

# Manager Conference Survey

**Research study for**

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# 1 Executive Summary

Lancashire County Council's manager conferences, which have been running since 2002, were initiated as part of the culture change programme. They are run twice a year with a usual format of presentations from the leader, chief executive and other senior managers followed by a mix of question and answer or interactive sessions.

All managers who had registered to attend one of the November 2007 manager conferences were invited to complete a short online survey into their experience of the conference. The questionnaire link was sent to 200 conference attendees. Sixty-six managers completed the survey, at a rate of 33%.

## 1.1 Key findings

- Overall, almost all respondents were satisfied with the manager conference they attended, (94% were very or fairly satisfied, with 41% of all respondents *very* satisfied). Only two people answered that they were dissatisfied. This was similar across directorates, venues and between first-time delegates and those who had attended before.
- Satisfaction with aspects before the conference, the venues and the presentations is also high.
- Similarly, almost all delegates said the conference met their expectations and that they would recommend it to a colleague.
- Three-quarters of those responding to the survey had attended a manager conference before. The main reason for attending the conference was to hear an overview of the challenges facing the council, even among those who had attended previously.
- Most delegates had heard of the conference by email or staff notices on the intranet.
- The most preferred priority for manager conferences is for them to be an information and communications tool.

## 1.2 Recommendations

- Repeat attendance to the conference appears very high. Consider whether to encourage more managers who have not attended a conference before, for example by not inviting previous delegates.
- Provide conference handouts to attendees, and consider providing a video of presentations.
- Consider the suggestions made by respondents to improve the conference, alongside those from members of County Management Board.

## **2 Introduction**

Lancashire County Council's manager conferences, which have been running since 2002, were initiated as part of the culture change programme. They are run twice a year with three opportunities each time for managers to participate; attendance has generally been around 200 – 250 for each group of conferences. The format for these conferences has been for presentations from the leader, chief executive and one other senior manager (usually a CMB member) followed by a mix of question and answer or interactive sessions.

To enable the success of these conferences to be measured, and to take on any suggestions for improvement, a short survey of delegates was commissioned.

## **3 Methodology**

All managers who registered to attend the November 2007 manager conference were invited to complete a short online questionnaire on their experience of the conference.

This looked into:

- the communications before the conference;
- the usefulness of the conference itself; and
- suggestions for future improvements.

The questionnaire link was sent to 200 conference attendees. Sixty-six managers completed the survey, at a rate of 33%.

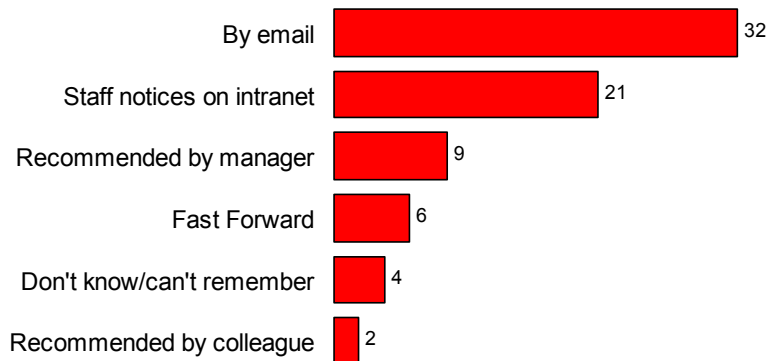
## 4 Main Research Findings

A list of respondents' suggestions for improvements can be found in the appendix.

### 4.1 Before the manager conference

Respondents to the survey were most likely to have heard about the conference **by email** (32) or **staff notices on the intranet** (21).

