

# Chief Executives' Forum Building Inclusive Leaders Programme Evaluation

Final Report

14<sup>th</sup> December 2020

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*\* Please note, additional data are provided on the notes pages of the slides where appropriate should you want more detail*

# 1. Project Background

## 1.1 About the programme (1 of 5)

- The Building Inclusive Leaders' (BIL) programme was launched in 2018 by the Chief Executives' Forum. The programme is the successor to the Forum's Women's Leadership Initiative (WLI) programme which ran for the previous 15 years.
- An evaluation of the WLI programme in 2015 concluded it was effective and efficient and achieved a significant impact in terms of achieving its stated objectives relating to developing leadership among women in the NI public sector and identified a strong rationale for the continued provision of this type of value-added gender specific leadership programme.
- Following a procurement exercise in 2017, CreateExpress Ltd was appointed to design, manage, deliver and evaluate the refreshed programme for the three-year period 2018 – 2021. The resulting BIL programme offers aspiring / senior female leaders working in the public sector a unique opportunity to further develop their leadership capabilities and career opportunities. It seeks to enable participants to get high impact results with and through the people they lead and the organisations they serve. Whilst programme participants are not selected on the basis of an explicit expression of a desire to achieve career progression / promotion, it is expected that the programme will support some participants in achieving progression, thereby helping to address the gender imbalance at the most senior levels in NI's public service.

# 1.1 About the programme (2 of 5)

- Programme elements:



**360 Assessment**  
Emotional & Social Intelligence 360  
Hogan Leadership Assessment



**6 Face-to-face Learning Events**  
2-day Leadership Residential Retreat  
Plus 4 Action Learning Events



**Virtual Coaching**  
We Add Urgency And Challenge To The Learning Journey Through A Targeted Virtual Coaching Intervention  
  
6 X Coaching Sessions  
  
Mentoring Support From Public Sector Leaders



**Learning Nuggets**  
We Support With Micro-learning Before Each Learning Event  
- Pre-reading  
- Resources



**Virtual Webinars**  
We Deliver Core Elements Of Content Via Live Facilitated Virtual Discussions:  
  
Confidence  
Resilience  
Organisational Savvy  
Decision Making  
Collaboration



**Guest Speakers**  
Hot Topics  
Panel Interviews  
Political Experts  
Policy Makers  
  
Key Role Models Invited To Attend Action Learning Events & Leadership Retreat



**Resilience Challenges**  
We Drive New Habit Formation To Build Brain & Body Fitness via Coaching.  
  
We Track Progress Against 6 Key Variables:  
Exercise, Stimulation, Sleep, Mindful Time, Focus Time, Play Time



**Assignments**  
We Promote Peer Engagement, Peer Coaching, Leader-led Elements,  
Social Learning  
Immersion Activities,  
Role Modeling &  
Reflective Assignments

# 1.1 Leadership assessment (3 of 5)

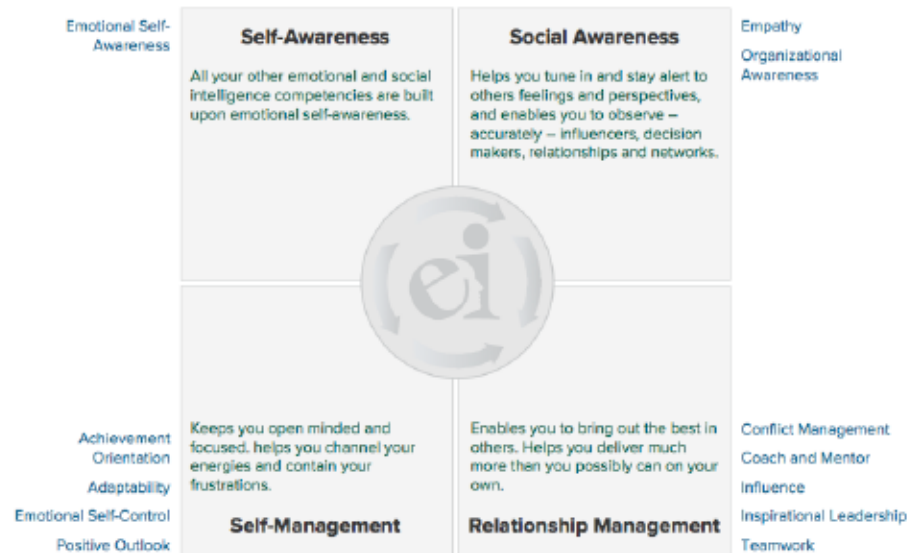
## The Leadership Assessment Elements of the Programme

### The ESCI 360 Assessment

Building Inclusive Leaders by design offers participants rich, multiple source, frequent and ongoing feedback. We kick start this with a 360 focused on emotional and social intelligence assessment via Hay Group ESCI (most validated & scientific measure). The ESCI 360 measures and comments on behaviours that can be developed.

The Haygroup **Emotional and Social Competency Inventory 360** measures 12 competencies across 4 clusters – self awareness, self management, social awareness and relationship management. We encourage you to solicit feedback from a broad range of raters, so you can more accurately assess how you are currently showing up as a leader in the context of your work.

Your reports are confidential to you and are used to support you in identifying your strengths and areas for development for the programme. You will receive your feedback reports at your deep dive leadership retreat.



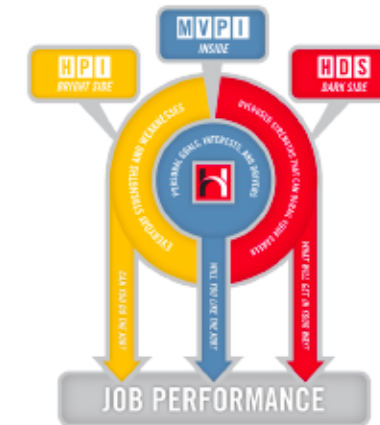
### Hogan Leadership Assessment

#### Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI) - What is your leadership reputation?

The HPI describes your bright-side personality – the qualities that describe how you relate to others when you are at your best.

#### Motives, Values, Preferences Inventory (MVPI) - What drives you?

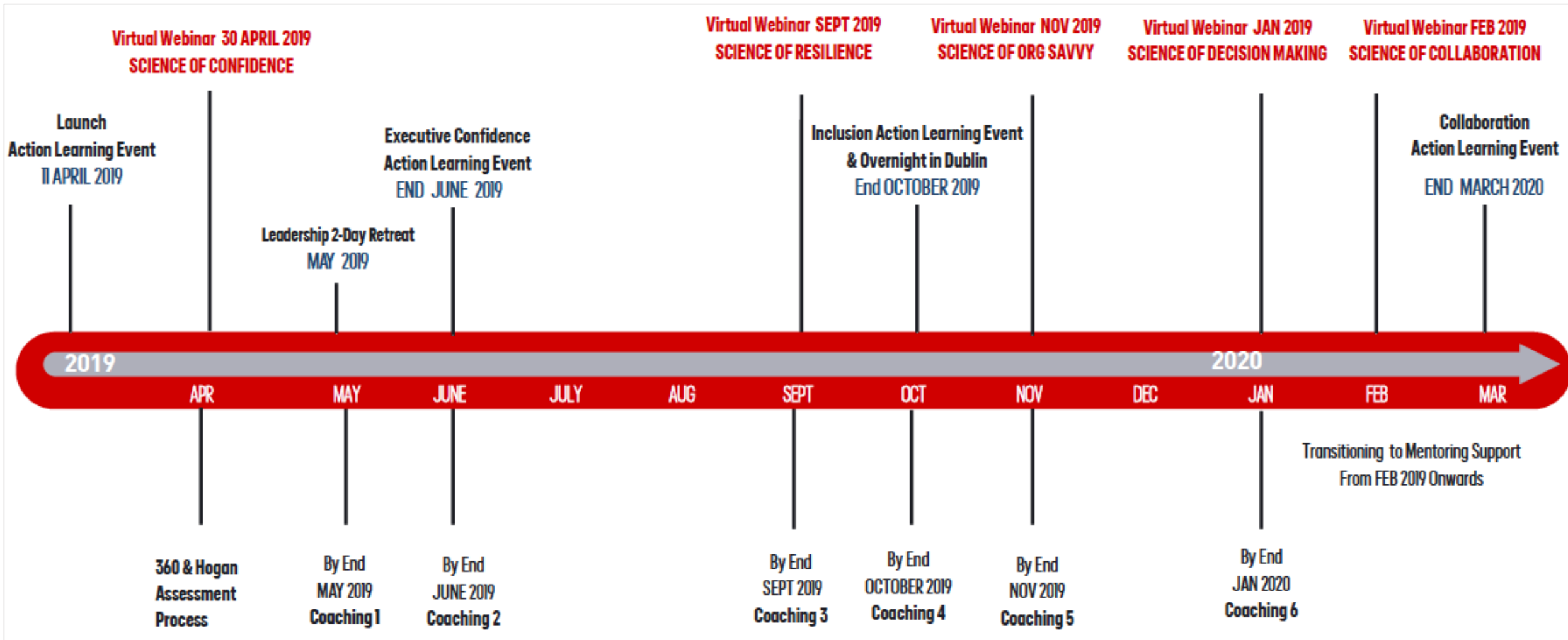
The MVPI describes your core values, drivers and interests, which determine what you desire and strive to attain. By assessing your values, you can better understand what motivates you to succeed – and what doesn't.



#### Hogan Development Survey (HDS) / Leadership Derailers - What could stop you? The way you act when the pressure is on could be influencing your reputation and career prospects.

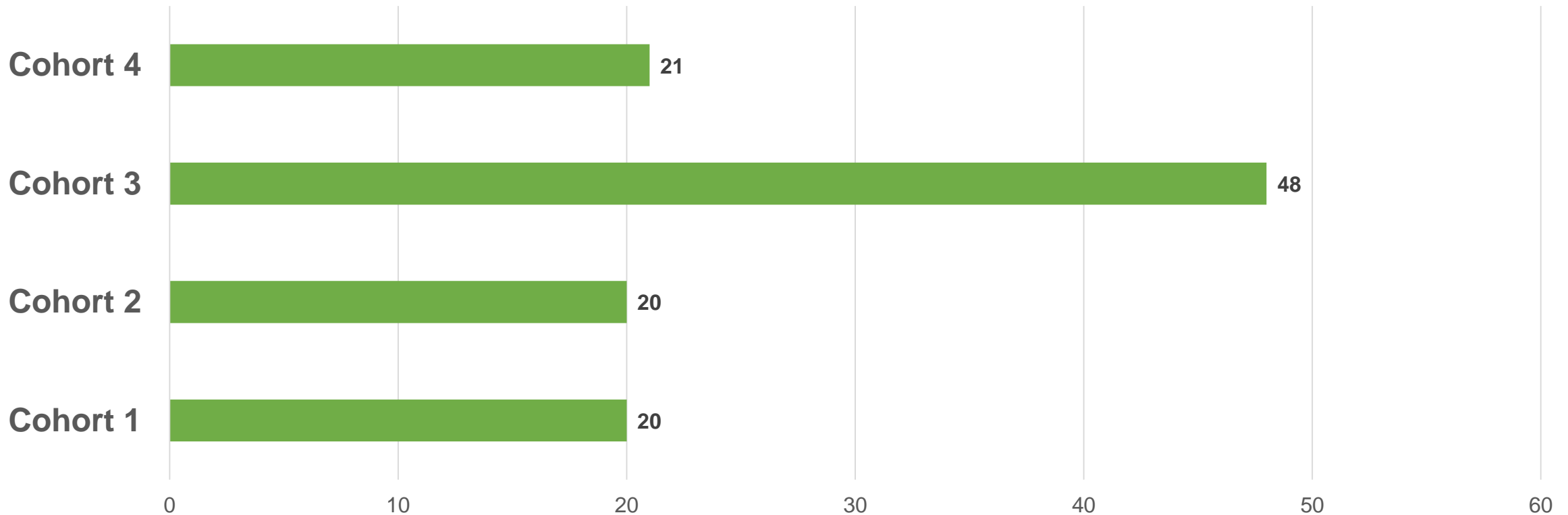
# 1.1 About the programme (4 of 5)

- Learning journey (with example dates):



## 1.1 About the programme (5 of 5)

- Three cohorts, representing 88 participants, have completed the BIL programme to date, with a fourth cohort of 21 participants having commenced the programme in June 2020.
- [This evaluation was circulated to cohorts 1 to 3 as cohort 4 only commenced in June 2020.]





## 1.2 Evaluation approach: Objectives (1 of 4)

- 1. To determine the impact of the programme on individual participants.** *To include consideration of issues such as: Understanding of self and personal qualities, Confidence boosting, Ability to lead/influence, Professional profile, Career progression, Networking skills & development of networks. Also investigate if participant has since changed job role; if any change represents a promotion; to what degree participant feels this is due to the programme.*
- 2. To determine the impact of the programme on the wider public service.** *To include consideration of issues such as: Development of participants' awareness and understanding of other organisations and inter-dependence of system as a whole, Collaborative ability, Transfer of learning back into the public service ecosystem, Would be useful to have some form of feedback from line managers as well as participants for this section*
- 3. To determine levels of satisfaction with the management and delivery of the BIL programme.** *To include satisfaction levels with the individual elements of the programme e.g. Live events, Digital events, Assessment, Coaching, Mentoring, General communication / admin. How the programme as a whole has met participants' expectations? Feedback on any element's participants would like to see expanded or reduced. Opportunity to investigate particular issues e.g.: levels of comfort with single gender programme; does the programme have the correct name?*

## 1.2 Evaluation approach: Research methodology (2 of 4)

1. Project initiation meeting  
Review of background documents / course content

3. Development and agreement of focused online questionnaire

5. Analysis & Reporting

2. Qualitative research to inform development of questionnaire:  
6 telephone interviews with participants spread across 3 cohorts / types of organisations

4. CEF circulate online survey to 88 respondents

Survey open 3 weeks:  
26/10/2020 to 13/11/2020



## 1.2 Evaluation approach: Stage 2 qualitative sample response (3 of 4)

| Type of organisation / Cohort | Central Government | Local Government | Non Departmental Public Body | Other | Total |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Cohort 1                      | 1                  | 1                | -                            | -     | 2     |
| Cohort 2                      | 1                  | -                | 1                            | -     | 2     |
| Cohort 3                      | -                  | -                | 2                            | -     | 2     |
| Total                         | 2                  | 1                | 3                            | -     | 6     |

- 4 names were provided to RFA per cohort
- RFA then chose whom to contact for interview
- Even spread of interviews across cohorts
- Spread of interviews across types of organisation

## 1.2 Evaluation approach: Stage 4 quantitative sample response (4 of 4)

| Type of organisation / Cohort | Central Government | Local Government | Non Departmental Public Body | Other | Total | Total sample circulated to | Response rate from each cohort |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------------------|-------|-------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Cohort 1                      | 8                  | 2                | 1                            | -     | 11    | 20                         | 55%                            |
| Cohort 2                      | 3                  | 1                | 6                            | 1     | 11    | 20                         | 55%                            |
| Cohort 3                      | 9                  | 0                | 5                            | -     | 14    | 48                         | 29%                            |
| <b>Total</b>                  | 20                 | 3                | 10                           | 3     | 36    | 88                         | 41%                            |

- 36 survey responses. Overall response rate of 41%
- Better response rate from cohorts 1 and 2
- Spread of interviews across types of organisation
- Survey responses on the whole are very positive but we can't say how representative this is of all views

## **2. Executive Summary**

*“It broke me down as a person into really thinking deep, really deep about who I am, my mojo, what purpose do I have in life in this organisation, rather than just where do I want to go ... I mean you can apply for different jobs and go wherever you think but ... when you really understand yourself and your strengths then you chase the right thing or you go for the right thing or you find what’s important.” (Qualitative Interview 1)*

