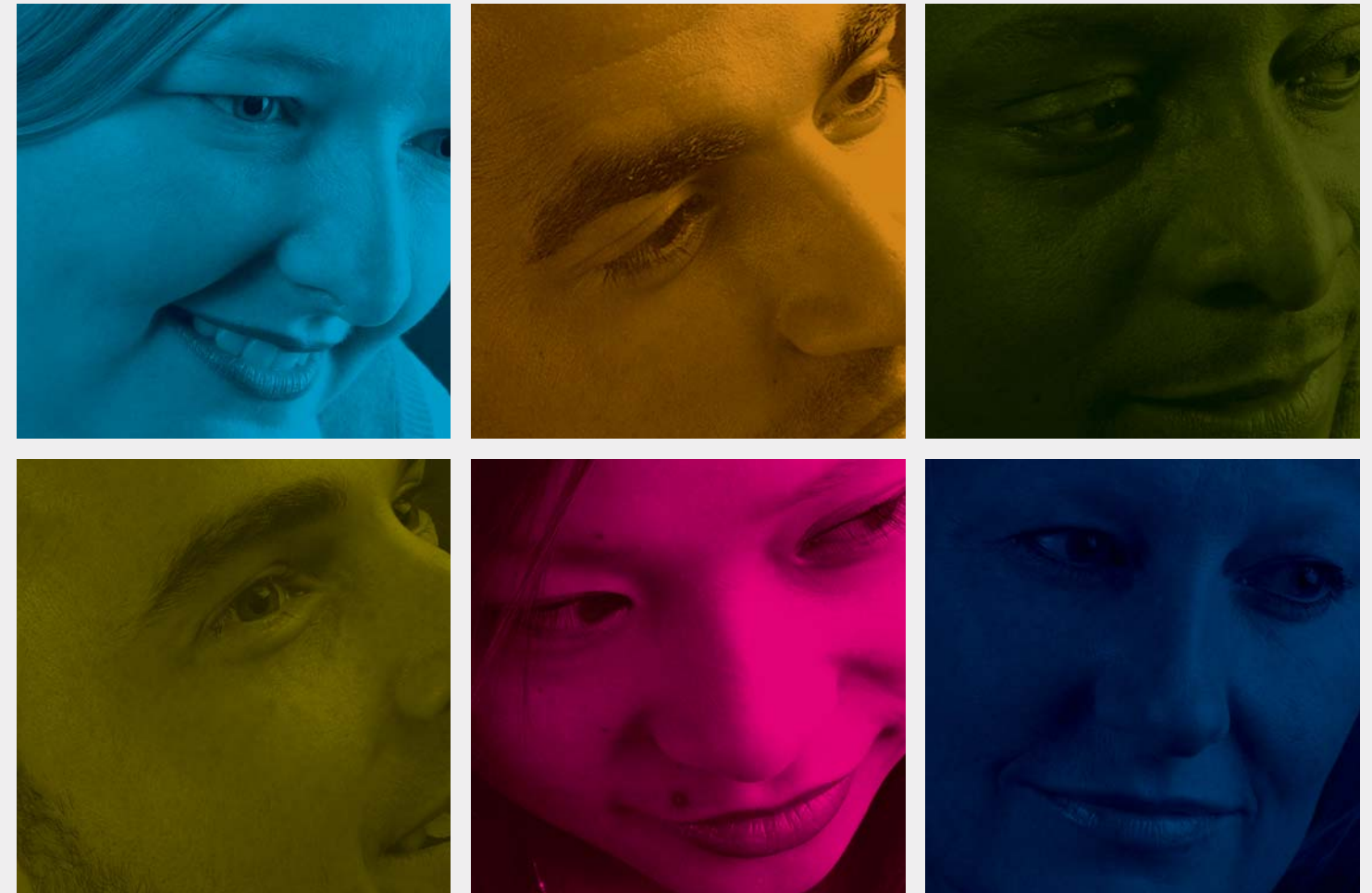


Improvement and Development Agency
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local government talent: careers

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improvement and development
agency for local government

local government talent:
careers

Local councils provide services to the public. The leisure centre you keep fit in, the collection of your household rubbish, the school you or your children go to, the care of those who are disadvantaged, the hygiene standards in your local restaurants and shops, the range of reference materials in your local library – all of these things and many more are your council's responsibility.

