

# WORKING IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Career opportunities for young people





# Foreword

by the Chair of the LGA, **Cllr David Sparks**

I am delighted to introduce the Local Government Association (LGA) career guide for school-leavers, particularly in view of my own experience as a careers advisor for most of my own working life in Birmingham.

Leaving school is a critical time in any young person's life. A moment when decisions taken can set a course for the future. A time when advice, information and guidance are critically important, but can be overwhelming, confusing and unhelpful.

This simple guide is intended to provide you with a general introduction to the work of councils and local government generally.

It aims to give you a flavour of the many jobs that exist in councils and the wealth of opportunities that working for councils can open up for you.

It is fair to say that councils are very different to when I left school! Increasingly they do things in partnership, eg with health, police, the fire and rescue service and a range of private companies.

These changes mean that a career in local government can over time take your career in any number of directions – working in different services and for different councils, working across the public sector or for some, moving into private sector jobs associated with councils' work.

Councils are full of people who have chosen to work in local government because they want to help others and make a difference to their lives or the environment in which local people live.

If this and following pages interest and inspire you, then working for a council, in whatever job you feel is right for you, could be the best decision you make as you leave school.

On a personal note, I wish you all the very best in your future career, whatever you choose to do,

**Cllr David Sparks**

Chair, Local Government Association

# JUST LEFT SCHOOL OR COLLEGE AND LOOKING FOR CAREER OPPORTUNITIES...?

You may be surprised to find that local government has an enormous range of jobs, endless opportunities for development and that working for a council provides a great starting point for your future career, wherever it may take you.

Does the word 'council' just bring to mind emptying bins, council tax, pest controllers and library books?

While these are all services we benefit from, you might be interested to know that councils do so much more than this and working in a council could be a rewarding career choice for **you**, as a school leaver, who wants to make a difference to the lives of people in local communities.

This guide provides some key facts and figures about local government to give you an insight into how it works and the prospects that might be available to you.

You might find that local government opportunities are more wide-ranging, and more interesting than you think and decide that local government is the right employer for you.

## What do councils do?

Councils are at the heart of the places we live, work, learn, shop, socialise and exercise.

The responsibility for helping and protecting people, shaping and maintaining the environment and supporting local businesses and jobs in an area, is a fundamental part of the role of councils.



Across the country, local government provides a huge range of services to local people and employs millions of staff to do so. **People who work for councils:**

- teach our children
- protect vulnerable people
- support and promote local businesses and jobs
- ensure we are treated well and not over-charged by shops and restaurants
- put out fires
- make our neighbourhoods safer and more pleasant to live in
- run our parks, leisure centres and libraries
- help to keep us and the community healthy.

Increasingly, they do many of these things by working together with local residents and people in the health service, police forces and other parts of the public sector, as well as working with and using private sector providers of services, making decisions that ensure local people get the most effective and efficient services possible.

That's quite a list of responsibilities and councils **need talented people** of all ages and backgrounds to work for them...



# HOW ARE THESE SERVICES PROVIDED?

Local councils either provide services directly to the public or arrange for other organisations or companies to provide them.

The services the council will provide and how they are funded is agreed by councillors (elected members who are voted for by the public in local elections) and are delivered by paid council employees. Councillors from different political parties make up the full council. The number of councillors is determined by the size of the population it serves.

In total there are 353 councils in England. There are several different types of council: county, district, London borough, metropolitan, English unitary and town and parish councils, each with a range of responsibilities.

In most urban areas, primarily the local services are provided by the London boroughs, metropolitan and unitary councils.

**YOU COULD  
BE ONE  
OF THEM...**

In mostly rural areas the responsibility for service provision is split between county councils and district councils. In many areas the council is very often the largest employer in a local area – there are around 1.3 million local government employees across England and Wales.

Councils work hard to make sure people know what services are available and how to access them as well as highlighting news and events that will be of interest to people living and working in the area.