*“Well organised and professionally run programme. A CEF-type leadership programme should be compulsory for all middle/senior managers in the public sector/NICS.” (Survey respondent)*

*“[I’d give it a] ten ... I think it’s the standard and the quality. From day dot, the very first day you are in Stormont and the permanent secretaries appear ... there is a real sincere and absolute effort here being made to invest in this so it automatically gave me a level of buy in that I have never experienced before with any sort of training or you know those sort of courses and the commitment of Cora and the team, the mentors, it was so individualised ... we were all essentially fit in some form of a mould from the civil services perspective, but we were all so different and we were all so unique in our personal circumstances and yet the course managed to tailor itself to meet those very specific and individual needs. So you had the support of the other candidates but you also had a very specific tailor made programme, it’s like nothing I have ever experienced before and I can’t speak more highly of it ... it was absolutely outstanding in every regard. I genuinely can say that it was the best course I have ever done, ever ... it superseded anything I have ever done before in terms of developing me as a person, both personally and professionally.” (Qualitative Interview 4)*

# Executive Summary

1. Overall, the feedback on the programme was overwhelmingly positive. Women valued the programme for the benefit it brought them both personally and professionally. They reported that their confidence was developed and their horizons widened. They appreciated the opportunity to take time out to work on themselves and on their career and leadership goals.
2. Almost all research participants had already recommended the programme / or would recommend it.
3. The format of the programme seems to work well. The ethos / approach was praised and each of the individual elements was well regarded. The combination of live events and activities with the assessment approaches and coaching was considered to work well. The retreat was the most highly rated element of the programme partly as it provided opportunity to build relationships and to really reflect and listen to authentic frank speakers
4. Mentoring was the main element around which there was some negativity. This seems to have been due to difficulties in getting in touch with and engaging with mentors.
5. A key benefit of involvement on the programme was the development of a network which enabled on-going peer support and development. This also enabled ongoing learning about the rest of the public sector in Northern Ireland. Participants were positive about the impact the programme was having on improving the quality of leaders in the public sector. There is an opportunity to further build on and support the networks developed by the programme should CEF wish to do so.
6. Participants generally considered that the programme benefitted from being a women-only programme, and the name 'Building Inclusive Leaders' also worked well (although this was only discussed within the qualitative component of the research).
7. CreateExpress were considered to be a good and credible programme provider.

# **3. Detailed Research Findings**

**(organised according to project objectives)**



## 1. To determine the impact of the programme on individual participants.

*To include consideration of issues such as: understanding of self and personal qualities, confidence boosting, ability to lead/influence, professional profile, career progression, networking skills & development of networks. Also investigate if participant has since changed job role; if any change represents a promotion; to what degree participant feels this is due to the programme.*

## Research theme 1:

### **Overall the impact of the programme was very positive**

Through the quantitative research programme participants spontaneously mentioned a raft of positives from their engagement with the programme:

- Meeting others to learn and network with
- The coaching component
- Having the opportunity to take time out and reflect e.g. on their leadership skills.

Many of the comments were effusive about how good their experience of the course was and the positive impact that it has had on them.

**Q. Which aspect of the Building Inclusive Leaders Programme was of most value to you and why? (Base:35)**  
**Themes from responses**



## Q. Which aspect of the Building Inclusive Leaders Programme was of most value to you and why? (Base:36)

### Example responses

*“The self awareness exercise where I understood my skills and where I needed to improve. I also gained a much more in-depth understanding of what leadership really means.”*  
(Survey respondent)

*“Having the opportunity to hear from/engage with a range of senior leaders, across different areas of public policy - including those outside NI. - and encouragement to think differently.”*  
(Survey respondent)

*“The high quality and significant level of tailor made engagement invested in the programme was captivating from the outset. It created an environment where you welcomed every opportunity to assess and challenge personal traits and characteristics and felt confident in the skills being taught to improve or accept them.”* (Survey respondent)

*“The programme was valuable to me for a number of reasons but mainly as it helped me build confidence in leadership and also to build and maintain important connections with colleagues from other parts of the public sector.”*  
(Survey respondent)

*“Understanding my leadership type and preferred style and how this is perceived by those I manage. I also valued the coaching programme.”* (Survey respondent)

*“The technical input [hints/tips/methodologies] was excellent as it gave me a sound basis on which to operate - some things I may have done anyway, but the technical input explained why it worked, and put rationale, coherent processes around activities for me.”* (Survey respondent)

## **Research theme 2:**

**Programme participants mention that they had a range of aspirations for their involvement in the programme prior to starting it.**

Developing their leadership skills and a clearer sense of career direction were the two most frequently mentioned in the survey.

The qualitative research suggested that most women had started the course as they wanted some sort of support with their career progression / direction.

**Q. When you applied to the programme which of the following did you hope to achieve? (Base:36)**



*“I joined the programme ... at that time I had been thinking about career progression and just where I wanted to go ... so whenever the information and application came round, it ticked a lot of those boxes in terms of how I was maybe able to think about what my career progression might be, and I was probably looking at it quite narrowly at that time but then from doing the course it was much wider and much more beneficial than I anticipated.”*

*(Qualitative Interview 1)*

*“I didn’t have a lot of peer contacts ... I was just not sure where I was going next in the Civil Service ... it was really just to see what else there was and also to try, I felt that I needed leadership I needed to improve, so I felt I was very confident from a professional point of view in terms of how to do ... projects how to lead [area of specialism] but I suppose just that more general leadership was somewhere I wanted to explore..”*

*(Qualitative Interview 2)*

*“I felt I was at a bit of a crossroads in that I suppose I wasn’t, I was enjoying my work, don’t get me wrong, but I wasn’t feeling fulfilled, I felt that there was more I could do but I also wanted to retain some element of my technical piece but was struggling to find that next step on the career path. So ... there was a notification put around about the training opportunity and with that uncertainty about where was I going I said well this was an opportunity, maybe the time was right now to do this ... between the time of application and starting the programme I moved into a policy role with absolutely no policy background so the programme came to me at a really good juncture in my career.”*

*(Qualitative Interview 5)*

## Research theme 3:

**All areas of impact desired by the programme organisers were met to some extent according to the research.**

**In the quantitative research all but two areas scored an average of over 4 out of 5**

- *‘Developing an improved understanding of myself and the qualities that I bring to my job’* scored highest at 4.44.
- Programme participants considered that the programme also achieves impact around their leadership / influencing skills, their confidence and their network and their performance in their current role, as well as encouraging them to seek further development / progression.
- The areas where scores are slightly lower relate to impact around developing the ability to work across organisational boundaries and improving knowledge of other public sector organisations.



**Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements,  
Participation in the Building Inclusive Leaders Programme  
has... (Base:36)**



*“Without doubt, this is the best course I have ever attended and the journey of self discovery and awareness of my own ability as a leader has helped me in my work and personal life immeasurably.” (Survey respondent)*

*“The programme gave me a holistic insight into myself - how I perceive myself, how I'm perceived by others, how to develop my leadership as well as generally opening up my mindset.” (Survey respondent)*

## Research theme 4:

**Those who participated in the qualitative research were equally positive about the impact of the programme on the same range of areas.**

- **Confidence:** Programme participants talked about being more confident and how this had helped them for example get involved in new things in the workplace, be more outspoken and stick to the resolve to find better ways of undertaking their work.
- **Ability to lead / influence:** Programme participants talked about how their ability to influence and lead had developed for example noting times when colleagues come to them for help and support and providing examples of ways that they have influenced others.
- **Understanding of self:** Programme participants talked less about how they had understood themselves and more about their confidence. Some participants were able to cite specific ways of working that they were more aware of.
- **Networking:** Programme participants talked about having access to a network of women that they would not have otherwise met. All those interviewed noted that they had been involved with some sort of WhatsApp group or follow up meetings / discussions with their cohort.

## Confidence boosting

*“Definitely my confidence and self-belief, so rather than focussing on what I can’t do, it’s flipping that and [saying] well actually what are my strengths so having that belief in my own ability to speak out to go for something that I wouldn’t have, or get involved in something that I wouldn’t have beforehand, it’s also been really helpful for that, whenever sometimes you are just feeling stuck and you can’t see a way out and that ability to engage your growth mind-set more and be more positive.” (Qualitative Interview 1)*

*“I would almost say it strengthened my resolve to do things differently because I suppose that would be my modus operandi, even within a very set structure of government I am constantly trying to look at how we can do things better and do things differently and I think what I took away from it is I’m doing the right thing, that it was endorsing my approach however hard that is, which it is, and sometimes you really feel like you are racing against the machine but it’s worth keeping going on that tack because we will never see change if people at our stage and our level don’t keep doing that, we have seen a bit of change but there needs to be a lot more and unless people have that attitude of going in to look at things differently and we did look at things differently and we talked about how, you know what was important to us, and how we might see change in the way we are and the way we behave and the way we lead ... I feel like there was a lot of endorsement from that, because sometimes you feel like you’re just you know alone, you’re doing your thing, and you’re different to other people in the way you do things, but in that forum you found that there is a wider forum of women that think the same and want to do the same.” (Qualitative Interview 3)*

*“It definitely built confidence, wholeheartedly, across the board for me, and I definitely am a lot more outspoken in relation to aspects of my current position with line managers etc. because I do have a bit more sense of self-worth and sense of I have something to offer here and I’m not sitting quietly in the corner anymore, that sort of idea ... I would say it has impacted me positively across the board.” (Qualitative Interview 4)*

## Ability to lead / influence

*“... my boss the Chief Executive, at our one to ones I would have been introducing some things that I wouldn't have had the confidence to do beforehand whether it be conversations or fun things with purpose, and actually found then he then did say to me after it that that challenged him and his mind-set so having the confidence to do that.” (Qualitative Interview 1)*

*“I think it has definitely helped with things around confidence and resilience and actually there was a few exercises around ... I think it might have been collaboration, which was around engaging with others, and to understand, basically, first person, second person, third person kind of things ... it was a nice little tool in terms of questions ... what kind of person are you engaging with and what kind of person are you and see why those frictions will happen, and then it allows you to kind of, to use that to think about going in with other senior leaders and even with staff, see where we are different and where the frictions might happen and it helps you then to be prepared for dealing with that, so it's the relationship, one of my senior leaders is very similar to me in some ways but very different to me and there were challenges there in that relationship and it was very useful I think in that from a leadership point of view to understand how to manage up as well as manage down.”  
(Qualitative Interview 2)*

*“I suppose I think I wouldn't see it as a direct thing like I'm a better leader now because I've done that ... it's almost like a softer approach than that where it helps you to feel more enabled as a leader already in a leadership role and to be in a position to move in a direction if that opportunity comes, if you want to pursue that opportunity in leadership ... I don't think it's like I learnt this and now I am a better leader, but more that I have learnt a lot of things from the overall process which are more than just text book ways of doing things but actually a way of being in that position and for me that's a really important aspect around who you are in your position of leadership and what you represent in your position of leadership, and so for me I think the course really supports that place. ... there were little tips and stuff like that along the way which were helpful and you would keep in mind but for me it's more rounded than that, and that's why I love it so much, I think it really fitted for me.”  
(Qualitative Interview 3)*

# Understanding of self and personal qualities

*“I think it has really widened my outlook. It’s given me confidence that I can take on a new role. It has also given me much greater self-awareness, that sometimes I would have felt that I would have been going at 110 mph and maybe I wasn’t bringing my team and whatnot with me so it’s kind of said right okay let’s just re-evaluate how I approach tasks and things. So greater self-awareness and certainly increased confidence ... The changing of my role, the work that I was getting into was giving me greater exposure to permanent secretaries, to ministers which I had never had before, and there was a number of sessions in the programme which I go back to now, I do refer back when I am trying to prepare for some of those meetings and sort of really trying to take things holistically about it, the whole piece of trying to look at it from the other persons point of view and how will this match up, I just think it’s given me that much wider perspective..”*

*(Qualitative Interview 5)*

# Networking skills & development of networks

*“What I find with this is it’s opened up those networks including to not just the ones that were on the cohort and keeping in touch with them but also then there was quite a lot of influential speakers that came in and I have kept in touch with a number of them actually since so the likes of Tracey Meharg and Brenda King and ... Sue Grey, so yes absolutely it has opened up those networks and discussions and opportunities there..” (Qualitative Interview 1)*

*“I think it was good from a networking point of view ... I found that really refreshing ... just great to meet those people and I am quite sure that we will connect again, we will sort of in smaller groups within the bigger because it was quite a big group overall, but I do think there is opportunity to continue with those networks and I think that is really helpful across departments because we work across departments and will come across people maybe anyway through the work environment but I think it’s really good to maintain those networks and I would really value the continuation of that.” (Qualitative Interview 3)*

*“I think it has been a fantastic opportunity for me in terms of making a network of people ... I feel like I have a network that I wouldn’t have had if I hadn’t of went on this programme.” (Qualitative Interview 2)*

## Research theme 5:

**Programme participants in the qualitative research found it difficult to comment on whether there had been an impact on their professional profile.**

- A minority felt that it had impacted, as they felt they were being perceived slightly differently in their organisation.
- Others felt it had impacted to some extent, as they have been given the opportunity to meet senior leaders on further occasions.
- Others noted that colleagues / managers would be better placed to comment on whether their profile had been influenced.

[Unfortunately, the study budget did not allow for collecting feedback from line managers and colleagues.]



## Professional profile

*“[Do you think this has had an impact on your professional profile?]”*

*“Yeah I do think so because with the confidence in my own ability and to I guess get a bit more involved or speak out more even in a more positive way I have been more visible and would notice that my peers are coming to me ... just that kind of sounding board, and I wouldn't call it mentoring but like for example we have a forum, a head of service forum in the organisation here and again as a result of the course I just was speaking up a bit and I said this isn't working for anyone, we need to just go back to what's important, to what our objectives are ... so that then set a course of doing that forum and the meetings differently and [I am] the first person to chair that and a few thereafter had come to myself and said look have you any ideas or I was thinking about trying to do this, how do you think we could make that more engaging ... even just in terms of getting involved in different projects where people maybe wouldn't have come to me before and they are now and they are seeing that I add value ... even my then line manager and the directors some of them actually saying it's clear that I have an additional skill set that I should be using or using better or the organisation should be making use of so absolutely.”*  
(Qualitative Interview 1)

*“[Do you think this has had an impact on your professional profile?]”*

*“To some extent ... some of these leaders did maybe round table discussions and went round the groups but you never really got that long to spend with any of them and I think if you had had a smaller group you might have had more opportunity to talk to those people and probably the like of, I would know Katrina Godfrey through my work she's one of the permanent secretaries in Northern Ireland Civil Service, I had a conversation with her over lunch but she already knew me anyway so it wasn't increasing my profile it was giving me another opportunity to talk to her.”* (Qualitative Interview 6)

*“It has given me yes a visibility it has raised my visibility to senior people. I'm not so sure how much impact, because I can't tell, I feel like I've met lots more senior people than I would have had the opportunity, a lot of them I had already met ... it's very hard for me to know whether they would know me now after it, whether I have made any impact.”* (Qualitative Interview 2)

*“The course itself I suppose I wouldn't say it necessarily raised my profile, you meet people through the course that you know now you might say hello to that you wouldn't before so people kind of know who you are a bit more if that's what you mean in terms of who you are and what you do ... I do think that the opportunities of meeting people and hearing from people puts the possibility there of that in that I think I could go to some of the speakers and grade 3s and ... you could go to them and say oh hi I met you at this you know you could, I wouldn't have a second thought about doing that, if I wanted to ask them about something or inquire about what they are doing in their department or looking at opportunities for myself.”* (Qualitative Interview 3)

## Research theme 6:

**Most of those whose role had changed in some way considered that the programme had either contributed to some extent, or a lot, to their move.**

In relation to immediate career progression: about half of programme participants who responded to the survey stayed in the same role after the course. 8 of the remaining 18 had been promoted and a further 3 were either temporarily promoted or moving to a promotion.