Councillors, for whom you vote in local elections, are the decision-makers within the council. They decide upon council policy and how the budget is spent. Council staff, who run the services on a daily basis, carry out these policies.

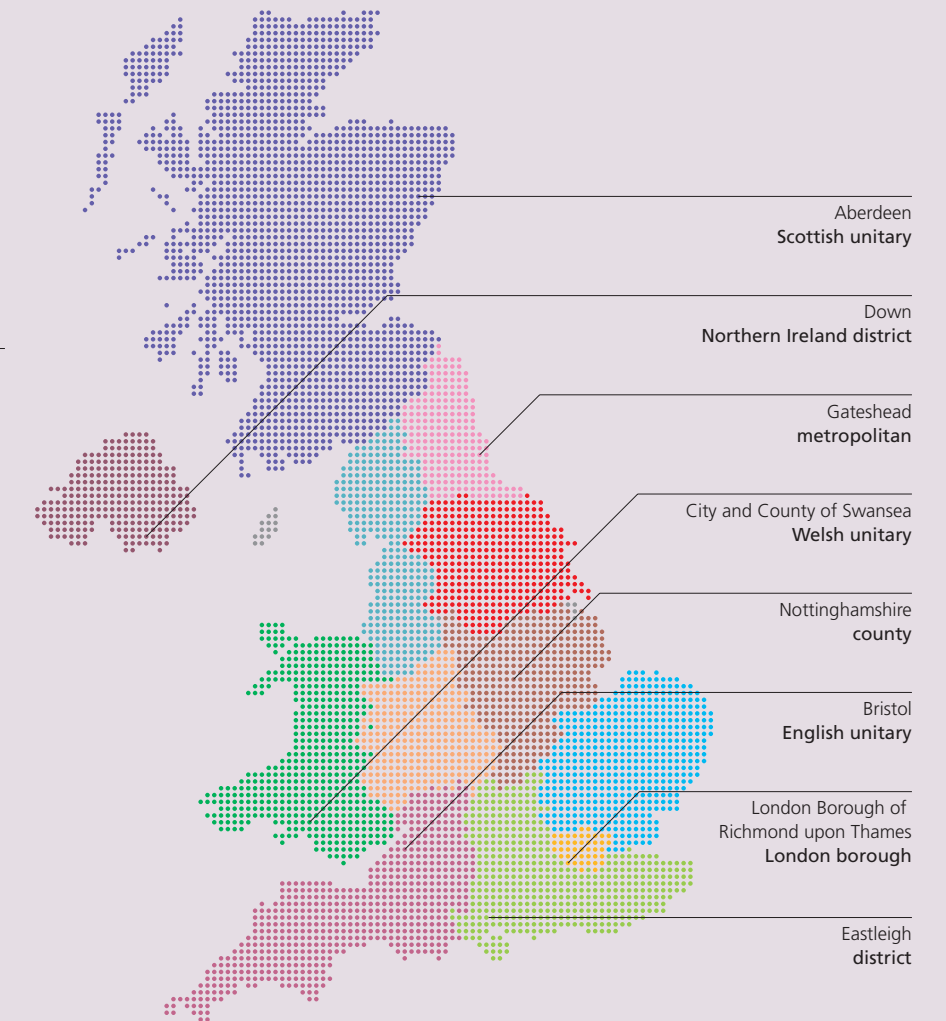
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local government services – who provides them?