Councils use traditional methods of communication to get these messages across but increasingly they use Twitter and other social media to interact with their local communities and are providing a growing number of services online eg parking permits.

In order to provide the diverse range of services and functions, **local government needs to employ people with the right skills, qualifications and/or experience.**



DOES THIS  
SOUND LIKE  
YOU?

# WORKING IN A COUNCIL

Are you still at school exploring options, wondering what to do next? Perhaps higher education is not for you – you want to dive straight into a career and **start making a difference**? Local government could be just right for you....and here's why...

It makes sense for a young person to work for an employer who:

- can offer a diverse range of job and career options
- can provide plenty of scope for career progression
- can provide structured training and personal development
- recognises the value in investing in young people.

Local councils are some of the largest employers in the UK and deliver a huge range of services to local communities. This means that they offer an unbelievable range of careers covering everything from accountancy and engineering, to teaching and social work.

Councils are increasingly innovating and changing the way they work, which makes it an exciting time to join them as an employee.

There are a wide range of schemes being offered to attract young people **including apprenticeships and graduate programmes**. These opportunities demonstrate the importance that councils place on attracting young people into local government.

Apprenticeships usually develop key skills such as literacy, numeracy, ICT, problem solving, team working and personal development and most will also include a technical certificate.

The training provided will vary by council but opportunities will be available to enable further progress.



## Apprenticeships

Occupational areas for training towards apprenticeships or NVQs include accounting, horticulture, arts and entertainment, business administration, catering and facilities services, construction, customer services, early years and education, emergency fire service operations, environmental conservation, health and safety, health and social care, heritage, housing, information services and technology, insurance, human resources, sport, recreation and communications.

Apprenticeships provide young people with an opportunity to learn on the job, gaining knowledge and skills and achieving qualifications **while earning money**. Being a trainee requires a commitment from you to work and study hard.

If you enjoy working with people, examples of interesting and varied jobs within the sector include:

- social work and social care
- administrative/customer services
- public and media relations
- educational services/psychologists
- nursery nursing
- leisure and tourism
- youth work/teaching support work
- fire control operators
- interpreter/linguist
- libraries/recreation
- trading standards.

If you find yourself drawn to a profession and/or research and analytical type work:

- procurement
- architects/property management
- contract management
- trading standards
- ICT/telecoms
- planning
- finance/legal
- human resources
- policy/research & analysis
- commissions
- building control/surveyors.

You may find the following of interest if you would enjoy caring for the environment and providing safe amenities for the public:

- public health
- community firefighters
- caretaking/cleaning/catering/ security
- regeneration
- maintenance & construction
- conservation/ecology
- health and safety
- waste management/recycling
- environmental health
- water resources.

There are many more – please look at the useful websites on pages 14 and 15.

With such a wide range of jobs and potential career paths, you won't be surprised to learn that **your career is most likely to develop quickly** by moving between councils, or increasingly across the public sector and for some, into the private sector (and possibly back again!)

## Graduates

Councils provide a range of career opportunities for graduates and often operate their own graduate schemes which include undergraduate and post graduate entry levels.

Many jobs require degree level entry and these range from a specific occupational based qualification (like social work, town planning and environmental health) to more generic degree qualifications (such as business administration, management and economics).

Councils employ professionals carrying out important roles in diverse areas and in addition there are many job roles in local government in interesting emerging areas.

Graduates should also note the **National Graduate Development Programme (ngdp)** which is a two-year graduate management programme run by the LGA.

The programme has been set up to provide local government with the high-calibre managers of the future their communities need – and to give committed graduates the training and opportunities to make a positive impact to the sector.

The LGA can provide successful graduates with a launch pad for a **rewarding leadership career** in local government.