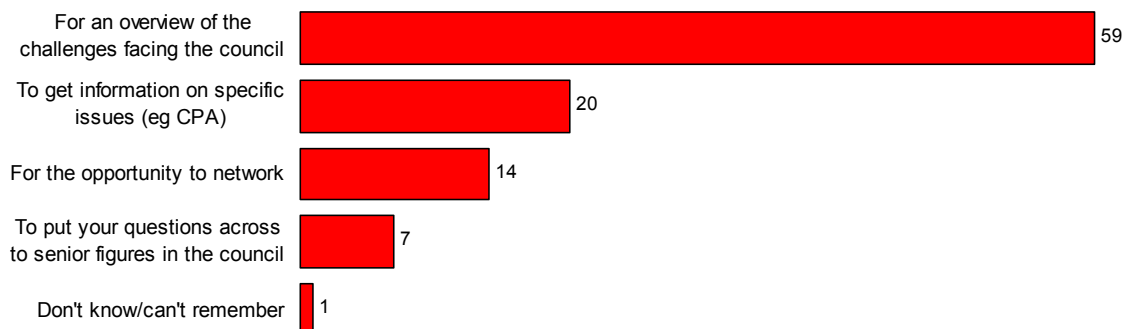
**Chart 1 - How did you hear about the manager conference?**



Base: all respondents (66)

About nine in ten of delegates attended to receive **an overview of the challenges facing the council**. About three in ten attended to get information on specific issues, such as the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), which was one of the main areas covered in the November management conferences.

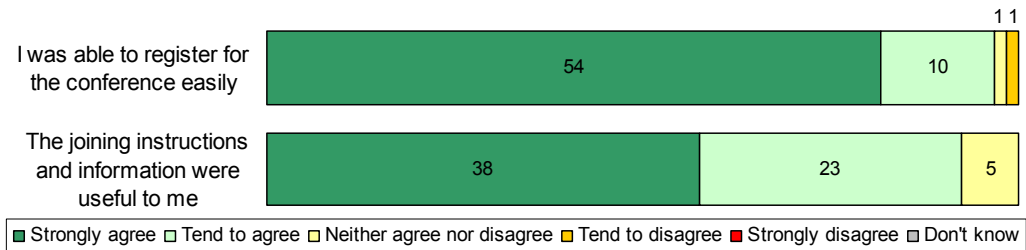
**Chart 2 - And why did you decide to attend the conference?**



Base: all respondents (66)

The vast majority of survey respondents agreed that they were **able to register for the conference easily**, (four in five strongly agreed) and that **the joining instructions and information were useful** (three in five strongly agreed).

**Chart 3 - And how much do you agree that...?**

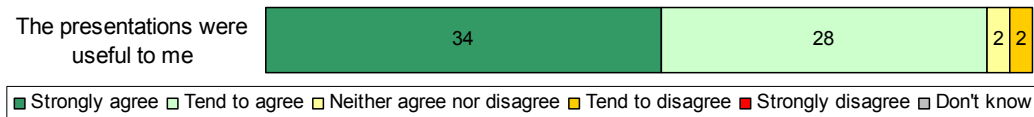


Base: all respondents (66)

## 4.2 At the conference

About half the delegates strongly agreed that the presentations were useful to them, and only two people disagreed.

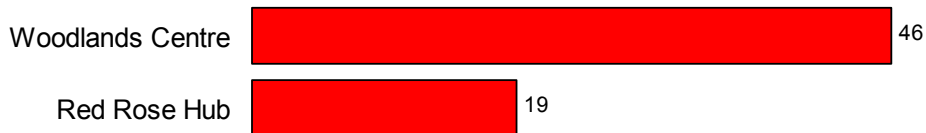
**Chart 4 - And how much do you agree that...?**



Base: all respondents (66)

More of those completing the survey attended the Woodlands Centre (46) than the Red Rose Hub (19).

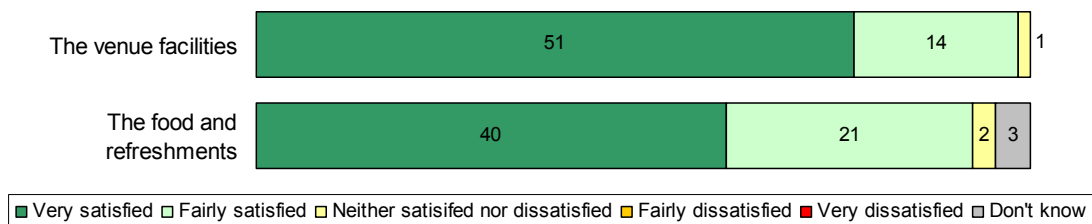
**Chart 5 - Which conference venue did you attend?**



Base: all responses (66)

The majority of delegates were very satisfied with the venue facilities and food and refreshments, and this was similar between the two venues.