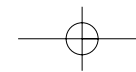
In primarily urban areas in England, London boroughs and metropolitan and unitary councils provide all local government services. In other, mostly rural areas, responsibilities are split between county councils and district councils.

service provided	county	district	unitary/ metropolitan	London borough
architecture, building and design	yes	yes	yes	yes
art galleries and museums	yes	yes	yes	yes
building control		yes	yes	yes
car parking – off street		yes	yes	yes
car parking – on street		yes	yes	yes
cemeteries		yes	yes	yes
economic development	yes	yes	yes	yes
education	yes		yes	yes
environmental health		yes	yes	yes
fire service	yes		yes	
highways	yes		yes	yes
housing		yes	yes	yes
leisure and recreation		yes	yes	yes
libraries	yes		yes	yes
parks and open spaces		yes	yes	yes
planning (local)		yes	yes	yes
planning (strategic)	yes		yes	
police service	yes		yes	
roads and footpaths		yes	yes	yes
social services	yes		yes	yes
tourism	yes	yes	yes	yes
trading standards	yes		yes	yes
traffic and transportation co-ordination	yes	yes	yes	yes
waste collection		yes	yes	yes
waste disposal	yes		yes	yes

region	number of councils
Scotland	32
Northern Ireland	26
North East	25
North West	46
Yorkshire and Humberside	22
East Midlands	45
West Midlands	38
Wales	22
East of England	54
London	33
South East	74
South West	51



The map above shows some examples of different types of council and the numbers of councils in each region.



local government talent:
careers

working in local government – what's it like?

local government is influential

Local government is responsible for providing a wide range of services that affect all our lives. Local government can really improve local communities. It houses, informs, educates, entertains and protects its citizens and maintains a well-balanced environment.

local government is dynamic and exciting

Local government is constantly changing and is becoming increasingly competitive. There is pressure to respond both to the needs of the local community and the wishes of central government. For those working in local government there are new challenges every day.

local government has a broad range of career opportunities for everyone

With so many services to provide, it is no surprise that there is such a variety of careers in local government. There are 600 occupational groups ranging from teaching, social care and environmental health to sports development, trading standards and planning, plus many more.

Opportunities exist for school and college leavers, graduates, career changers and those returning to work after a break, in roles such as administrators, front-line staff, professionals, managers, technicians and assistants.

the pay is good

In many occupations salaries are competitive, especially in administrative and management posts. Employment benefits are good and there is the opportunity for professional development and training.

there are opportunities to progress

The emphasis on training and development ensures that local government staff not only have the opportunity to change jobs, but are equipped with the skills needed to do them well. There are opportunities to move between different departments, as well as upwards into more senior roles and management positions.

did you know
local government
employs over
two million people?

why work for local government?

community

Local government employees contribute to the local community whilst working in a dynamic, fair and flexible environment. Whoever you are and whatever your background, working in local government gives you the opportunity not only to develop your career, but also to make a difference in people's lives.

diversity

As well as the huge diversity of work, there are people from many different backgrounds working in local government. Local government values the contributions different people make and recognises that the strength of an organisation lies in having a diverse workforce.

Local councils are equal opportunities employers and have recruitment policies and practices, which ensure that no person will be discriminated against for reasons of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, religion, culture, language or HIV status. This commitment to equality of opportunity and respect for diversity extends not only to employees, but also to service users.

training

Local government trains and develops its staff. Many councils run specific training programmes, such as graduate training schemes, management training programmes, training to gain professional qualifications, Apprenticeships and positive action schemes. However, you don't need to be on one of these schemes to benefit, as the commitment to training includes everybody. All new members of staff within a council receive an induction and most have regular appraisals with their line managers, enabling them to identify training needs.

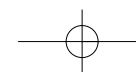
flexibility

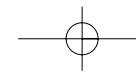
Due to the broad range of occupations in local government, there have always been many different patterns of work. Some jobs may require you to work a full time week of 35-40 hours, but there may often be part-time and job share opportunities, or shift work.