# THE BENEFITS OF JOINING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

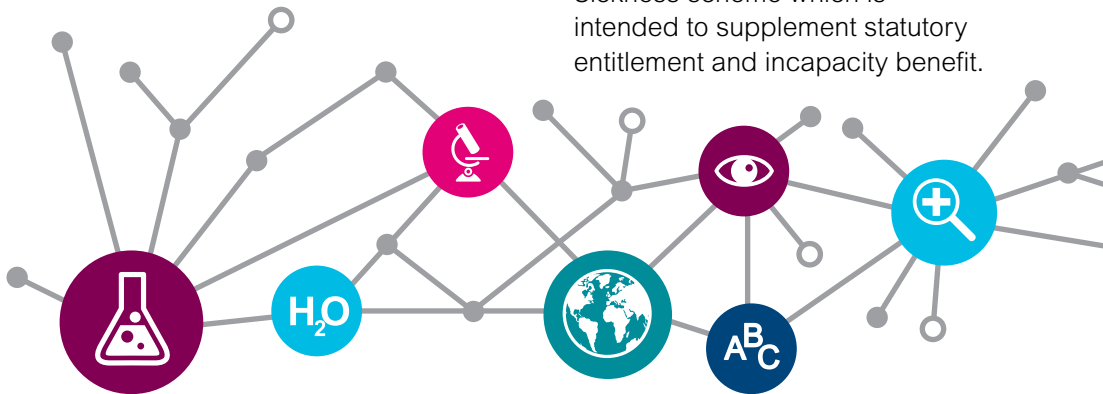
Aside from the exciting range of opportunities to make a difference to your local community, councils are great places to work and for many people already provide an attractive employment package and working environment.

## Pay and terms and conditions

The pay and terms and conditions of employment for over 1.3 million local government services employees is largely set nationally but with a range of local variation on these terms by local councils. The details of the employment package would be shared as part of the recruitment process for a specific job.

### Core terms and conditions

- Flexibility – with full time, part-time, term-time work options.
- Fair pay and pensions – local authorities pay competitive rates of pay with a growing number committing to a minimum of the Living Wage rate.
- The Local Government Pension Scheme is considered to be one of the best.
- Generous holiday allocation and public holidays.
- Career progression and relevant training.
- Job satisfaction.
- Maternity, paternity and adoption leave.
- Sickness scheme which is intended to supplement statutory entitlement and incapacity benefit.



## Wellbeing and employee engagement

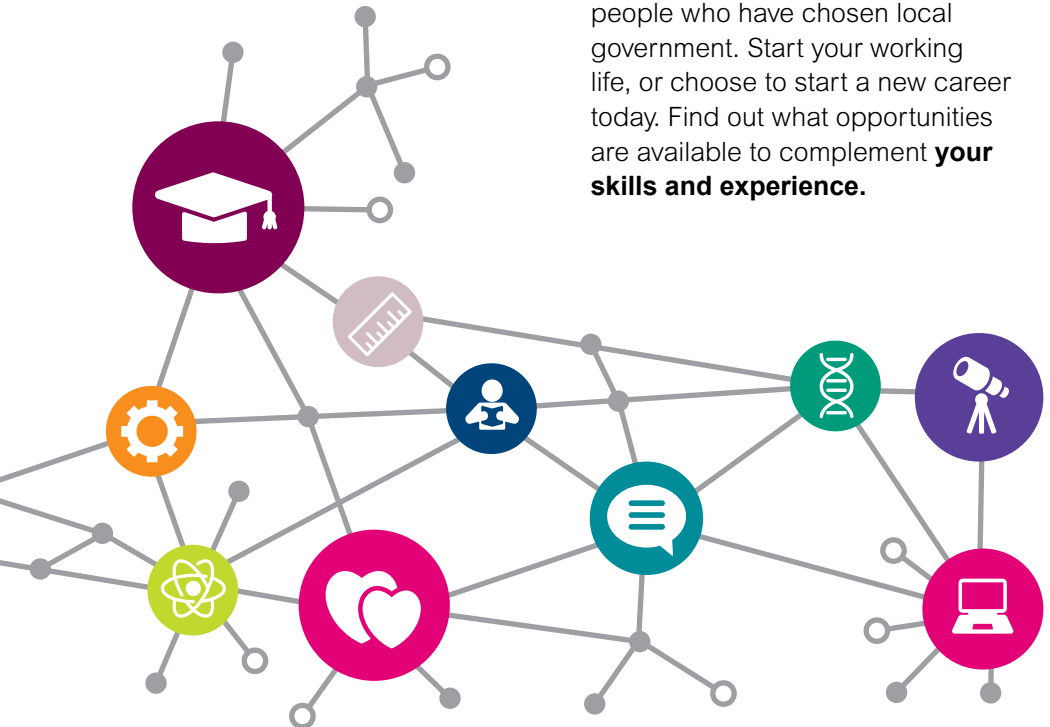
Local authorities have a key role to play in the health and wellbeing of their employees. Healthy, engaged and well-motivated employees have a positive impact on productivity and effectiveness and many councils have a range of programmes and initiatives to look after both their employees and the people they serve.