**Chart 6 - How satisfied were you with...?**



Base: all responses (66)



Almost all respondents were satisfied with the conference overall, (19 in 20 satisfied, and two in five very satisfied), with only two people dissatisfied. Satisfaction was similar across directorates, venues and between first-time delegates and those who had attended before.

**Chart 7 - And how satisfied were you with the conference overall?**



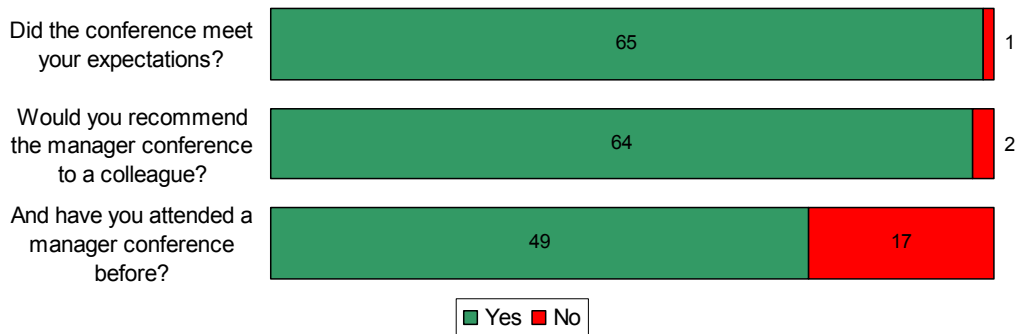
Base: all respondents (66)

Almost all delegates said the conference met their expectations. Only one respondent said the conference did not. They were asked the reason for this; their answer is quoted below.

*“Didn't really provide me with extra information other than what I could find on the intranet. Just in a more glossy format.”*

Similarly, almost all those responding said that they would recommend **the conference to a colleague** (about 19 in 20). This, and that almost all delegates said the conference met their expectations, are very positive results for the conference.

**Chart 8 - Did the conference meet your expectations?**



Base: all respondents (66)

Three-quarters of those who attended the conference had also attended one before (74% of respondents). This percentage is very high, and could be because those who have attended more than one conference were more likely to respond to the survey. Alternatively, this particular conference, with its focus on CPA, could have encouraged managers to come who had been before. If the aim of the manager conferences is to reach a wide cross-section of managers, then more first-time delegates will need to be encouraged in future.

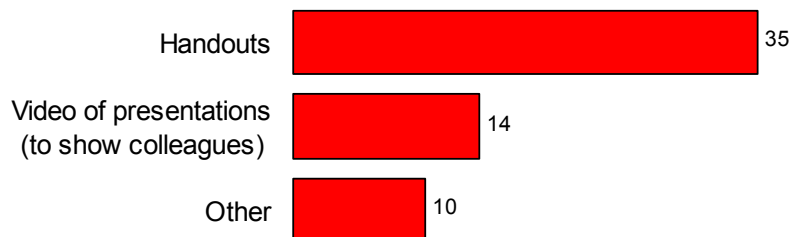
First-time delegates were as likely to be satisfied with the conference overall as those who had been to one before. Comparing the reasons for attending, both types of attendee came for **an overview of the council** (100% of new attendees and 89% of previous delegates). This might be surprising since this might have been expected to have been covered the previous time delegates attended. Those who had attended before were twice as likely to say they were there to **get information on specific issues such as CPA** (36%, versus 18% of first-time delegates).

As only one in three previous attendees came for CPA information, this suggests that repeat attendance would be high whatever the subject matter of the conference.

### 4.3 Preferences for future conferences

The most preferred materials to take away were **handouts**, preferred by about half of delegates. About one in five preferred a **video to show colleagues**.