There is a great degree of flexibility in all areas of local government work and many employees benefit from flexi-time arrangements, term-time working, compressed weeks and career breaks.

benefits

As well as a fair and competitive salary, there are many other benefits to which local government employees may be entitled, such as generous annual leave, local government pension scheme, crèche facilities, secondments, reduced rate membership at leisure facilities and reduced fares on public transport.





building your community

Local councils build, develop, manage and own a wide range of buildings, from housing and residential homes to schools and public buildings. Staff are employed in all sorts of capacities both to oversee and regulate construction and development, but also to design and build.

architecture

Architects are responsible for council building projects from the earliest stages of design through to completion. The work is varied and includes the design of new buildings and the alteration and conversion of existing ones. Architects work closely with architectural technologists, who are responsible for the technical performance of buildings.

building and construction

The construction and renovation of council owned buildings requires a number of highly skilled workers to carry out tasks such as bricklaying, joinery, plastering, plumbing and electrical work. Building control officers oversee this work and check that buildings meet regulations. Access officers ensure that buildings are accessible to all.

facilities maintenance

Building services staff are responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of council property. Engineers look after technical systems such as heating, ventilation and electrical wiring, whilst cleaning, caretaking and security staff ensure buildings are clean and safe.

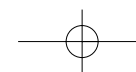
housing

Housing departments manage and maintain council housing, sheltered housing and hostels. They assess local housing requirements and the needs of particular groups, ensuring minimum standards of repair and maintenance. They also monitor tenancy agreements and rent levels. A variety of staff are employed to achieve all this, including housing officers and assistants and those who work with homeless people.

surveying

Surveyors in local government are responsible for the management, valuation, development and measurement of land, property and buildings. Building surveyors maintain, repair and improve council property. Quantity surveyors oversee the financial side of council construction projects. Land surveyors measure and plot the positions of features on the land to produce maps. Valuation surveyors negotiate sales, purchases and leases. Planning and development surveyors specialise in all aspects of urban and rural planning.

did you know there are 468 local councils in the UK?



focus on

a career in
building control

the work

Building control officers (sometimes also known as building control surveyors) are responsible for ensuring that buildings comply with national building regulations and associated legislation. Much of the work involves visiting construction sites and checking on progress. This may mean anything from an extension on someone's home, to a large office block or shopping complex.

Building control officers may also be asked to inspect buildings that have fallen into disrepair or been damaged by adverse weather conditions to check that they are safe.

career development

Val, from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, is a building control surveyor. She started work at the council as a typist, but when a trainee building control post became available she decided to apply. The council has supported her through her building control qualifications, allowing her day release and on-the-job training to complete an HNC and a BSc degree in building control. She is now a qualified building control surveyor and hopes to progress to a management position in the future.

getting in

To become a building control officer you need to have good interpersonal skills and knowledge of construction and building regulations. You also need an HNC in building and/or a degree in building control.

More information about professional building control qualifications is available from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors www.rics.org/careers



caring for your community

Looking after those who are socially excluded, taking care of elderly people, caring for children and young people, supporting those with disabilities and other vulnerable groups within society – local councils take on all these responsibilities. They require friendly, caring and highly skilled staff both to manage these services and to deliver them on the front-line.

social care

Social care is a huge and varied area of work, which can take place in a number of different settings and means working with many different types of people. Some work involves direct care for elderly people or those with physical disabilities, providing assistance in their own homes or in residential care homes with washing, dressing and a range of other domestic tasks.

Other roles could involve looking after children and young people in children's homes or nurseries, giving practical advice to families with low incomes or providing support for those with learning difficulties.

social work

Social work is about helping people find solutions to problems. Social workers often visit people in their homes to assess their needs and work with other agencies and departments such as the NHS, the Probation Service and the council's education department, to provide the necessary help.