The qualitative interviews with programme participants suggested that there was some contribution of the programme to their progression, through increased confidence/ambition, support with preparation or just encouraging more openness to looking for opportunities.

**Q. Which of the following best describes any change in your role since starting BIL ? (Base:36)**



| To what extent did your learning on BIL contribute to your promotion/move?              |   |
|---|---|
| A lot – I wouldn't have made the move without the learning gained through the programme | 5 |
| To some extent – The learnings contributed towards me making the move or promotion      | 9 |
| Not at all – I would have made the move regardless of the programme                     | 2 |

*"I haven't changed my job title but I have been much more open to looking around and applying for jobs that I never would have beforehand and it's also, although my job title hasn't changed just in terms of what I get involved in in work definitely has changed so I have widened that remit, albeit it hasn't impacted on my title ... I really would say it was entirely down to the programme. In terms of what I get involved in here it was about the programme helping giving me the confidence to understand and know my strengths and then influence ways of actually getting involved in projects [that I want to get involved in] ... [ambition] it's not a dirty word and that wanting to have more authority or more decision making ability is a good thing, so yeah it's definitely made me more ambitious and also thinking wider than just my current profession as well which I probably would have slept walked through for quite some time."*

*(Qualitative Interview 1)*

*"The facilitator (Cora) was excellent. The programme focused on lived experiences and used theory to help understand how and why leadership behaviours exist and the extent to which they can be changed. A positive, 'can do' approach, with a real sense of support was inspiring. The coaching element was excellent, giving me the opportunity to explore my own goals, which ultimately led to a successful promotion." (Survey respondent)*

*"I think I was going for it anyway [a promotion], but I think the programme probably helped with the confidence point of view so it did, it definitely helped me I think even in my acting up in the terms of the, the other, the grade 5 post that I was acting into a little bit more confidence in my ability to even do that temporary position ."*

*(Qualitative Interview 2)*

*"[Did programme encourage you to go for the promotion?]  
"No, I would have gone for it anyway, but I suppose it was useful for just kind of helping me prepare for it and I suppose it helped me develop ... I would have gone for it anyway, and given it my best shot, but there were certainly things that I was able to take from the course that helped me prepare for the process that I went through to get the post." (Qualitative Interview 6)*

## 2. To determine the impact of the programme on the wider public service.

*To include consideration of issues such as: development of participants' awareness and understanding of other organisations and inter-dependence of system as a whole, collaborative ability, transfer of learning back into the public service ecosystem*

## Research theme 7:

**Those completing the survey generally considered that the programme is contributing to change in the public sector through improving the quality of leaders and contributing to increasing the number of women in leadership in the sector.**

There was less agreement that the programme is helping to change the working culture in the public sector.

The qualitative interviews allowed a general discussion around the impact of the programme on the public sector generally. There was general agreement that the programme has the potential to bring change over time through working in a different way.

**Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:  
(Base:36)**

**The Building Inclusive Leaders Programme is contributing to improving the quality of leaders in the public sector**

**4.14**

**The Building Inclusive Leaders Programme is contributing to increasing the number of women in senior leadership roles in the public sector**

**4.03**

**The Building Inclusive Leaders Programme is helping change the working culture in the public sector for the better**

**3.94**

3.8 3.85 3.9 3.95 4 4.05 4.1 4.15 4.2

*“... I think there is that ripple down effect where they are trying to better themselves and that is, they are going to, in those groups where we would have met afterwards they would have been talking about what we had done with our teams, what people had done, so that is rippling down to their teams. And I would like to think that it’s also rippling upwards so that people are seeing the potential talent that it’s striving to do better, across the NICS and I do think it was driving for me it’s driving a group of people who are wanting to work, to be good leaders, but also to work in a different way, it’s very much around the collective and ... collaboration as opposed to what I have seen in some of my time in the Civil Service which is senior people, some, not all, but that mentality of doing stuff to improve your own individual profile whereas this is around, the people that I have engaged with on this, it’s about us trying to do the right thing to improve everything, as opposed to just our own individual profile.” (Qualitative Interview 2)*



## Research theme 8:

**In general, programme participants seem to be more aware of other organisations in the public sector.**

The survey did not explicitly ask about awareness of other organisations and the theme of public service organisational interdependence. However, given the positive response about the development of their networks and the discussion around these it does seem that most expanded their network. |

Qualitative programme participants commented positively on growing their networks and getting to know more people in other parts of the public sector and on understanding the public sector better. It was however noted that there is limited local government involvement in the programme. One respondent was also frustrated that their group was too large (they were in cohort 3) to allow them to get to know more people.

*“The biggest thing I appreciate from the networking side of things is understanding the civil service on the wider scheme much more with much more clarity and understanding the different, how each of them work and even the recruitment exercises.” (Qualitative Interview 4)*

*“Obviously didn’t know any of the individuals who were on the programme, it was all completely new, some of the organisations yes, I would have had dealings with but really didn’t know them in any great detail so again this did give you that, wider perspective, ... you were able to understand organisations, they all had the discussions around what roles we were playing at the moment and a lot of people were into new roles so there was lot of commonality in that respect and challenges.” (Qualitative Interview 5)*

*“It brings together female leaders who otherwise would unlikely meet. We don't do the golf thing as we have other commitments - so this is the an opportunity to do this.” (Survey respondent)*

*“I do think there was a good mix of the different organisations and if there could be more local government representation that would be great but I think that’s more of a local government issue and [it is being pushed].” (Qualitative Interview 1)*

*“It was meticulously designed and executed. The content was so appropriate and I loved not just the science and evidence but the way in which the programme was delivered. The variety of events, exposure to senior leaders, the ability to connect and network with other aspiring leaders in the wider public sector community was all made possible with the programme. It was just at another level in terms of programmes and skills training currently available.” (Survey respondent)*

## Research theme 9:

### **More work needs to be undertaken to understand programme impact on the theme of collaboration.**

Programme participants were not asked in the survey about collaborative activity.

However, it was briefly noted in the qualitative interviews. All programme participants were part of some sort of follow up groups and were working to further build their learning. This was happening to various levels of sophistication.

One programme participant also noted that they had involved colleagues in a particular area of their work in celebrating successes across the civil service.

*“I actually think the way that we then behave and the way we address problems, lead people, try to coach and support people, is the longer-term potential impact. So I think there is a couple of impacts, big impacts, one is, on the individual, and I think for the individual it’s a great programme ... I think that the people who apply for a programme like this are people who are wanting to really strive to push themselves to be better, whether it’s in their current job, they may not be looking for promotion at all, it may be that they want to be better they want to learn, but I do think there is a benefit to the individual. I think there is a benefit then for their direct team which is where I think the ripple effect then comes. I know we have a What’s App group set up of all of the ... cohorts that were on this and we followed on ... we continued meeting every couple of months to address different themes like trust how do we go about building trust, how do we make our presence felt, so that continued on for a good year probably after the programme, or nearly a year after the programme ended where we would have met. Now not everybody on the programme went, only a handful, I’d say only about there was about half a dozen who were the ones that would have come all the time, but they would have met quite regularly, and it was always on a theme, developing, trying to continue developing.”*

*(Qualitative Interview 2)*

*“We’ve done a couple of events together and we would share some if there is a piece of literature or a webinar or an event that we think others would be interested in we would share that, so that would help to build networks across people in completely different departments and also we were fortunate that we had a couple of girls who were from local government so again it’s just that connection and that there is people now that if we are doing something where your work area overlaps maybe or you need a contact, so it’s been really good, and there’s a sort of, there’s the sort of network I think that even if we aren’t in direct contact all the time we still feel confident that you can pick up the phone to somebody and go look can you help me here?” (Qualitative Interview 5)*

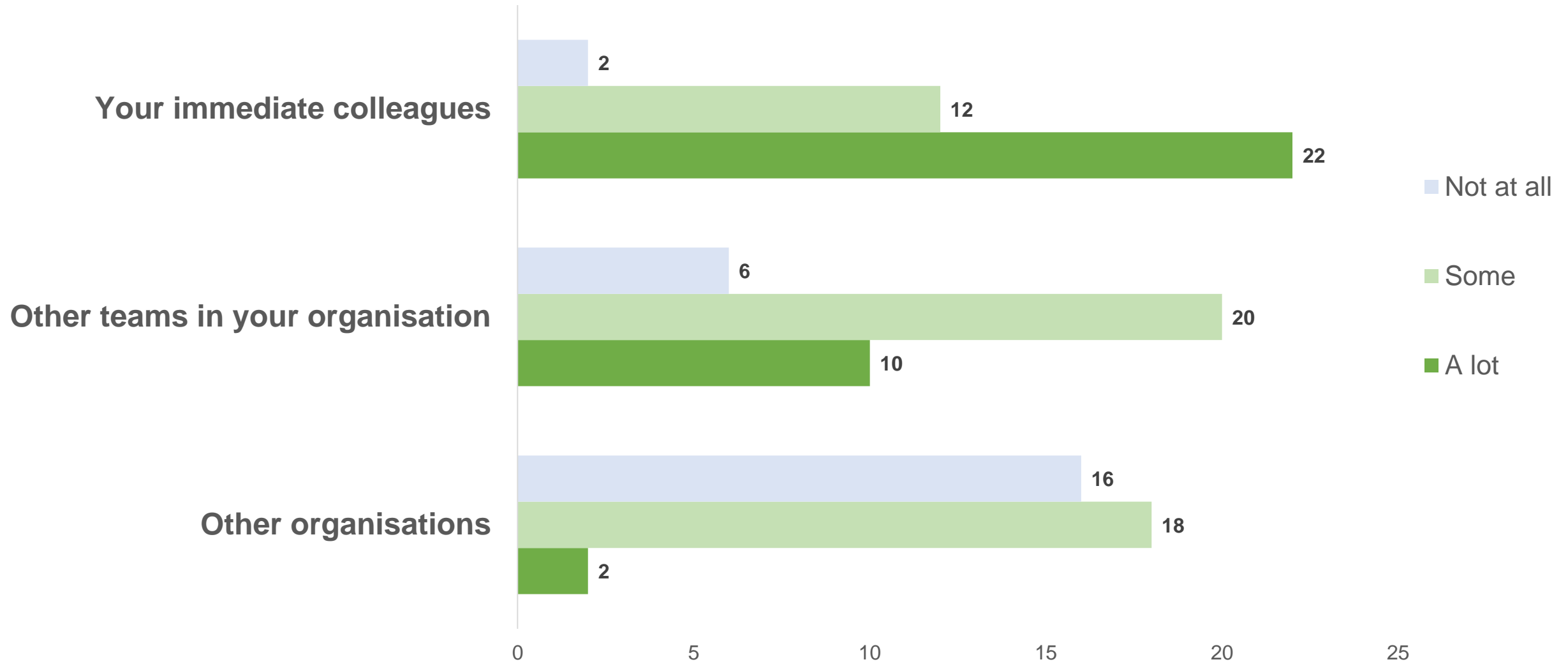
## Research theme 10:

**Most survey respondents (32) had already recommended the programme to someone in their network or to a colleague.**

Most transfer of knowledge had taken place with immediate colleagues. 22 of 36 survey respondents said that they had shared their learning a lot with colleagues. There was also sharing with other teams in their organisations; 20 said they had shared to some extent. There is least sharing with other organisations but 18 said that they had shared to some extent with other organisations.

We know from the qualitative research that at least two programme participants had developed their own programme to deliver to women in their own organisations.

**Q. To what extent have you sought to transfer what you learnt on the Building Inclusive Leaders Programme to: (Base:36)**

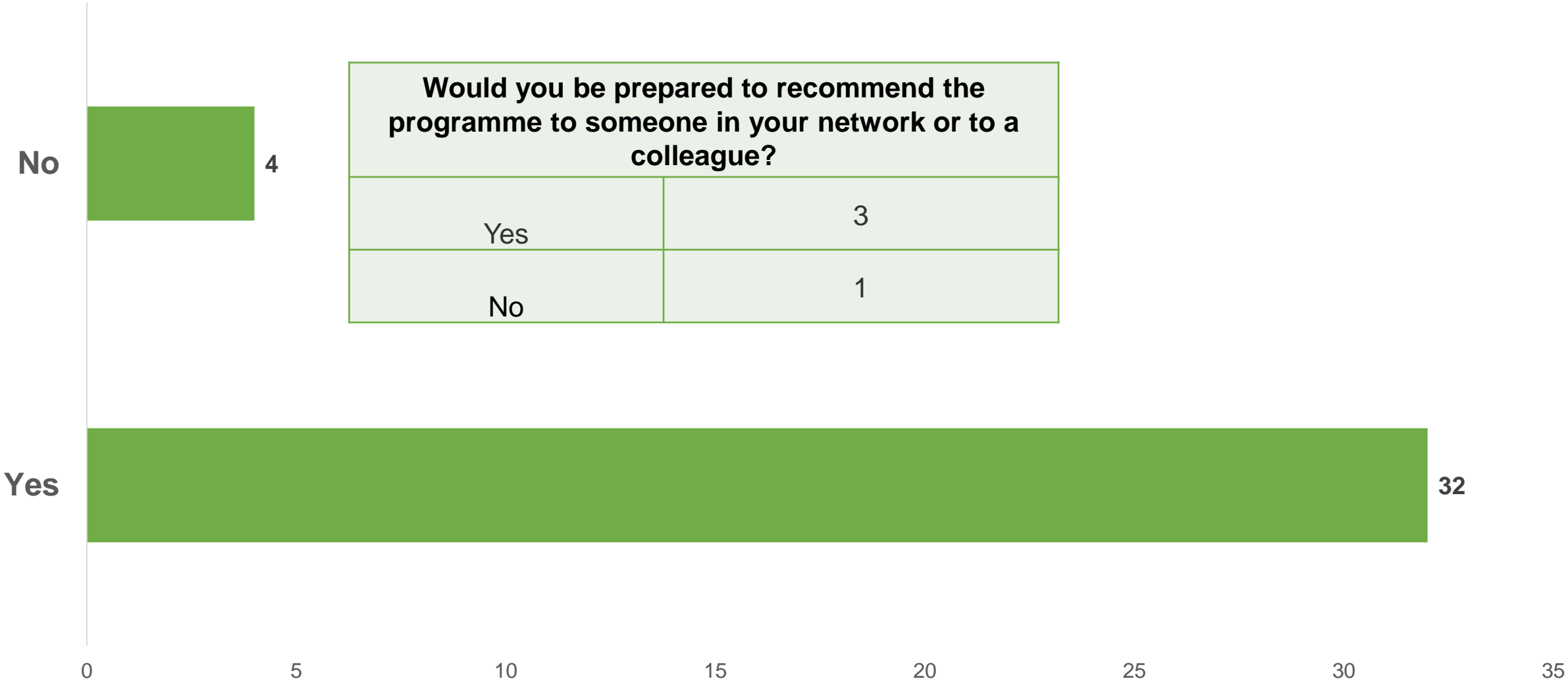


*“I was just so passionate about it that I had decided to do a mini development course for females in this organisation here. It wasn’t aimed at a specific level ... we created a 6 month, as I say a mini development programme, there were 6 topics on it, 45 minutes once a month. Now we only got half way through because then Covid hit ... it was just some of the fundamental stuff about your values and your mojo ... there were 28 females that signed up and most of them stayed with us throughout to the point where we got to and the informal feedback or sort of anecdotal comments was great actually and it’s been a very good support network.”*