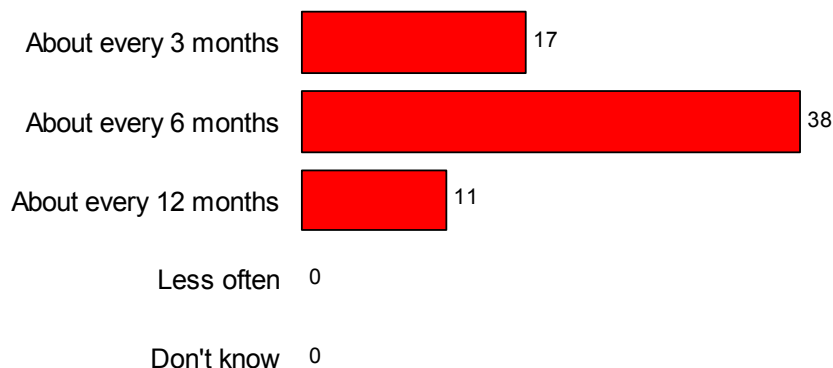
**Chart 9 - Which of the following materials, if any, would you like to be able to take away from the conference?**



Base: all respondents (66)

The preference for the frequency of manager conferences was to hold them be about every 6 months.

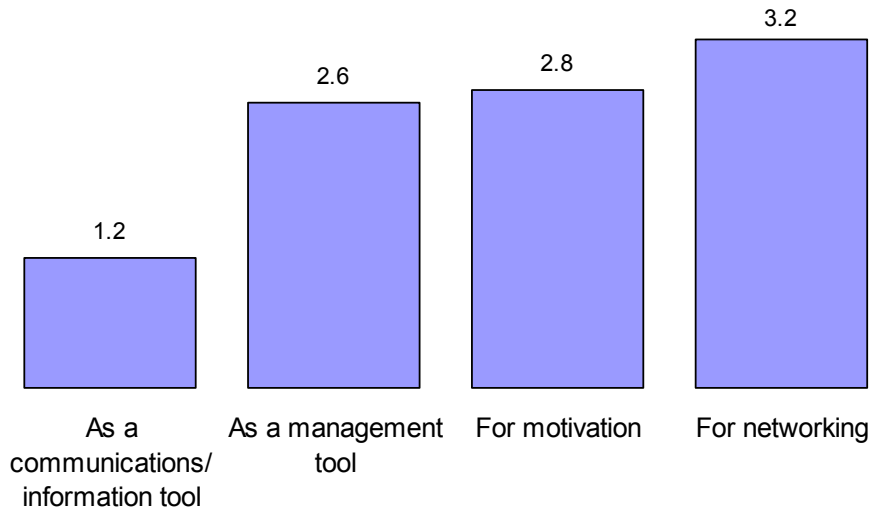
**Chart 10 - How often would you like to see the manager conferences arranged?**



Base: all respondents (66)

The next question asked what the priorities of the conferences should be. The most important priority by far is to use them as an **information and communications tool** (five people in six gave this as the most important). Using the conferences as **management tools**, for **motivation** and for **networking** are all less preferred.

**Chart 11 - What do you think the priorities of the manager conferences should be?**  
**Please rank each of the following aspects of the conference from 1 to 4 in order of their importance to you, where 1 is most important and 4 is least important.**

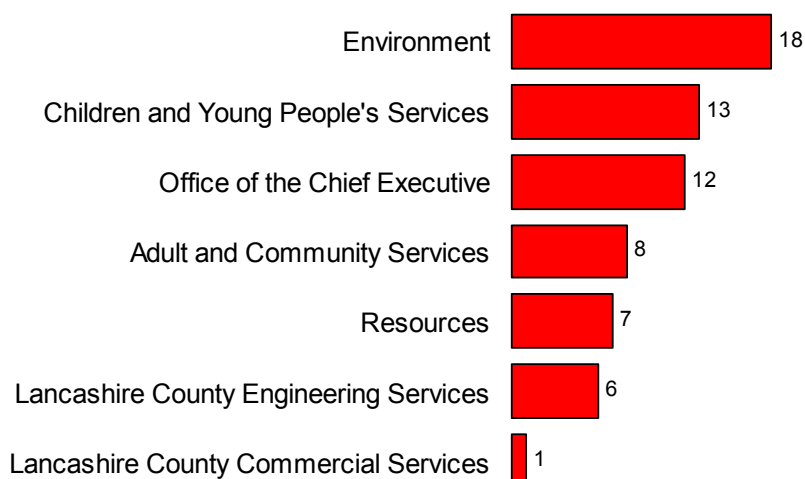


Base: mean rank from 1 to 4 - all respondents (66)

Delegates were also invited to give their suggestions for improving future manager conferences. These are quoted in the appendix. Several delegates would have preferred more opportunities for questions for example, or for them to be made in a different format.

