand, identity and influence by leveraging networks, partnerships and collaborative learning across the sector.
- Apply new thinking and tools to real-world local authority challenges, recognising their role in shaping organisational culture and modelling high standards of leadership behaviour.
- Have a raised level of awareness of the importance of continuous professional development and the tools to engage in it to work towards future career aspirations.

Why choose East Midlands Councils/Challenge:

The current climate within Local Government is challenging and ever changing. The programme will be designed with this in mind and to encourage interaction and participation to share and compare good practice and to ensure that the content is relevant and applicable.

- Support throughout the learning journey via email, telephone or video conference, ensures delegates maintain momentum on the course with opportunity to coach other participants and hone their skills.
- Direct claim status from ILM for level 2 to level 7. Awarded only to those centres who have demonstrated consistently high standards in design, delivery and assessment over a number of years.
- Challenge have been a trusted partner of East Midlands Councils for several years and have an indepth understanding of many of the challenges facing local authorities and the wider public sector. They have been the largest centre for ILM qualifications within the East Midlands since 2013, registering more delegates onto ILM programmes than any other centre, with a pass rate of in excess of 96% so you can be sure you are in safe hands.

TOPIC	SUMMARISED CONTENT	DATE
1	Induction & Developing the Strategic Leader (Part 1) + Research & Study Skills • Complete a comprehensive ILM induction, with guidance on assessment expectations and success strategies. • Develop advanced referencing and critical analysis skills relevant to public sector policy and practice. • Understand the role and importance of evidence-based research in shaping effective, outcomes-driven services, with a focus on good practice methods. • Plan and conduct structured enquiries to explore service improvement opportunities or policy impact. • Reflect on current professional development progress through CPD frameworks, establishing clear baselines for growth. • Explore the GROW coaching model to map your leadership journey and identify development goals. • Navigate sources of insight and support for strategic leadership within the local government landscape. • Examine the evolving role and scope of modern public sector leadership, including expectations of integrity, accountability and vision. • Construct a personal development plan • Identify and engage with relevant professional networks that foster collaboration, innovation and sector-wide learning.	28th Jan 2026 In-person 9.30am-4.30 pm
2	Developing the Strategic Leader (2) • Reflect on the distinctions between management and leadership in the context of today's public service challenges, exploring various leadership styles and their impact on team performance and service delivery. • Compare traditional and contemporary leadership theories with particular reference to local government application. • Understand the strategic leadership demands of working in a complex, fast-changing political and societal environment. • Distinguish between strategic and operational thinking, and when each is most effectively applied. • Apply tools and diagnostic methods to set objectives, measure impact and ensure accountability. • Strategic thinking methodologies and diagnostic tools eg – McKinsey's 7 S Balanced Score Card, Porter, Ansoff, BCG, Product Life Cycle etc.	25th Feb 2026 In-person 9.30am-4.30 pm
3	One to one Executive Coaching Session + Tutorial (on-line) • Review of individual behavioural profiles using DISC to explore communication styles and preferred working approaches, and their impact on leadership effectiveness. • Organisational research project topic discussion to refine objectives and scope in line with strategy. • Planning and alignment of Continuing Professional Development activities to maximise learning outcomes and professional impact from the programme.	Online 11th March 2026 9.30am-3.30 pm