*(Qualitative Interview 1)*

*“I would have quite a lot of females within my team ... I’ve done it with males too but ... there’s definitely a pattern there in relation to confidence, so taking some of that material from what I have learnt and trying to apply that or share some of that with them, confidence and resilience perspective ... I have gone back to this quite a bit and even just some of the ... methodologies and things that came out I have shared quite a bit of this with my team.” (Qualitative Interview 2)*

**Q. Have you recommended the programme to someone in your network or to a colleague: (Base:36)**





### **3. To determine levels of satisfaction with the management and delivery of the BIL programme.**

*To include satisfaction levels with the individual elements of the programme e.g. live events, digital events, assessment, coaching, mentoring, general communication / admin.*

*How the programme as a whole has met participants' expectations?*

*Feedback on any elements participants would like to see expanded or reduced.*

*Opportunity to investigate particular issues e.g.:  
levels of comfort with single gender programme;  
does the programme have the correct name?*

## Research theme 11:

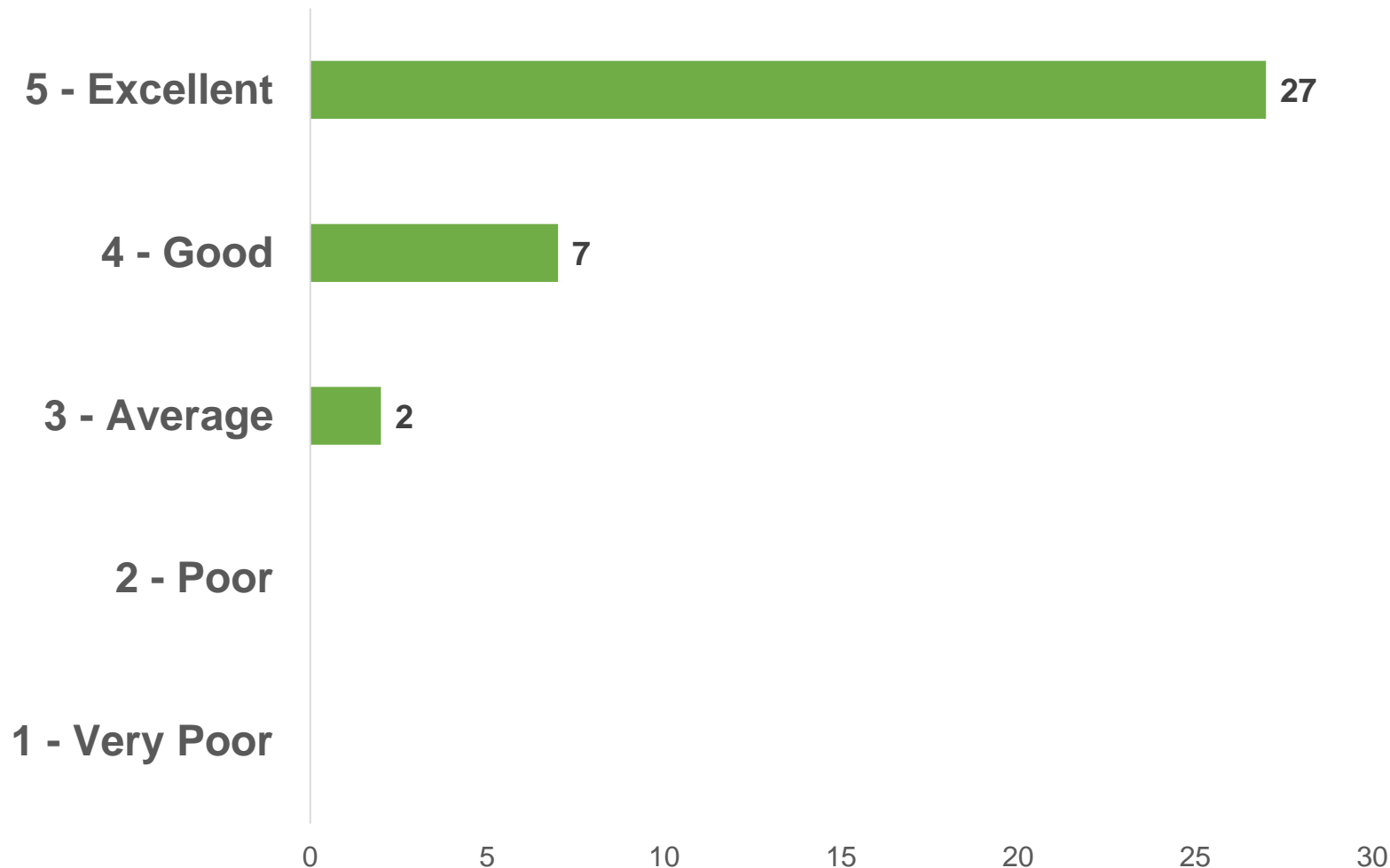
### **Overall the programme was very highly rated.**

Three quarters of the survey sample rated it as excellent overall. In the qualitative research with programme participants 5 of 6 scored it 9 or 10 out of 10.

From what we can tell looking across the qualitative research and the survey those who rated the programme less highly felt disappointed with elements around the mentoring, the Hogan assessment or the size of their group.

The qualitative research emphasised that programme participants enjoyed not only the content but the overall ethos and approach of the programme.

**Q. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent, how would you rate the overall quality of the programme: (Base:36)**



*“I would have no hesitation of scoring it a 10 [out of 10]. It was so well designed ... definitely towards the end where you could see how everything tied in together so it was all very purposeful and not just the topics ... but ... how it was delivered and how it challenged me and other people to look at things differently and some of the ways in which the workshops, the active learning events were carried out, again it was just so much more engaging.” (Qualitative Interview 1)*

*“I think I would give it about an 8 ...things very rarely get a 10, but no, I think it was just a little bit the coaching didn’t really hit the mark as much as I had hoped for ... the Hogan assessment, I never really got under the skin of understanding what that was telling me so I didn’t really know what to take away from it...” (Qualitative Interview 2)*

**Comments from those who gave a GOOD rating:**

*“Was not as anticipated or billed but was effective at what it delivered. A very good quality product with great staff and participants but the objectives may be somewhat unclear, or perhaps, not clearly communicated in advance. Hard to suit everyone’s needs but overall a success.”*

*“While it didn't necessarily meet what I needed at this point in my career - it was extremely well run. The quality of the inputs were excellent - not least of all the opportunity to step outside the workplace.”*

*“It took me out of my comfort zone, helped me see things in a different light and made me think about where I wanted my career to go and what aspects of it made me tick.”*

*“I welcomed all of the programme input and learned from it.”*

*“Though it was a great programme, I got a lot from my mentor, no longer in touch as they have left NICS. The coaching was good but didn't land as had hoped not sure if this was because me and coach never got to meet F2F. Also Hogan assessment seemed to contradict 360, understood what 360 was telling me but not so much the Hogan and was unsure what to do with findings.”*

**Comments from those who gave a POOR rating:**

*“While most aspects of the course would get a good rating I feel that the mentoring and coaching sections fell short of what was expected. My mentor did not bother contacting me despite many emails requesting them to do so.”*

*“A very organised course that give me a greater insight into leadership but didn't really help me build confidence as didn't always feel part of a 'sharing' environment which was my key aim”*

## Q. Please explain why you have given the programme this rating: EXCELLENT

*“I found this to be an enriching, stimulating experience, the programme content and delivery were always relevant and very engaging, the interactive approach brought with opportunity to hear and learn from others, the different styles and approaches were a breath of fresh air in what can be a very stuffy old fashioned often hierarchical approach to doing business in the NICS.”*  
(Survey respondent)

*“This was a truly innovative approach to the concept of 'leadership' and what that actually means in practice, but more significant is the lasting impact of the learning. I return time and again to various aspects to remind myself and 're-learn'. How many programmes inspire in that way for a lifetime?”* (Survey respondent)

*“It is an excellent programme and has truly changed how I think about myself. It gave me the confidence to extend myself professionally and that has paid off. I love the opportunity it affords to network and collaborate with other women too. I've really benefited from the one to one sessions and mentoring too.”* (Survey respondent)

*“The programme content [and speakers] was excellent and the varied styles/modes of engaging participants meant it kept everyone engaged. I learned so much about myself and my leadership ability. I have said the best bit was the technical input but there are so many best bits - Cora is excellent; her other speakers and colleagues from CreateExpress were excellent - really unusual inputs; my coach was awesome; the use of virtual/real engagement opened my eyes to new ways of doing things, some of which I employed with my own team. And finally the team of girls I met on the programme – I have friends and colleagues for life.”* (Survey respondent)

*“Like I loved the programme ... I would be a great advocate of it, and I ... could quite happily give it a 10 because I think everything I did within it I found really helpful, useful, and it’s not just the course itself, it’s the way it was delivered, the methodology and the difference to that, doing things a bit differently in our approach, the way we took time to have quiet mindfulness time, the idea of going out having meetings while you are out walking ... and then also the connectivity that it brought with other women and again we had a little What’s App group that came out of that ... I think there is so many aspects to it, it’s not just the course as it were but the elements of methodology, the way it’s delivered and the connections and the people that you’re with and the people that are delivering. To me it just was exactly what I needed I really loved it ... the things that we learnt from that to be like that and to have that approach, that challenges the system and wants to make things better and wants to see more equity in government and opportunity for women and other cultures and from an inclusive perspective, so I think it just endorses stuff that I would have thought anyway if asked about that, but also put it across in such a way that really was helpful the way it was delivered, that methodology as I say I felt it was just it wasn’t like text book learning, it was experiential, it was conversational, you were challenged to be involved constantly, it was great.” (Qualitative Interview 3)*

## Research theme 12:

**Over three quarters of the survey respondents rated the retreat, the general communications and organisation of the programme and the live events as ‘excellent’.**

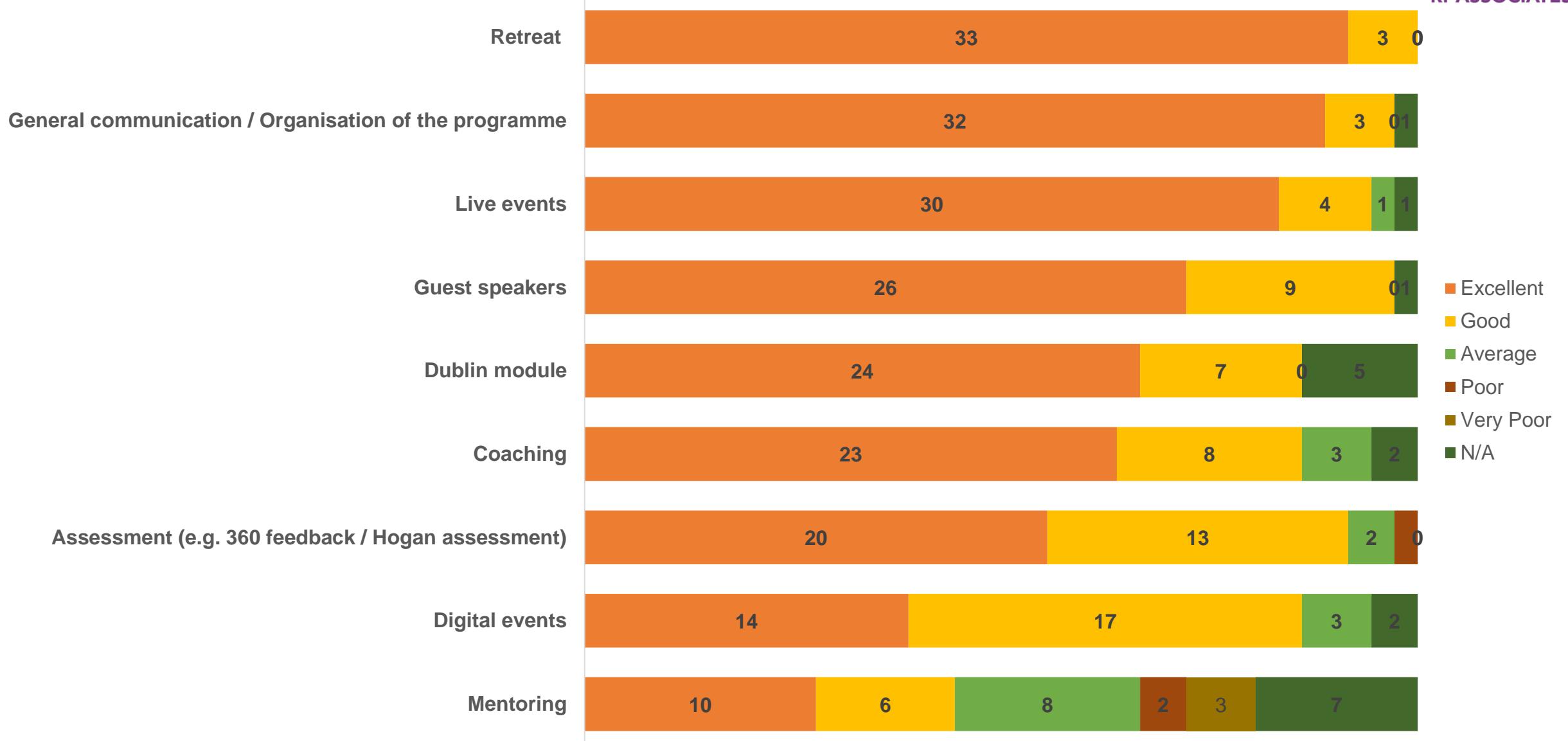
The guest speakers, the Dublin module and the assessment approaches were also highly rated as ‘excellent’ or ‘good’.

Digital events received the highest amount of scoring as ‘good’ with fewer considering them to be excellent.

Mentoring is the activity that had the most mixed response. 16 said it was ‘excellent’ or ‘good’, but 5 considered it ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’ and 8 said it was ‘average’.

The qualitative research was likewise positive about these programme elements and helps us to understand what is working well (and in a small number of cases less well) in relation to them.