Normally social workers will specialise in a particular type of work either with adults or with children and young people. The work may include assisting ex-offenders to find jobs, supporting people with HIV/AIDS, helping to rehabilitate those who have been addicted to drugs or alcohol, enabling those with disabilities to live independently, dealing with child abuse cases and supporting foster carers.

youth and community work

Youth and community workers organise social, recreational and educational activities to meet the needs of specific age groups, genders or ethnic minorities. They work alongside schools, churches, the police, clubs and other community organisations.

Youth workers have a particular role to help young people fulfil their potential and to help them in their personal and social development. Some youth and community workers may specialise in helping people with specific difficulties, for example drug and alcohol abuse.

youth offending team

The work of the youth offending team focuses on preventing young people from committing crime and supporting young offenders and their families at various stages in the criminal justice system. Youth offending team officers liaise with a variety of different agencies in their work, including courts, the Probation Service, detention centres and schools.

health related work

Local councils employ a range of staff in health related occupations. Some officers may be directly involved in caring for those with particular health problems, for example occupational therapists, rehabilitation workers or mental health workers. Others may be more involved in raising health awareness and promoting a healthy lifestyle.

local government talent:
careers



name:
Bryam

employee profile

council:
Bristol City
Council

job title:
economic
regeneration
assistant

Several years ago, I was involved in a serious motorcycle accident, which left me with injuries so severe I thought I might never work again. I sustained a major head injury and spent a year in rehabilitation learning to read, write and walk again. However, with the support of my medical team, I was able to get in contact with the local Jobcentre Plus back to work team and with their help was able to gain confidence and develop new skills.

With the help of the back to work team and Bristol City Council, I was able to develop further, when I took up a work placement in the council's contract services department. I had a work place mentor who closely supervised my work and gave sensitive and constructive feedback to help me identify my strengths and weaknesses. The council seemed really positive about employing disabled people and enabled me to gain greater understanding and awareness of a potential employer.

My work placement helped me decide that I would like to work in administration and shortly afterwards I was successful in gaining a short-term contract as a clerical assistant in the neighbourhood and housing department at the council. When that contract ended, I applied for the economic regeneration assistant job via the council's in-house recruitment agency.

I've really enjoyed my job and have been given great opportunities to train and develop my career. I have already gained some IT qualifications and am currently studying for Association of Accounting Technician exams.

I've overcome a lot of barriers on my way back to work. Many employers wouldn't have given me a second glance when they heard about my accident, but the council not only helped me to develop my skills and gain meaningful employment, but also to feel happier and more confident in myself.

focus on

a career in
social work**the work**

As a social worker specialising in the care of elderly people, a typical day for Jill may start with a visit to the local hospital to check on a client who has been brought in with breathing difficulties. Jill then liaises with the client's GP and home carer and opens negotiations with a local residential care home, which may be able to offer him a place after his release from hospital.

Recently, the client has become aggressive and eccentric and there have been complaints from his neighbours, so Jill must also visit the local police station to explain the situation. Finally, it is back to the office to write up the case notes.

career development

Some councils offer traineeships combining study for a social work qualification with on-the-job training in the social services department. Trainees learn from qualified social workers and assist them with their caseloads.

Once qualified, a social worker can take a range of further training courses, which allows them to specialise in particular areas such as mental health or childcare.

Social workers can progress into senior practitioner and supervisory roles and there are opportunities to move into service or care management. Some social workers move into other areas such as education or youth work.

getting in

Social workers need to be able to communicate sensitively with people from all walks of life. To become a social worker you must gain a degree in social work and be registered with the General Social Care Council.

If you are considering social work as a career, it is often a good idea to try and gain some relevant experience through voluntary work in your local community.

Some councils run specific cadetship schemes, which enable young people to work in a variety of different social care settings and study towards a recognised national qualification.