## Equal opportunities

Councils have led the way in creating workplaces that are respectful of people's differences, value and welcome diversity and deal quickly and efficiently with discrimination.

## So what are you waiting for?

Come and join the 1.3 million other people who have chosen local government. Start your working life, or choose to start a new career today. Find out what opportunities are available to complement **your skills and experience.**



# USEFUL WEBSITES

Your local council's website

[www.local.direct.gov.uk/LDGRedirect/Start.do?mode=1](http://www.local.direct.gov.uk/LDGRedirect/Start.do?mode=1)

Local Government Jobs

[www.lgjobs.com/](http://www.lgjobs.com/)

Jobs Go Public

[www.jobsgopublic.com/](http://www.jobsgopublic.com/)

Target Jobs

[www.targetjobs.co.uk](http://www.targetjobs.co.uk)

The Guardian Newspaper

[jobs.theguardian.com/jobs/government-and-politics/](http://jobs.theguardian.com/jobs/government-and-politics/)

Local Government Association

[www.local.gov.uk/](http://www.local.gov.uk/)

Careers in Local Government

[www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/workforce/-/journal\\_content/56/10180/6502605/ARTICLE](http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/workforce/-/journal_content/56/10180/6502605/ARTICLE)

National Graduate Development Programme

[www.local.gov.uk/ngdp](http://www.local.gov.uk/ngdp)

Local Government Pension Scheme

[www.lgps2014.org/](http://www.lgps2014.org/)

Living Wage

[www.livingwage.org.uk](http://www.livingwage.org.uk)

# OTHER USEFUL LINKS TO ADVERTISED JOB VACANCIES

## **ENGLAND**

East Midlands Councils  
[www.eastmidlandsjobs.org.uk/](http://www.eastmidlandsjobs.org.uk/)

North East Regional Employers' Organisation  
[www.northeastjobs.org.uk/](http://www.northeastjobs.org.uk/)

North West Employers  
[www.yourcounciljobs.co.uk/](http://www.yourcounciljobs.co.uk/)

South East Employers  
[www.seemp.co.uk/index/seejobs-site.htm](http://www.seemp.co.uk/index/seejobs-site.htm)

West Midlands Employers  
[www.wmjjobs.co.uk/](http://www.wmjjobs.co.uk/)

## **WALES**

Welsh Local Government Association  
[www.wlga.gov.uk/jobs/](http://www.wlga.gov.uk/jobs/)  
[www.lgcareerswales.org.uk](http://www.lgcareerswales.org.uk)



**Local Government Association**

Local Government House  
Smith Square  
London SW1P 3HZ

Telephone 020 7664 3000

Fax 020 7664 3030

Email [info@local.gov.uk](mailto:info@local.gov.uk)

[www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)

© Local Government Association, November 2014

For a copy in Braille, larger print or audio,  
please contact us on 020 7664 3000.  
We consider requests on an individual basis.