**Q. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent, how would you rate .... (Base:36)**





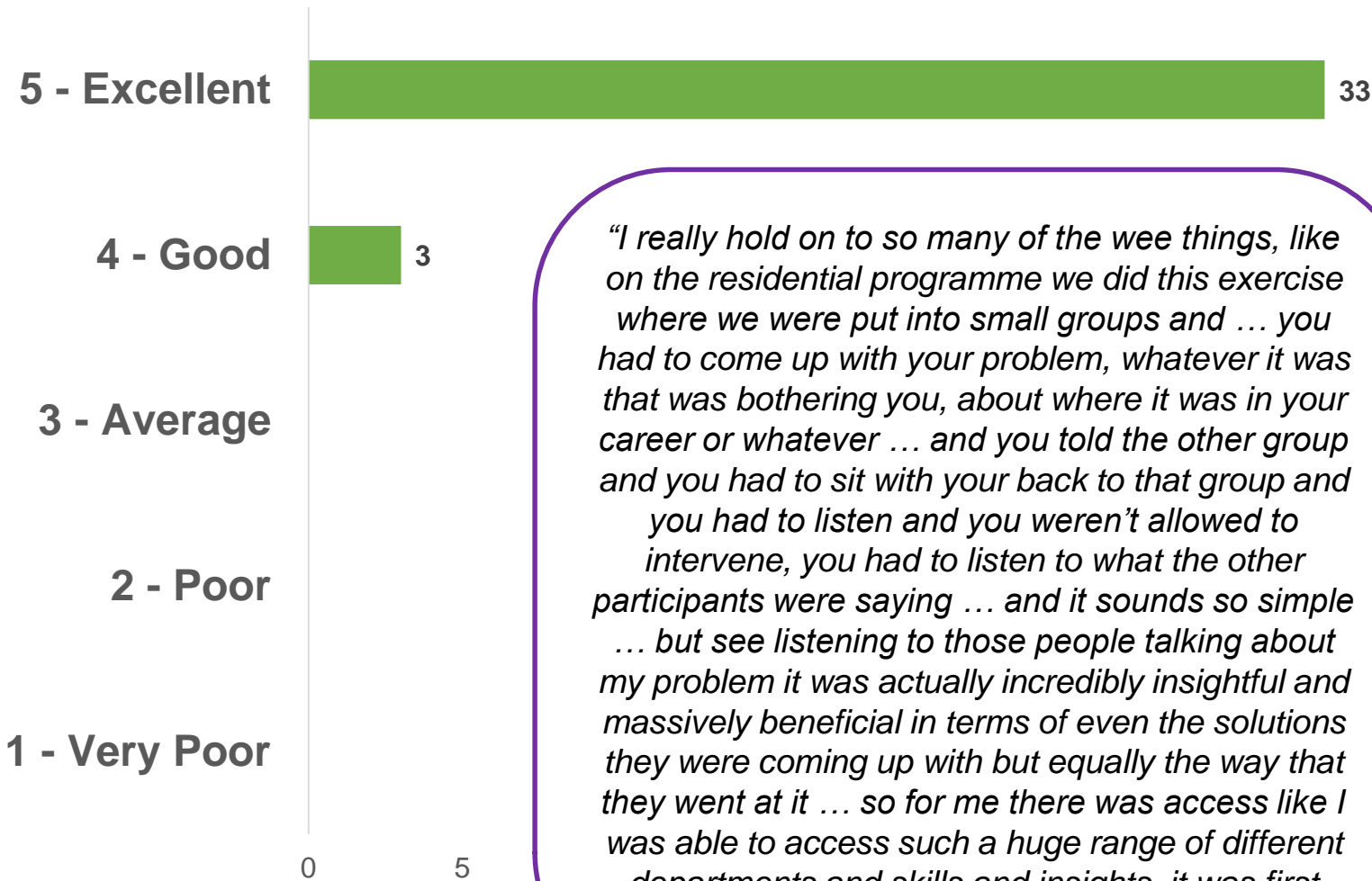
## Research theme 13:

**The retreat was the most highly scored element in the survey with 33 out of 36 saying it was ‘excellent’.**

According to the qualitative research the retreat was highly regarded for a range of reasons including the opportunity to have time out to really get to know others in the group and recalled for some of the particular exercises that took place and speakers that were involved. The whole experience was noted as being well put together with even elements like the food being commented upon.

*“I have participated in a lot of leadership development but this was outstanding in terms of content - including the neuroscience, residential was incredible (allowing time & space out of the office to think about role as leader and options for career path), great networking with broad range of participants.” (Survey respondent)*

**Q. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent, how would you rate: RETREAT  
(Base:36)**



*“I really hold on to so many of the wee things, like on the residential programme we did this exercise where we were put into small groups and ... you had to come up with your problem, whatever it was that was bothering you, about where it was in your career or whatever ... and you told the other group and you had to sit with your back to that group and you had to listen and you weren’t allowed to intervene, you had to listen to what the other participants were saying ... and it sounds so simple ... but see listening to those people talking about my problem it was actually incredibly insightful and massively beneficial in terms of even the solutions they were coming up with but equally the way that they went at it ... so for me there was access like I was able to access such a huge range of different departments and skills and insights, it was first class it really was.” (Qualitative Interview 4)*

*“The retreat was just great, obviously a lovely environment and time at that point ... just to get a bit of space ... with the people that you were with and have a bit of down time and just normal conversation as well as that kind of relaxed approach of going to walk on the beach ... just doing things differently in that sense.” (Qualitative Interview 3)*

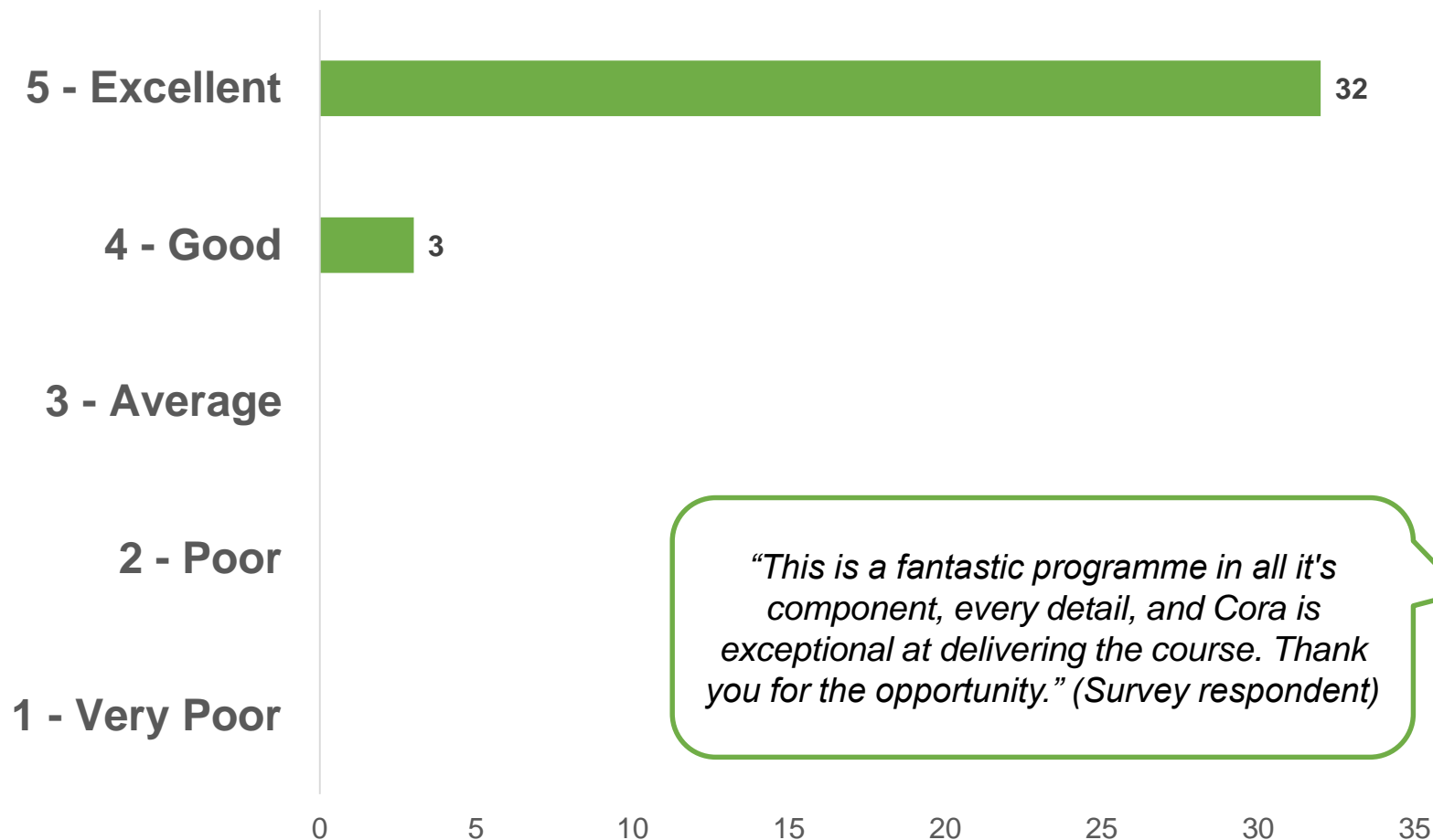
*“I have to say I think things like the retreat, those are the things that really, I had done one before, a programme where I had done a grade 7 one and we had an overnight and I think they really build very strong proper personal relationships that allow then the real support network afterwards. I don’t know there is something about when you go away and you are away with a group of people in an enclosed space, that that ... it gave that opportunity for conversation and it’s not just work ... so it allows you to build those deeper relationships I think.” (Qualitative Interview 2)*

## **Research theme 14:**

**The programme was considered to be well organised with the CreateExpress team going the extra mile to support participants.**

Cora was highly praised for her delivery of the programme materials.

**Q. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent, how would you rate: GENERAL COMMUNICATION / ORGANISATION OF THE PROGRAMME (Base:35)**



*"I put down here very well organised, Olive was fantastic, nothing was too much trouble for her and no matter what you asked her about she responded very quickly and [she is] a very empathetic sort of a person and really good with people so I just thought the whole programme was so well organised and the communication around it was excellent and I think they were prepared to accept feedback which isn't always the case." (Qualitative Interview 6)*

*"This is a fantastic programme in all it's component, every detail, and Cora is exceptional at delivering the course. Thank you for the opportunity." (Survey respondent)*

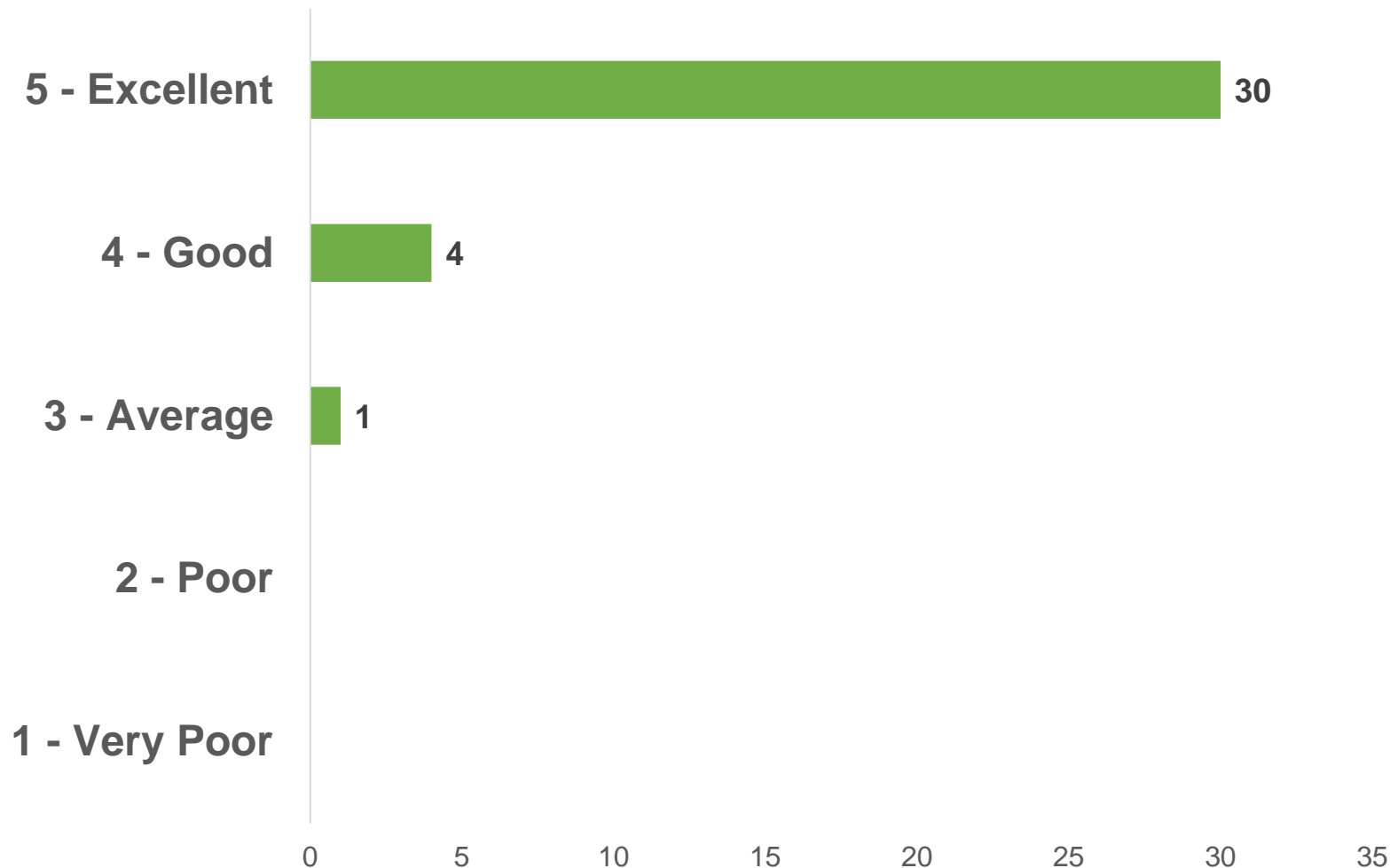
*"I think Cora is a great presenter, she almost seems to live it she seems to almost speak without notes, you know what I mean, she just seems to know what she is talking about and it comes across that way, and she is very believable in how she presents." (Qualitative Interview 3)*

## Research theme 15:

### Core elements of programme activity were highly rated.

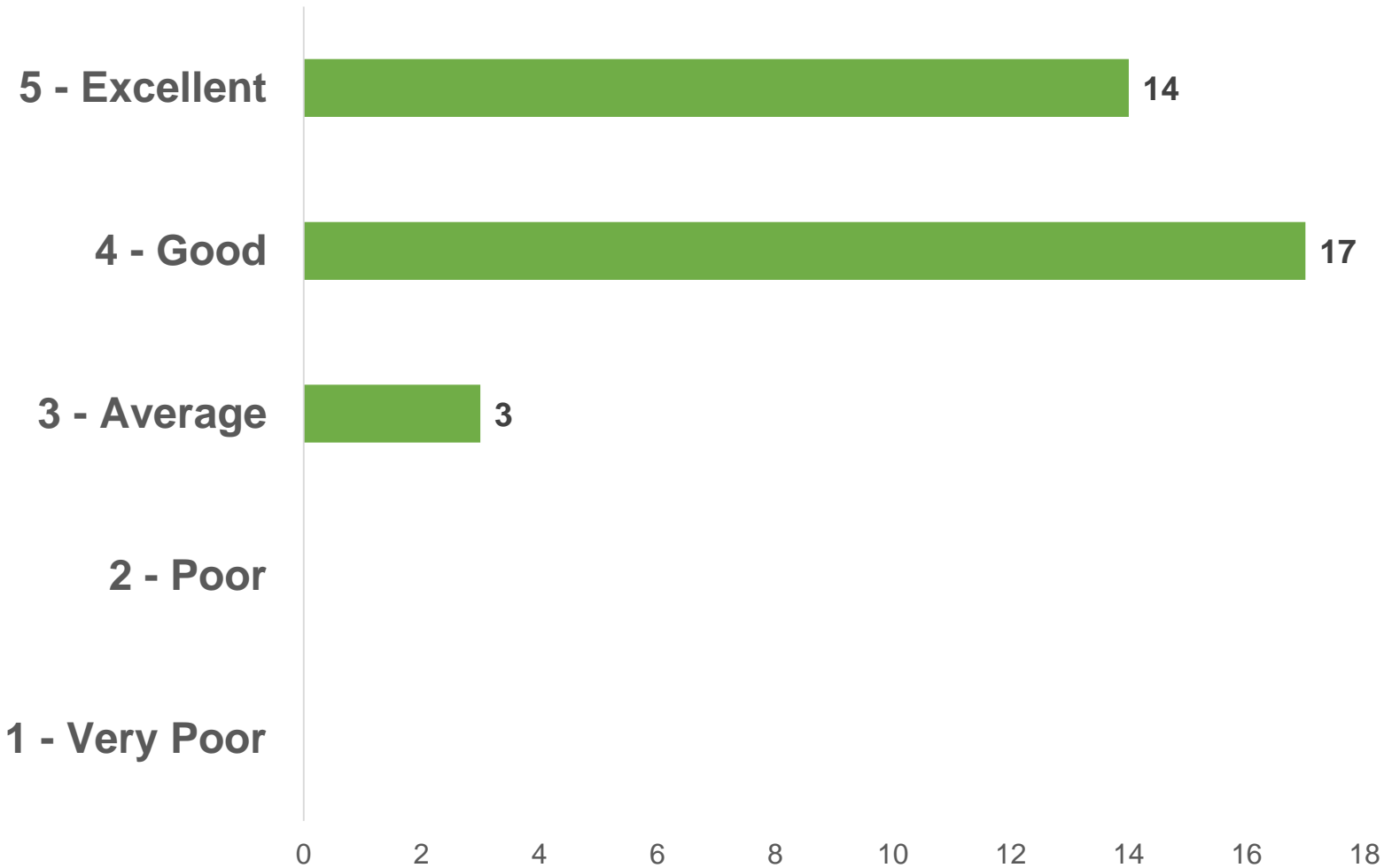
- The live events were well regarded with 30 considering them to be 'excellent'. In comparison digital events were more likely to be considered 'good' rather than 'excellent'. Amongst the qualitative research there was some comment that they had enjoyed these type of events more than the digital.
- The seniority and quality of the speakers at events was also highly rated. As well as their frankness and authenticity.
- The Dublin module was rated well but a small number of comments across the qualitative and quantitative noted that it was a very packed agenda of activities and might have been better as an overnight / with less content.
- Coaching was also rated well with 23 considering it to be 'excellent' and 8 'good'. The qualitative feedback suggests that for some coaching may have been the most important element of the programme, as it was for one participant that we interviewed. One participant noted that they didn't get as much out of the coaching as they had hoped, that they had found it harder to establish a connection possibly due to the online delivery. The coaching input was noted specifically as being helpful around the assessment approaches and preparation for promotion.