More information about social work qualifications and careers is available at www.socialworkandcare.co.uk

local government talent:
careerseducating your
community

Local councils are responsible for the smooth running of schools, colleges, libraries and information centres. Not only do they employ teachers and school support staff, but also a whole range of advisers and administrators who help to deliver the council's educational services.

teaching

Teaching is a huge responsibility and challenge, but also very rewarding. It is a teacher's job to build relationships with pupils in order to bring out the best in them, encourage them to use their skills and stimulate them to learn and be receptive to new ideas and knowledge. However, teachers don't just teach – they have a caring role to fulfil and are often called upon to provide advice to pupils about personal problems. As well as school teachers, councils also employ adult education teachers and nursery workers.

classroom support

There is a variety of staff employed to support teachers in their job. Teaching/classroom assistants work with teachers during lessons to assist individual pupils with particular learning tasks and to handle general classroom administration. Learning mentors help to identify pupils who are achieving less than their potential and then work with them on a one-to-one basis to help them overcome barriers to learning and make progress. Special needs officers, speech and language specialists and educational psychologists are also employed to provide support to children who may have particular needs or learning difficulties.

educational advice and support

There is a broad range of advisory and support roles that contribute to the delivery of the council's education services. There are non-teaching staff in schools such as bursars, lunchtime assistants, catering staff and caretakers. There are a range of advisers and inspectors such as education welfare officers, school improvement managers and curriculum advisers, who focus on raising academic standards, increasing attendance and combating truancy. There are also staff who work on school transportation planning and delivery.

did you know local government
employs a wide variety of people
to do many different jobs serving
a diverse community?

libraries and information centres
 Librarians and library assistants work in public libraries meeting a broad range of information needs. They are responsible for buying books, videos, CDs and DVDs and helping people use a variety of reference sources such as CD ROMs and the internet.

As well as routine tasks like checking reference materials in and out and cataloguing and organising collections, library staff help to arrange educational events and exhibitions.

Other council information work may involve archiving council documents or providing specialist information about individual services such as leisure, tourism, community projects or the workings of the council.

did you know there are eight different types of council: county councils, district councils, London borough councils, metropolitan councils, English, Scottish and Welsh unitary councils and district councils in Northern Ireland?

local government talent:
careers



name:
 Amelia

I have been with the London Borough of Havering for eight months as a national management trainee on the national graduate development programme (ngdp). My first placement has been in strategy and communications, but I will shortly be moving to a new placement in social services.

A lot of what I'm doing at the moment involves collecting information from other organisations and other parts of the council, and using this to draft reports for senior managers. Often I will be requested to write briefing papers at short notice and I spend a lot of time talking to people about projects and discussing what activity we should plan to achieve an objective, such as increasing civic pride. I've done work that has touched on lots of issues: services for older people; legislation and consultations from central government; benefits; services for children; transport; finance; and the local strategic partnership.

The best thing about this job is that my involvement makes a difference

employee profile

council:
 London
 Borough of
 Havering

job title:
 national
 management
 trainee

and something gets done to help the community. For example, a colleague who is responsible for energy efficient homes wanted to contact people in the area who were on benefit, but had been told by our own benefit team that this would be impossible. By doing some research I found that other councils had done this before, and through negotiating with the right people, I was able to get the project moving. The response from the public was so great that the call centre was flooded. It only seemed like a small task at the time, but hundreds of people on low incomes will now get free home improvement work done.

I think the most challenging thing about my job is working with senior managers. I do a lot of work for senior people, and though they are always friendly and helpful, they have high expectations and often need work to be completed in very tight timescales. There are benefits though: decisions get made, and the work is varied and interesting.

I decided to apply for the ngdp as it offered better opportunities to progress and a new challenge. The ngdp requires a 2:1 degree in any subject. I have a masters degree in philosophy, but it was probably

my previous work experience that gave me the examples I needed to illustrate that I had the skills for the job and was committed to public sector values.

Everyone on the ngdp studies for a postgraduate diploma in local government management. The Improvement and Development Agency also provides training – I've been to seminars on brainstorming, project management, finance and stress management. Havering Council has also helped me learn by encouraging me to visit people in different areas, like district audit and spending four days at the Local Government Association. I was even invited to a meeting chaired by John Prescott and Paul Boateng!