4	Strategic Decision Making & Resource Requirements	• Exploration of external drivers and organisational context to support situational awareness, informed strategy development and effective policy implementation. • Identification of service user groups and review of engagement channels to improve reach and effectiveness of public services. • Application of structured decision-making frameworks to address both 'hard' and 'soft' challenges incorporating techniques such as heuristics and scenario planning. • Scoring matrices/ evaluation techniques to support transparent prioritisation and risk analysis. • Delegates will be introduced to a variety of analytical and strategic tools with guidance to select the most relevant for their specific enquiry and signposted by tutors to further resources as appropriate.	1st April 2026 In-person 9.30am-4.30 pm
5	Strategic Human Resources & Strategic Change	• Understanding culture to support the development of a responsive and adaptive organisation. • Organisational capability and workforce capacity, ensuring alignment between human resources and service delivery priorities. • Strategic succession planning to identify future talent and capability needs • Integration of strategic human resource management (HRM) practices within complex environments to ensure equity, transparency, and effectiveness. • Development of structured coaching and mentoring frameworks, alongside appraisal systems and personal development planning to enhance professional growth and performance management. • Exploration of strategic change models (e.g., transformational vs incremental approaches) with consideration of collaboration and partnership as enablers of innovation and sustainable reform. • Understanding organisational responses to change, and applying strategies to foster staff engagement, mitigate resistance, and support successful implementation. • Evaluation of the evolving nature of human capital, particularly in relation to changing workforce expectations, generational shifts, and hybrid working models.	23rd April 2026 In-person 9.30am-4.30 pm
6	Developing the Strategic Leader (3) Communications, strategic influence & collaborative working	• Exploring organisational communication flows to understand how information is shared, feedback is exchanged and clarity is maintained across structures and hierarchies. • Assertiveness & impact. Recognising the strategic importance of personal presence, reputation and leadership style in driving change and stakeholder engagement. • Enhancing professional identity and organisational representation, with a focus on relationship-building, cross-sector networking, and partnership development. • Understanding vision, and shared values and exploring how these are understood, embedded and modelled throughout teams and services. • Integrating emotional intelligence to navigate complexity and inform leadership capability. • Understanding evolving structures and dynamics of contemporary public service organisations. • Reframing motivation in the light of modern expectations; hybrid working, wellbeing priorities etc. • Exploring partnership & collaborative working practices for joined up service delivery. • Embedding ethics & social value into leadership decision making; accountability and fairness.	Online 14th May 2026 9.30am-3.30 pm

7	Improving Product/Service Delivery & Performance	- Evaluating organisational performance and public reputation through recognised quality frameworks, accreditations, service charters, and continuous improvement standards. - Measuring and monitoring performance , gathering insights and feedback to shape delivery around service users' expectations and lived experiences. - Customer advocacy measures - using Net Promoter Score (NPS) and similar concepts to inform service planning and optimise delivery and learning - Assessing the relationship between service quality and resource efficiency, drawing on methodologies such as Lean, Just-in-Time (JIT), and Agile to enhance public value and cost-effectiveness. - Examining the strategic fit and resilience of supply chains, particularly in relation to service continuity, ethical procurement, and local economic impact. - Understanding social value & CSR including reputation and the role of social media. - Aligning strategy, policy, procedures, systems, processes and compliance. - Stakeholder engagement & creating a compelling case for change or investment.	18th June 2026 In-person 9.30am-4.30 pm
8	Part 2 Decision Making, Critical Analysis & Financial Indicators	- Applying negotiation and influencing techniques to secure necessary resources. - Understanding and preparing for critical decision making points including point of no return - Applying risk management through the use of risk registers to identify and mitigate risks. - Analysing and presenting data effectively to create a compelling case and recommendations. - Building robust business cases that include financial and resource appraisals, demonstrating return on investment and understanding key financial documentation. - Financial appraisal techniques, such as Discounted Cash Flow (DCF) and Payback Period, to evaluate investment proposals and long-term affordability. - Differentiating between capital and revenue funding streams. - Assessing the cost-effectiveness of internal versus external resource deployment, including consideration of opportunity cost, capacity, and quality assurance.	Online 9th July 2026 9.30am-3.30 pm
9	Showcase & Presentation	- Delegates to present their Project Enquiry and Findings to the group in person (and other stakeholders from the sponsoring organisation should they wish to attend) or stakeholders can join remotely. - Q&A - CPD Focus including creation of a personal action plan. - Professional discussion on any areas outstanding on the course - Course review & feedback	15th Sept 2026 In-Person 9.30am-4.30 pm
10	Professional Discussion & CPD (online on 1:1)	This is an opportunity for delegates to discuss their learning journey on a confidential basis with the tutors and to further develop their action points for continuing professional development.	On-line 13th Oct 2026 9.30am-3.30pm

**Assessment:**

1 x enquiry-based research project of a suitable size and scope to demonstrate knowledge and application of strategic management & leadership concepts. This should be suitably complex with a robust methodology and time frame and to make recommendations at a strategic level within the organisation and should be backed up by extensive research and evidence in order to add value to the organisation
A portfolio of evidence & reflective review of a) own senior management performance, to include a comprehensive analysis and plan for Continuing Professional Development and b) the extent to which the research project has through action, added value to the organisation.

Please Note: All assessed work will be based on own work situation and organisation and therefore delegates will require access to information from their own organisation at a strategic level (either their own workplace or another) in order to be equipped to undertake the programme.