**Q. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent, how would you rate: LIVE EVENTS  
(Base:35)**



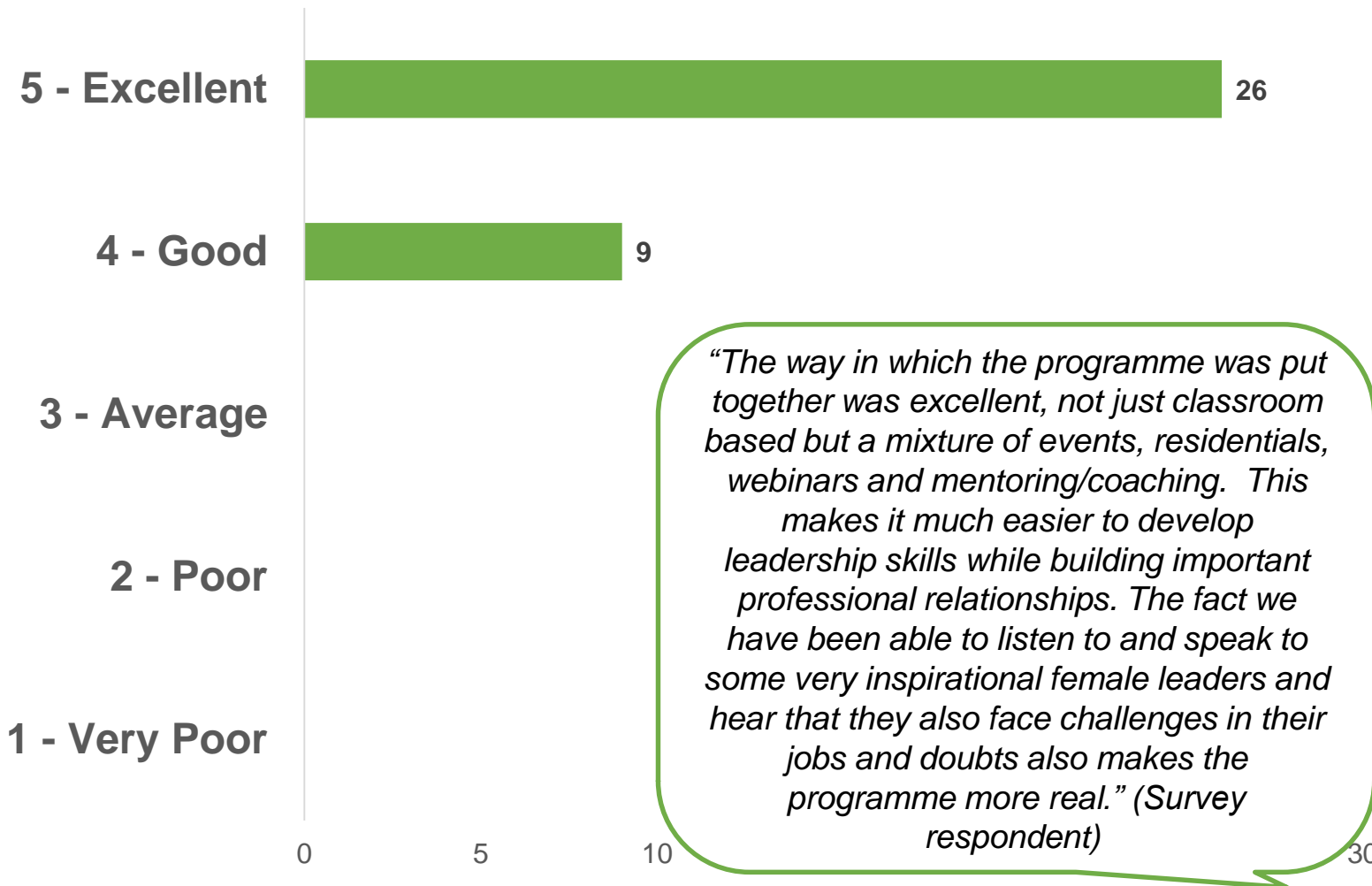
*“In terms of the combination of actual live events and digital, my personal preference is for actual live events, I just get more out of being in proper contact with people and I think the difficulty with some of the Zoom meetings was that if you actually have to go to a physical venue people prioritise that and make the effort to be there whereas there were people kind of dropping out of Zoom calls and maybe not attending them and I don’t know, I just, the Zoom calls always for me felt a wee bit rushed as well, they tended to be a couple of hours and you just felt as if it was a wee bit rushed. My personal preference would be that it would all be, I know the coaches are based throughout the world so it has to be done virtually but certainly for the main part of it I think even if it’s a couple of extra half days or something there is value in actually being together in the room. That’s just my personal preference.” (Qualitative Interview 6)*

**Q. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent, how would you rate: DIGITAL EVENTS (Base:34)**



*“It wasn’t just the content, it was how it was delivered. For me the bundle was really good because it wasn’t just a case of either rocking up to an event, or rocking on to a webinar, there was the pre-recording so if you were serious about it you had a bit of homework to do yourself, and for me having the different ways of engagement and delivering the course was great because just even in terms of how you factored it into your own timetable, so for example if instead of webinars we were meeting all the time that probably would have been a bit too much so I think the balance and the mix was just right.”*  
(Qualitative Interview 1)

**Q. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent, how would you rate: GUEST SPEAKERS (Base:35)**



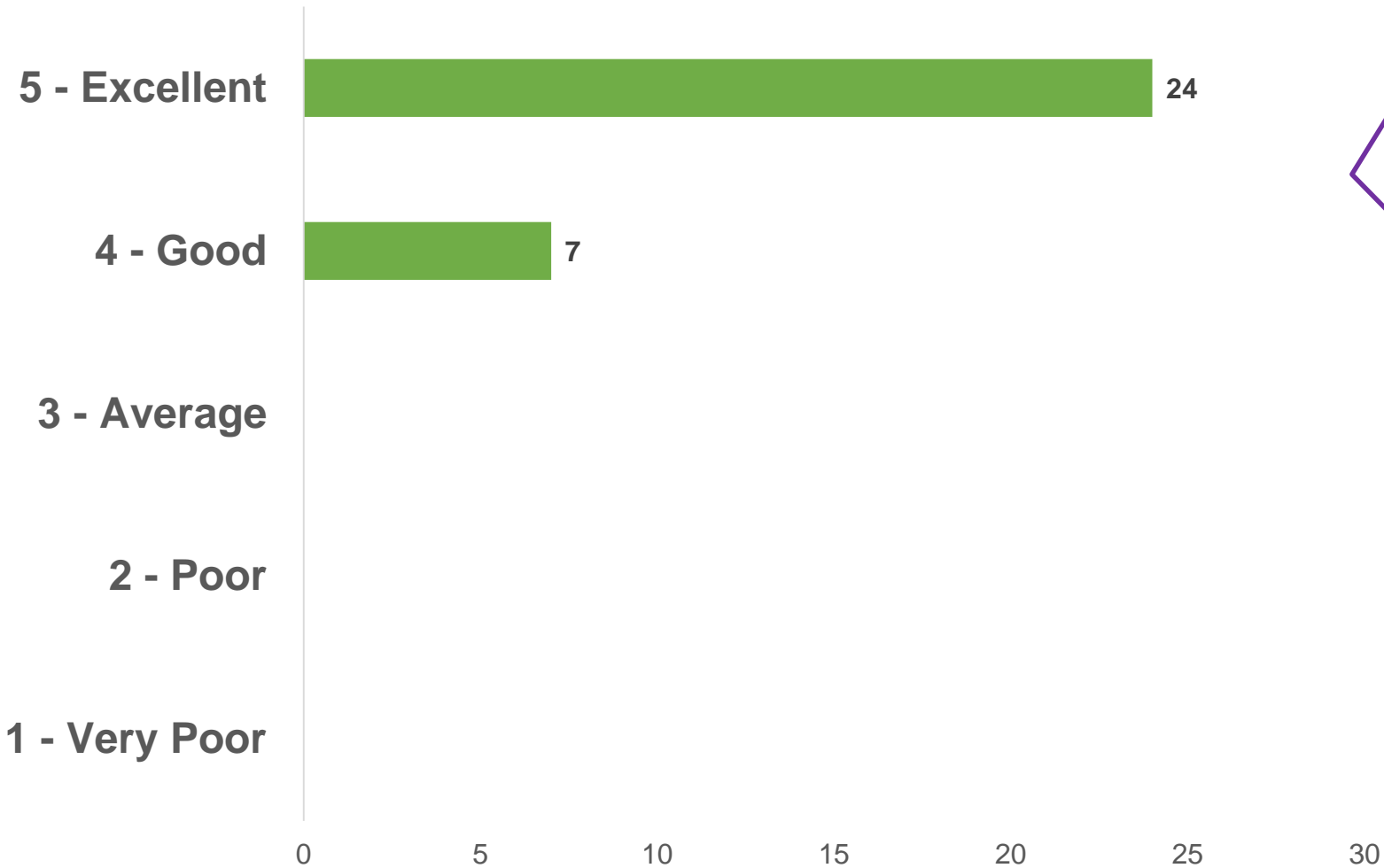
*“The way in which the programme was put together was excellent, not just classroom based but a mixture of events, residentials, webinars and mentoring/coaching. This makes it much easier to develop leadership skills while building important professional relationships. The fact we have been able to listen to and speak to some very inspirational female leaders and hear that they also face challenges in their jobs and doubts also makes the programme more real.” (Survey respondent)*

*“The other thing that stands out to me is the fireside chats so we had David Sterling come down and that was just such an honest and lovely environment in which to have a senior leader speak to you so honestly and it was a really really good insight.” (Qualitative Interview 2)*

*“Just the calibre and variety of guest speakers. There was no, I was going to say no expense spared, but I know that’s not really how it works, people give their time to this probably freely in most cases, but we had everybody from the First and Deputy First Minister to the first female Permanent Secretaries in the Civil Service to the Chief Executives, the line-up of speakers was really fantastic and I think that breadth, there was something for everybody and there was always somebody that you could identify with. Barbara Grey, Deputy Chief Constable in the PSNI, you know you couldn’t have asked for better.” (Qualitative Interview 6)*

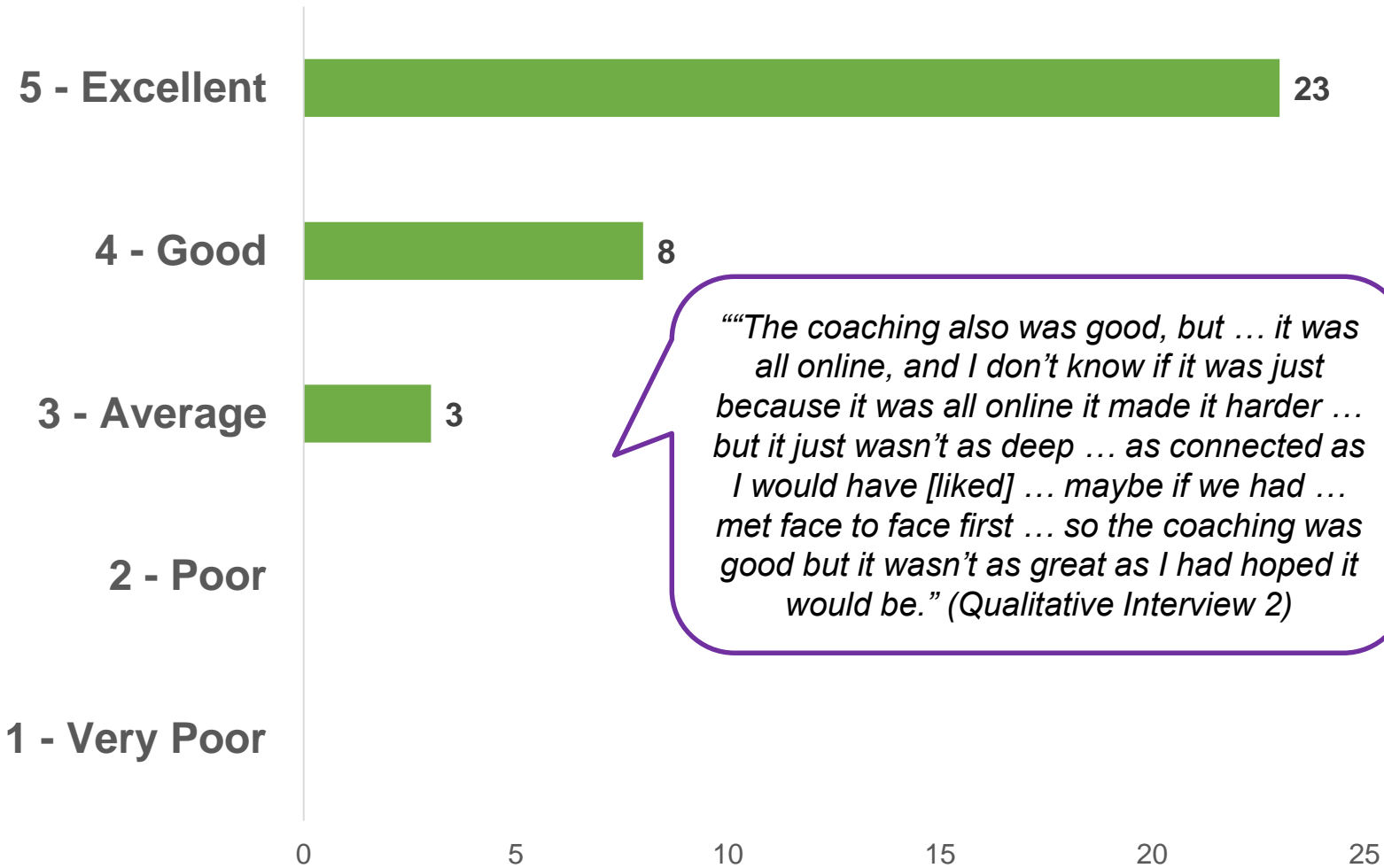


**Q. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent, how would you rate: DUBLIN MODULE (Base:31)**



*“... we had a trip to Dublin which was excellent, really great high profile speakers, and very motivating but they tried to pack too much in and I would say that not only about the Dublin trip but just generally, the days felt like they were trying to pack too much in and Cora was maybe starting a new topic at 4.45 pm and the difficulty is that a lot of the people on the course are females with children and I felt that she started to lose people at a certain point in the day and particularly when there had been a lot of material covered because people you know their priorities started to change and they were starting to think about leaving to get home, to get children picked up or, and I just felt sometimes that the days were a little bit too intense and the Dublin trip was a case in point, it was just far too much in a short space of time.” (Qualitative Interview 5)*