I love working in local government, so when I finish my two years on the ngdp I definitely want to find a position in a council. But I don't want to sit still! The ngdp is all about making progress and developing and I'm always looking for the next step up the ladder. There are a lot of opportunities in local government, so I'm confident that if I continue to push myself I'll be a senior manager in time.

focus on

a career in
teaching**the work**

Most people come into contact with teachers at some time in their lives and anyone who has been to school has some understanding of what a teacher does. A large part of the work is based in the classroom teaching pupils and trying to find innovative and interesting ways of presenting information, so that they are able to learn effectively.

However, a teacher's day may also include meetings with other teachers, planning for lessons, marking work, meetings with parents to discuss pupils' progress and running lunchtime or after school clubs such as choirs, bands, sports teams or drama groups.

Teachers can sometimes come across difficulties particularly when they face an unruly class or a disruptive individual. They may also have to deal with issues such as bullying or truancy. However, the opportunity to inspire young people and give them the confidence to learn can be immensely satisfying.

career development

Primary teachers can progress by taking on responsibility for key areas such as numeracy and literacy. Both primary and secondary teachers have opportunities to move up the management structure within their departments, by taking responsibility for specific subject areas and moving on to become department or year-group heads.

Some teachers may progress to become deputy head or head teachers. There is also a range of education-related jobs that may be of interest to an experienced teacher, such as education adviser or school improvement manager.

getting in

Teachers must like and respect young people and must be able to build solid relationships. To be a teacher you must have Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). This means either studying for a degree in education, a subject degree with QTS or gaining a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) after your first degree.

Alternatively, you can enter School Centred Initial Teacher Training, which enables you to study part-time whilst teaching. Some teachers enter the career by first qualifying as a teaching assistant and then going on to do teacher training.

More information about routes into teaching is available at www.teach.gov.uk

local government talent:
careersentertaining your
community

Councils provide a range of leisure and recreational services for the public to enjoy. They manage leisure centres, museums, art galleries and tourist attractions and often organise special cultural events. Staff are employed to run and manage all of these facilities and activities.

sports facilities

Leisure and sports facility managers have overall responsibility for the smooth running of leisure centres and other sports facilities such as ice rinks, tennis courts and parks. This work includes managing budgets, overseeing publicity, security and events, and managing staff.

Other employees such as football coaches, recreation assistants, lifeguards and fitness instructors, ensure the smooth running of individual activities. Parks and amenities officers are also employed to maintain and look after the council's parks, sports pitches and open spaces.

arts and entertainment

Council-run theatres, art galleries, museums and tourist attractions require a variety of staff from museum assistants and curators to box office staff, security wardens and information officers.

Arts officers are involved in the planning and development of specific arts related events and work within the community on arts projects. Events/entertainment officers organise and promote a range of events including exhibitions, fairs, conferences and festivals. Playworkers look after children and provide activities for them during school holidays, at weekends and after school.

leisure, sports and tourism development

There is a range of council officers who are involved in the strategic development and promotion of leisure, sports and tourism in a local area. Some officers may take a broad ranging view of the leisure and sports opportunities the council offers and whether service provision is meeting local people's needs.

Others, such as sports development officers or tourism officers, work in specific areas managing promotional campaigns and increasing participation at sporting events or encouraging more people to visit tourist sites.

focus on

a career as a
leisure attendant**the work**

Leisure attendants have a varied job that brings them into contact with many different people. They carry out a variety of tasks in leisure centres. They may spend some of their time working on reception, dealing with enquiries and selling tickets. They may get involved in setting up equipment such as badminton nets or trampolines.

Leisure attendants also work in the swimming pool area, keeping watch at the poolside and taking action if there are any problems. Additionally they may provide coaching for various sports such as football or tennis.

career development

Leisure attendants often have to start at the bottom and work their way up in their jobs, but councils may be able to offer them training opportunities to achieve this.