The final question on the survey asked for the directorate of respondents. The spread of areas is shown below.

**Chart 12 - And finally, which directorate do you work for?**



Base: all respondents (66)

## 5 Appendix: Comments

### Q15 - If you have any suggestions for how to improve future manager conferences please enter them below (comments by directorate/DSO)

#### Adult and Community Services

I feel the managers' conference could be used as a strong vehicle for energising and motivating the management teams and consequently speeches tailored to this objective. Although it is always good to hear the Leader and the Chief Executive talk it would be good to hear from some of the Directors who I have never met. They could talk about key agendas affecting their directorate on a rolling programme.

No specific suggestions. I've attended several since they were first introduced and I very much hope they will continue under the new Chief Exec. I think they are of particular benefit to managers working outside of County Hall who can sometimes feel isolated from what is happening at the centre. They help managers to put their own service's aims and targets in context and clarify how they fit with the County Council's overall objectives and priorities.

Stop the building work when the conference is on.

The event to be included as training requirement for all middle managers.

#### Children and Young People's Services

Keep them very strategic. Keep representation from the Chief Exec and Leader. It's one of the few occasions I get to hear them speak directly on the priorities for the County Council and I really value the opportunity it provides. Each time, I have come away with a greater understand of the corporate agendas and have to some extent felt re-energised by what I've heard.

Maybe a facilitated event, with a specific and relevant topic that is meaningful to employees. Get employees to do some thinking around the issues facing LCC; what are their perceptions / suggestions? I value the question time input but am concerned that perhaps, some junior middle managers will feel intimidated asking a question.

More focus on forward thinking and corporate planning to improve business and service planning within teams

Opportunity to formulate and submit queries prior to conference. Also to have opportunity to express concerns and have them taken seriously.

The presentations and items were relevant but could be addressed in such a way as to be related to the delivery of front line services. The global overview whilst important needs to be firmly set in a local context. Questioning is rather inhibited due to the tone of answers sometimes.

#### Environment

A list of who is attending each conference would help to identify any networking opportunities in advance and aid inter- directorate communications

<p>Could focus on best practice within Directorates - perhaps including the Executive Directors from Directorates to be on the panel occasionally.</p>
<p>I thought both conferences I attended were excellent in every respect. I learned a lot from hearing the views and opinions of Leaders and the challenges facing the County Council. Well done.</p>
<p>Videos of presentations to share with staff and electronic copies of presentations plus questions/answers</p>
<p><b>Lancashire County Engineering Services</b></p>
<p>Increase the frequency and utilise the use of internet/video conferencing/podcast etc</p>
<p>It would be useful to publish a brief transcript of the conference on the intranet so junior managers and other employees, who are perhaps unable or not permitted to attend, can also have access to the leaders views and have an opportunity to ask questions on matters which may affect their own future and that of others around them.</p>
<p>The form produced for comments at the end of the presentation implied that there are only directorates within LCC and no mention of DSOs.</p>
<p><b>Office of the Chief Executive</b></p>
<p>An opportunity at the end of the session for individual discussions with those making presentations.</p>
<p>Might be useful once a theme etc for the event has been publicised that an opportunity be given to submit questions in advance</p>
<p>The event was well organised. The key messages from the Leader and the Chief Exec have given me a clear sense of purpose in my role and that of LCC and an awareness of the current priorities for LCC. It was well worth attending</p>
<p><b>Resources</b></p>
<p>A link via the intranet outlining presentation points so information can be accessed by all LCC staff.</p>
<p>A presentation from the new chief Executive on his initial views of changes he would want to see at the authority</p>
<p>Ask attendees to introduce themselves</p>
<p><b>Other - (no directorate given)</b></p>
<p>Potential to ask delegates in advance if there are any key corporate subjects they consider should be raised.</p>