**Q. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent, how would you rate: COACHING (Base:34)**



*“The coaching also was good, but ... it was all online, and I don’t know if it was just because it was all online it made it harder ... but it just wasn’t as deep ... as connected as I would have [liked] ... maybe if we had ... met face to face first ... so the coaching was good but it wasn’t as great as I had hoped it would be.” (Qualitative Interview 2)*

*“The counselling was really great and that was very specific around like actually attitudes to work it was very helpful with where I was at at that time and really tactically really helpful ... in terms of looking at work and who I was working with and what I was trying to achieve and doing things differently, you’ve kind of reminded me now of things that I haven’t been thinking about, I really found that really helpful.” (Qualitative Interview 3)*

*“The coaching element came in as well really good, even though you sort of you had the formal parts of the programme, having an assigned coaching mentor, that’s a really strong strength of the programme, you are able to get into your specifics, it’s almost a lot of the generalities in the larger group but then you are able to get down into the real nitty gritty through initially the coaching and then the mentoring.” (Qualitative Interview 5)*

*“I couldn’t speak highly enough of him ... out of the whole programme the value I got out of those coaching sessions was just really fantastic, it made a huge difference to me personally because I had been through a hard time and he really helped build my confidence again and he did actually take some time to help me prepare for my interview as well that I was doing and the help that he provided to me was just invaluable, it was really excellent. I found that a really positive experience and probably for me the best part of the whole programme.” (Qualitative Interview 6)*

*“the elements ... that we did at the beginning the 360 and the Hogan, like I had never done that stuff before, and that was really interesting, and that really actually does challenge yourself and you see how that comes out and you think oh right really, it was good to go through that with my coach and get the reflection on what that means ... when you look at these reports it’s really good to have somebody with objectivity looking at it with you.” (Qualitative Interview 3)*

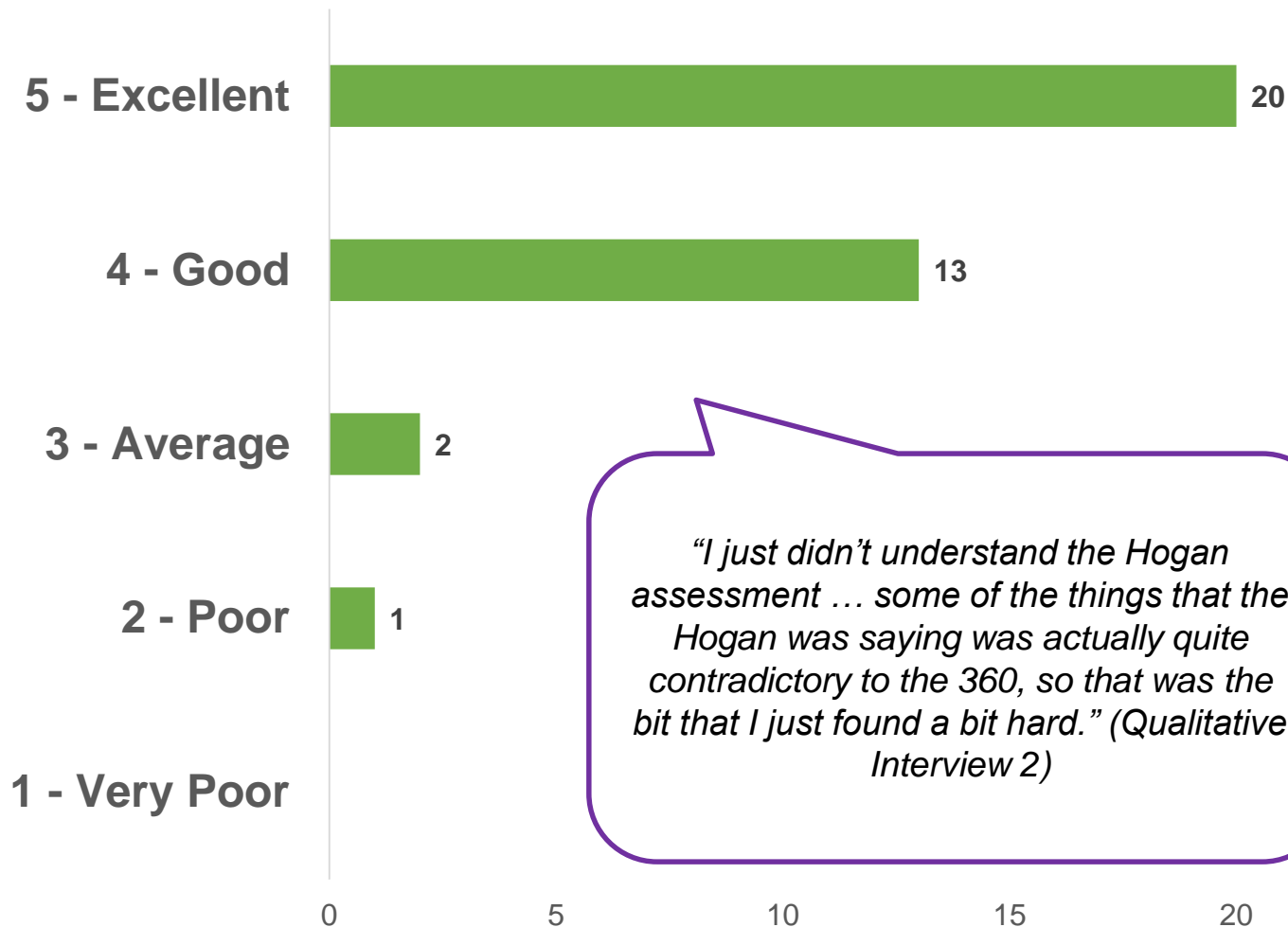
*“It highly motivated me and supported me as I settled into my new role. The use of the coaching techniques was great, very supportive in helping me manage many challenging situations I faced at the time.” (Survey respondent)*

## Research theme 16:

### **Mentoring is the only area that perhaps requires some further development.**

- The assessment approach was considered 'excellent' by 20 and 'good' by 13. This was supported by the majority of the qualitative findings.
- Mentoring was the element which elicited much more varied with 8 considering it 'average', 2 'poor' and 3 'very poor'. This is in stark contrast to the other elements that were rated. The qualitative research did not raise any particular issues in relation to mentoring except that one participant had not managed to connect with their mentor due to Covid (but they did not see this as negative), and another suggesting that there should have been a better introduction in relation to what to expect from your mentor. Some of the issues around mentoring seem to relate to a difficulty getting hold of a mentor and them not being able to give time to the participant, as well as complications due to the Covid pandemic. (These are explored under areas for development).
- However, it is important to note that mentoring does seem to work well for some of those on the programme and 12 of the 36 said that they were still in touch with their mentor.

**Q. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent, how would you rate: ASSESSMENT (Base:36)**



*“I just didn’t understand the Hogan assessment ... some of the things that the Hogan was saying was actually quite contradictory to the 360, so that was the bit that I just found a bit hard.” (Qualitative Interview 2)*

*“And as part of that we did the Hogan assessments, and again I think those assessments were really insightful, particularly the one that sought feedback, so you nominated a number of individuals, peers, and I found that really worthwhile as well.” (Qualitative Interview 6)*

*“I suppose we did the 360 and the Hogan assessment. I was surprised somewhat taken aback at some of the feedback, and I have got to say Cora and her team were really good at taking us through that process and reassuring us that some of the reactions were normal. I found all of that sort of neuro linguistic science piece really fascinating to understand, helped me understand my reactions to things, so and as I say there were things in that 360 and I would go oh, that makes me feel very uncomfortable ... and I suppose putting things in perspective that like everything there is a balance that it’s not all good it’s not all bad ... helping me to put it into perspective and to take it forward.” (Qualitative Interview 5)*

**Q. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent, how would you rate: MENTORING  
(Base:29)**



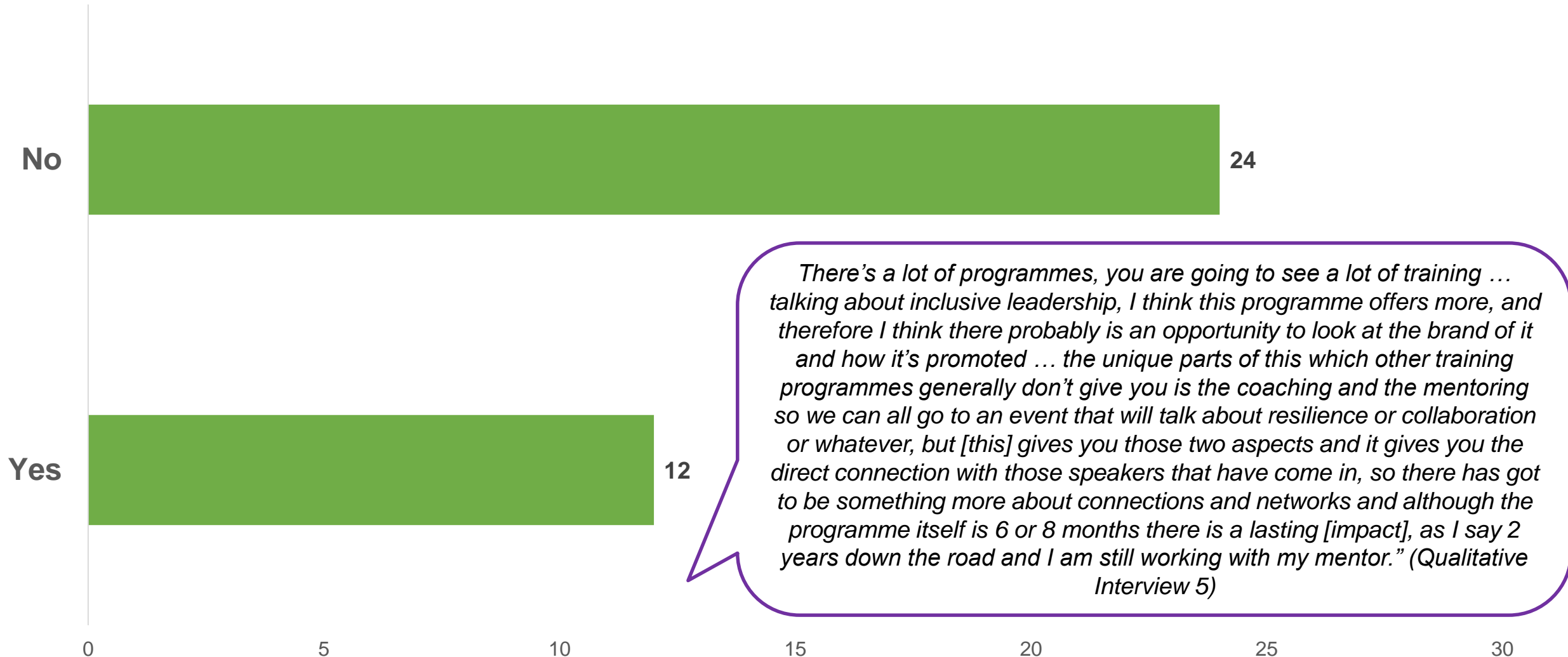
“I was disappointed not to get off the ground with the mentor, I exchanged one email with him, I think it was a missed opportunity - but it coincided with Lockdown and everything was out of kilter, workload greater than ever as well as adapting to new norms, and it fell off the radar. My responsibility.” (Survey respondent)

“My mentor worked out really well and she really gave me the time, like I couldn’t have asked for a better mentor ... she was amazing.” (Qualitative Interview 2)

“The mentors were absolutely fabulous I mean they were, just allowed such an individualised approach ... I’ve had a wee email actually from her over lockdown yeah. So yeah she is brilliant.” (Qualitative Interview 4)

“the mentor assigned to you at the end of the course, because that all happened around lockdown ... I have not been able to connect there ... I just have lost that connection opportunity through the hecticness of working from home and everything that has gone with that and the disruptions in life ... I still have this in the back of my mind, it comes up and I think I must make that connection again, you know, but I haven’t as yet.” (Qualitative Interview 3)

## Q. Are you still in touch with the mentor with whom you were linked during the programme: (Base:36)



## Research theme 17:

**In general participants found it hard to suggest areas for development or improvement. It is difficult to see critical mass around areas suggested for improvement.**

- The two elements that came through to some extent are improvements in mentoring and the development of some sort of follow up alumni network.
- Two participants in the survey and one in the qualitative interviews commented that cohort 3 felt too large.



# If you could make just one improvement to the format of the programme what would it be? (Base:32)

| Improvement                                       | No. |
|---|-----|
| No change   | 5   |
| Development of some sort of network / follow up   | 4   |
| Specific attention to improving mentoring element | 4   |
| Smaller group / cohort too large                  | 2   |
| Other e.g.  | 17  |



The mentoring aspect has maybe not worked out particularly well for me. Mentor very skilled but after initial meeting I felt they were not very interested in having an ongoing role. Perhaps more matching/discussion before allocation might have been useful.

I found the mentoring needs improved, more time to spend with a mentor that can make the time, mine was extremely busy and meeting kept getting cancelled.

Ensure the mentors who have signed up really want to mentor and make sure that it actually takes place without the mentee feeling like they were a nuisance.

Preparation for mentoring - I think we could have been better prepared for it - to really help maximise the opportunity.

- Difficult to strike a balance between the softer end of the delivery and the practical skills - and too much focusing on 'fixing' women rather than recognising need for structural changes. Personally it worked for me, but with a very large element of Civil Service attendees, sometimes there was a bias towards how that organisation is structured and operates, for example, the 'women only' element, which yes needs to be addressed but is not the only area of inequality. Be reflective and representative of the society that you serve perhaps, rather than obsessively focusing and over emphasising a theme?*
- Spread over a slightly longer period - commitment required by my post prevented me from taking part fully to all aspects, if these had been spread over a longer period I might have been able to commit more fully.*
- Shorten the programme.*
- More time to get to know more of the participants and understand their areas of work. More retreats to get to know more of the audience.*
- I wouldn't really change the format it works well - maybe another retreat at the end of the programme lol.*
- Residential - all candidates in the one location/hotel.*
- Please digitalise the whole programme. I found the ring binder and 'worksheets' difficult to manage having been so used to working digitally in my own work environment.*
- My experience was excellent as it was pre-Covid, therefore my development and learning was through a broad mix of channels -face to face and virtual, e learning. From feedback from current attendee it is more challenging to build relationships and networks in the virtual environment. Therefore I would encourage finding alternative ways which support this. However this is pandemic problem not CEF, but may adversely impact on the most recent programme.*
- The day away in Dublin might have be better as an overnight event to allow for more relaxed networking.*
- For the course to continue to be delivered away from work as opposed to relying on virtual teaching as circumstances allow.*
- Build in more networking/ social/ unscripted/ reflection time.*
- Better understanding of how Hogan and 360 fit.*

*"I think we struggled a little bit in our transition to the mentoring ... just not sure that we all were completely sure what was expected almost. I certainly was very conscious that the mentoring bit, with somebody who was obviously very experienced and you didn't want to be wasting their time as such. I think we probably could have done with maybe a short session to prepare us for that mentoring transition and ... how we could get the most out of mentoring ... we had our 4 coaching sessions and I know my last coaching session my coach and I went and met with the mentor and that was grand, but I actually just think that we should maybe have had as I said it might have even been just a short webinar about the difference between coaching and mentoring and just helping us to prepare to make sure we got the maximum. Now I'm still in contact with my mentor and the relationship is working fine but that would be one area that I think there is maybe an opportunity to do more in."*

*(Qualitative Interview 5)*

*"The other thing was that I found it was ... too dominated by Northern Ireland Civil Service central government delegates and I felt that at times conversations became dominated by what happened in the Northern Ireland Civil Service and for the likes of [those coming from] smaller bodies it was hard at times to get your voice heard because there was just such a lot of them." (Qualitative Interview 6)*

*"The first thing was that in the year that I went through the programme I think there was approximately 50 delegates and in the previous year I think there had been around 20 and I found that, we were only together I think the whole group on maybe 3 or 4 occasions and that actually made it really difficult to get to know people ... Cora was keen to get people moving around and talking to different people and there was a lot of value in that but it really meant that you didn't build the relationships, the relationships weren't as strong as they might otherwise have been if you could have spent a little bit more time, in smaller groups. I felt like I was constantly being moved around and even at the end of the programme I was still feeling like there were people that I hadn't met and really didn't know and I think a smaller group would have facilitated getting to know people better ... I don't think the bigger group worked that well if I am being honest and speaking to other delegates on it that was a fairly common view, I think they just tried to pack too many people onto it and I don't think that worked particularly well." (Qualitative Interview 6)*

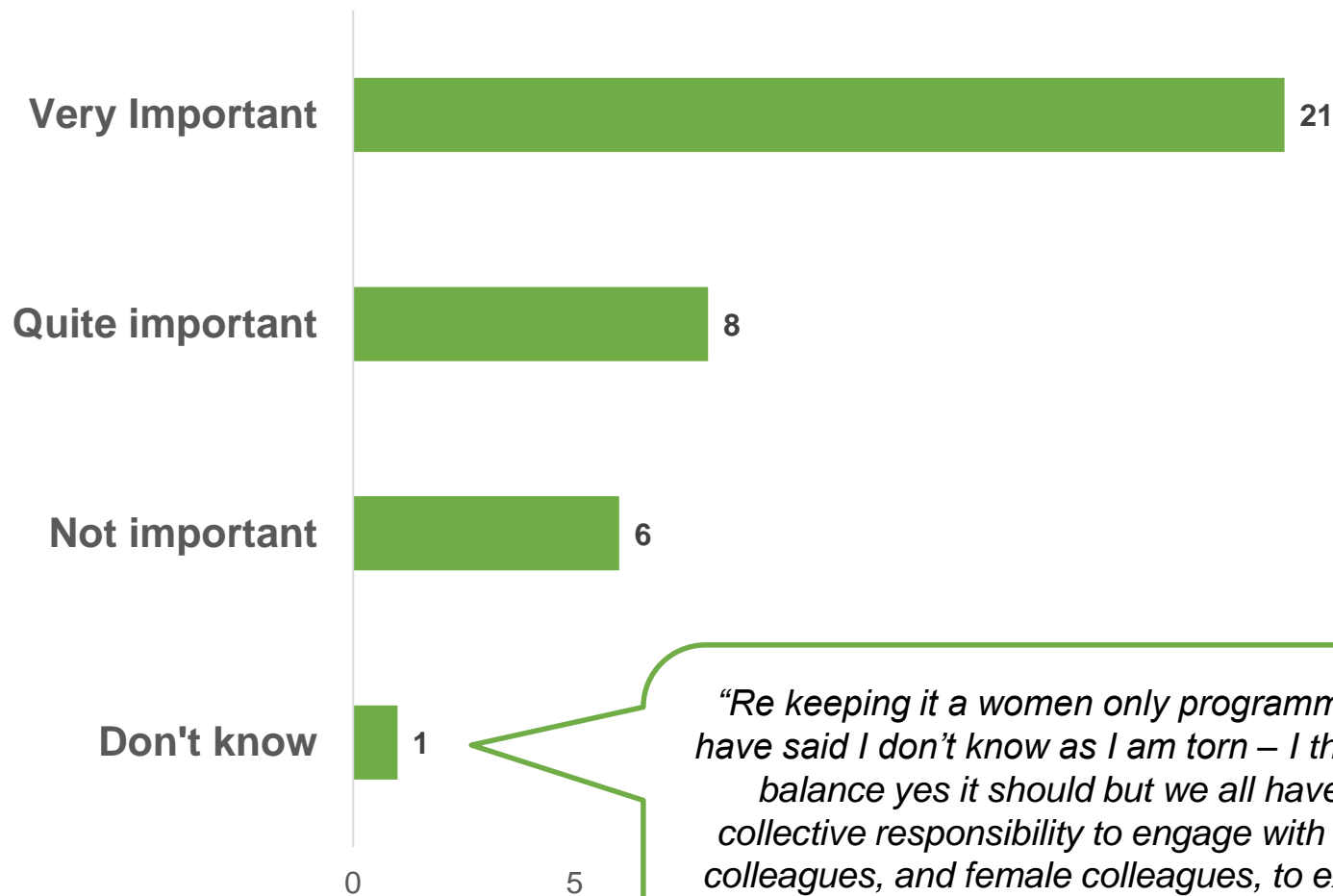
## Research theme 18:

**Over three quarters of survey respondents (29) considered it very or quite important that BIL remain a women-only programme.**

Only six of the 36 survey respondents considered this not important.

Four of the six programme participants interviewed through the the qualitative likewise suggested that they had benefited from the programme being women-only as it allowed the opportunity to discuss issues not so easily covered with both genders.

## How important do you think it is that the programme stays a women only programme? (Base:36)



*“Re keeping it a women only programme – I have said I don't know as I am torn – I think on balance yes it should but we all have a collective responsibility to engage with male colleagues, and female colleagues, to explain better why a women only programme is important.” (Survey respondent)*

*“[The fact that it's all women, do you think that's helpful or unhelpful?]”  
“Personally I think it's really helpful ... I think there were some very frank conversations that were had that you couldn't have if men were there, and it wasn't about men bashing or anything like that, but I think there were things that we learned about ourselves as a gender that you wouldn't have had men been there because part of it I think was the recognition that a lot of the time there is still a gap between pay and grade and all of that and I think part of it has to be about trying to address that and trying to build females up and improve their confidence and so to me that was part of it and I don't think I would have got as much out of it had it been mixed gender.” (Qualitative Interview 6)*

*"I liked it ... I think that there is ... need for more opportunity for women in the service as it were and I think yes it's changed a bit but there is this huge difference between the amount of men you see round tables still compared to the amount of women ... I think it was a really good opportunity to let women do the thinking and tackling the challenges of the system without that male input, I would say that the system ... is still pro men, it's still and would be sexist in that sense that you know more men get opportunities so I think it was great to give women the opportunity to spend time together considering how it could be different and what needs to be done, how it needs to be approached to try and bring about difference."  
(Qualitative Interview 3)*

*"[The fact that it's all women, do you think that's helpful or unhelpful?]"*

*"I found it helpful if I am honest. I don't know whether I would have necessarily been as open [if it were mixed genders] ... my problems were quite gender based, for me being in an all-female environment allowed me to explore those with other women that were suffering or not suffering / were experiencing similar difficulties or at least on the same lines, I think most of the people that were there had a degree of imposter syndrome ... I definitely preferred it to be all women. I do feel bad, there are certainly plenty of men that I have worked with that are brilliant and would benefit from it as well, but for me personally I definitely preferred that it was all women."  
(Qualitative Interview 4)*

*"I think it would have changed the dynamic slightly if it had of been mixed, and I don't know without testing that I don't know if that would have been a change for positive or negative."  
(Qualitative Interview 2)*

*... at the very start I was like this is counter intuitive [being women only] because it was like inclusive leadership, but actually as I was in the course and as it went on I could understand why because and again this is where I really enjoyed the neuro science behind it all, what the evidence was showing us how we are pretty much neurologically the same but it's how society has us in terms of the bias and the gender differences so actually it did work and ... I did think that there could have been ... something similar for either all men or a mix ... before I went on the course I was naïve enough to not really see a lot of the unconscious bias's and it's not really until you have that awareness you can decide whether to do something about it or not, so if there is a course there for females, yes there are ways you can try and deal with it but you think it might be a bit easier actually if some of the male counterparts were having that awareness to ... all females being on ... [this] particular course I did think it worked well.  
(Qualitative Interview 1)*

## Research theme 19:

**The qualitative discussions suggested that the name ‘Building Inclusive Leaders’ works. Participants consider that this is what the programme is about.**

Other individual comments noted that the programme is wider than this current title and that the name could be more encompassing. One participant also considered that there is an opportunity to create a strong brand around the programme which would attract people and that the current brand does not do this.

The programme name was only discussed as part of the qualitative research as it was agreed that it was difficult to gather feedback on the name through the quantitative research without alternative suggestions.

*"I think in terms of Building Inclusive Leadership, I like that, I like the focus on inclusive leadership because obviously that's not just about gender but it's about all aspects of inclusivity so I like that ... I would maybe say that it probably should have women in there somewhere ... I suppose I like inclusive in there because I think it's one of those things in a way that gets lost if it's not put out there as a leading aspect." (Qualitative Interview 3)*

*"I think it is about inclusive, well it's inclusive yes I do think it is, and there was a lot of that came out about understanding ... I think we have come away much more conscious about how to be collaborative and how to be inclusive and I think most people think about things that they may not have thought about before they went into the programme and that in itself will have an impact. So yes I do think it is about inclusivity. I actually think it's properly about working together ... I think it's a good title." (Qualitative Interview 2)*

*"Building Inclusive Leaders, is that the right name for the programme?"*

*"Probably not, I think it's focussing on very key part of being a leader but being an inclusive leader isn't the be all, you know it is an element of being a good leader but I think there are other factors that are important in being a good leader. I think that it's maybe a bit specific and the title should maybe be a bit more generic. I'm just trying to think off the top of the head and I'm not coming up with anything that's very inspiring but building effective leaders, to me is more about the person in the round and all of the things that you should be good at, and inclusivity is obviously one part of that. ... I mean we did talk about inclusivity during the programme but it certainly wasn't the focal point of it so potentially it's a bit misleading in a sense." (Qualitative Interview 6)*

*"I think it fits, it fits well. I think it's a good name ... I think the inclusivity and the leadership part actually do cover quite a bit and you think well it ties it all together quite well because there is a lot of different topics and themes and sub-themes and it would be pretty difficult to try and fit all that into something short and snappy so I actually think if you think about what leadership means and about what being inclusive means then it actually is quite a good way to describe it." (Qualitative Interview 1)*

*"It does what it says on the tin, that is what it's seeking to achieve. I think there is possibly an opportunity to change it and make it a bit more like a brand, because as I say I think unless you do know about it I'm not sure that the current title will be attractive enough if you don't, as I say I was fortunate that I knew the Chief Executive's Forum ran these events and I had been thinking about it for a few years before I applied." (Qualitative Interview 5)*

*"I do think it's good, at the beginning I questioned the name, I did actually question the name but then by the end I think it's the right name for it because I don't want it to become this idea that it's this man bashing exercise ... because it genuinely isn't, and that is essentially the intention of the course which is to build inclusive leaders, they are not building us up to go up and kick every man out of his job, they are encouraging ... I took it as an encouragement to go forward to build a diverse and inclusive workforce of everybody which at the minute quite frankly it is not." (Qualitative Interview 4)*

## Any other comments? (Base: 20)

*I am just very thankful to have experienced such a brilliant programme.*

*Overall excellent and I feel very lucky to have been a participant.*

*Excellent programme and whilst I am happy in my current role at present I feel has equipped me with the skills I need to progress when the time is right*

*A good programme.*

*Glad I did it even though I hated bits - and recognising that the bits I hated (eyes closed in a circle type stuff for example!) seem to have been valued by others. Is very effective in opening up links to other areas of work - even if never in contact in ones work - it exposes one to other worlds, ways of working, and areas of expertise. The participants, even if sceptical, were unfailingly generous in communicating about their work and experiences - which must speak to the atmosphere created by the team. Would recommend.*

*Excellent programme that I have recommended to several colleagues*

*Quality leadership training and development is an area that needs investment and development in all public sector organisations, not just at an organisational management level or to women, or where the organisation is 'lucky' to have a great leader*

*I loved the programme it came just at the right time for me as I commenced a new senior management role. I still consult my notebook and folder for inspiration. I learnt a lot about developing resilience which has held me in good stead. I was really disappointed my mentor didn't work out. It took a while to arrange a first meeting as it had been cancelled several times by the mentor. My first session was after the course finished and the mentor advised he was retiring from his position in two days! I would love regular keeping in touch sessions to catch up with everyone and see what we are all at!*

*Re mentoring – I haven't rated this as Covid hit a few weeks after I was assigned a mentor, then I moved roles so I have not been able to follow up with my mentor, other than one meeting.*

*Well organised and professionally run programme. A CEF-type leadership programme should be compulsory for all middle/senior managers in the public sector/NICS As a leadership programme I feel that the learning I got stands out hugely from the norm. It was interesting and stimulating and a very visible indicator of NICS commitment to developing women leaders.*

*Course organisers and facilitators very good. course itself good however it wasn't as good as I had anticipated or had been made out to believe.*

*I appreciate the support and development being afforded to women leaders who remain under represented across the public sector.*

*Without doubt, this is the best course I have ever attended and the journey of self discovery and awareness of my own ability as a leader has helped me in my work and personal life immeasurably.*

*The only part which didn't work for me was the mentoring as I never actually met my mentor. We got in touch as Covid hit, so our first meeting got postponed and although I contacted her a couple of times afterwards, I didn't hear back.*

*I found the programme hugely stimulating, very challenging but one which I think I will continue to refer to over the course of my career. Thank you for the opportunity.*

*I think certain aspects of the programme should be 'woman only' however many male colleagues could benefit from this excellent leadership programme.*

*This is an excellent programme, which I benefited greatly from and I have actively encouraged people to apply for. An excellent investment.*

*Sincere thanks to all involved for this incredible opportunity. It has been invaluable to me.*



# 4. Final Reflections

## Final thoughts

- The research only gathered feedback from about 41% of programme participants. However, we cannot be sure that the results are representative – those who did not respond may not have had such a positive experience.
- The feedback on the programme was overwhelmingly positive. It has clearly been an impactful programme with a large number of women, improving their self-awareness and confidence, thereby resulting in personal and career development which for some includes promotion.
- Many women are evangelical about the programme and all but one person had already recommended it to another or where prepared to do so.
- The programme is highly regarded for the approach/ethos taken as well as the different elements that make up the content of the programme. The programme seems to be successful partly due to the combination of coaching and teaching with the retreat being the most highly regarded element.
- The mentoring element of the programme is the main element where there was some negative feedback. From what we can tell this relates to a feeling by programme participants that not all mentors are able to give time to the mentee and we suspect relationships may have been more difficult to establish over the period of the Covid pandemic.

### Thoughts for going forward

- Awareness: The programme deserves a high profile given its impact and focus
- Women-only: Based on this feedback the programme should stay focused on women
- Mentoring: Is there a way to manage this element of the programme differently / more tightly?
- Live v Online: Given the current pandemic and the move to online experiences generally, it is important to note that this may see evaluation responses change to be different
- Alumni: There is a clear opportunity (and appetite) to create an alumni network off the back of the programme to further encourage women and expand their development