For example, Tom, who works for Bracknell Forest Borough Council, has been supported through an Apprenticeship in sport and recreation and has been working towards a National Pool Lifeguard Qualification. He is now acting duty manager and hopes to become a permanent duty manager and then a leisure centre manager in the future.

Other leisure attendants may be given the opportunity to specialise, for example, they may become fitness instructors or sports coaches.

getting in

To become a leisure attendant you must be fit and healthy, enjoy sport and be excellent at communicating with different types of people.

Although there are no specific entry requirements, most councils ask for a good general standard of education including GCSEs in maths and English. They may also ask for good ability in a number of sports, basic knowledge of first aid and possibly some experience of working in a recreation or leisure environment.

More information about qualifications and careers in leisure is available at www.skillsactive.org.uk/careers

local government talent:
careersprotecting your
community

Councils provide a range of services to keep you safe and protect you and your local environment. From fire and rescue services and emergency planning in case of disaster, to environmental conservation, pollution control, consumer advice, enforcement of hygiene standards in public places and management of household waste. It is the council's responsibility to ensure you live in a safe, clean and pleasant environment.

emergency services

As well as rescuing people from fires, explosions and accidents, firefighters in the council's fire service also have a role to play in educating the public about fire safety and prevention. Some councils are responsible for emergency planning and disaster response. Emergency planning officers work with the police and fire services to plan the response to possible emergencies such as terrorist attacks, severe adverse weather conditions or train crashes.

Councils also employ police civilian staff who provide support for police officers. They may work in incident rooms, deal with public enquiries and do scene of crime work. A growing area of work in local councils is that of community safety, which includes street wardens, neighbourhood watch co-ordinators and officers who work to combat anti-social behaviour.

There is also a range of staff employed to provide support to the emergency services such as taking emergency calls or planning staff shifts and timetables.

environmental care and conservation

Councils employ specialists whose main concern is the protection, conservation and care of wildlife and the natural environment in both rural and urban areas. Countryside officers and rangers encourage visitors to the country, promote awareness and understanding of the natural environment and protect the natural habitats of plants and animals.

Other staff, such as tree officers, ecologists and environmental monitoring officers, are concerned with more specific aspects of environmental protection. Gardeners maintain and look after the council's parks and open spaces.

environmental health

Environmental health work is concerned with the maintenance of a healthy and safe environment in the home, at work and during recreation. There are five main areas of work: food safety, housing, the environment, health and safety at work and public health. Some environmental health officers and

technicians may be involved in all aspects of the work, however most specialise in one area.

Food safety involves visiting shops, restaurants, factories, pubs and cafés to ensure that wherever food is prepared and sold, hygiene standards are met. Working in housing means inspecting properties to check they are fit to live in, advising on repairs and ensuring that they are carried out. Environmental protection work includes monitoring air, water, soil and noise pollution, assessing whether standards are being met and taking steps to minimise pollution. Health and safety involves assessing workplaces to ensure that standards are being met and providing advice on how to improve conditions. Public health involves working alongside a range of health professionals to promote healthy lifestyles in communities.

Environmental health departments also employ a number of other staff, for example, pest control officers, technical officers, laboratory technicians and dog wardens.



employee profile

council:
Basingstoke and
Deane Borough
Council

job title:
operations
manager

name:
Steve

I have worked in local government since leaving school 28 years ago. My first job was with Southampton City Council as a temporary assistant gardener to help with summer grass cutting. The 'temporary' job lasted 10 years and I have to say that I enjoyed every minute of it! Southampton City Council was a great employer and did everything possible to help my development by providing training opportunities and allowing me to work at various parks, gardens and nurseries. My last role with Southampton was as a working chargehand looking after a small team.

Southampton encouraged me to look further afield in order to develop my career, and I successfully applied for the position of supervisor at Woking Borough Council's parks department. This was my first real step into supervision and I needed,

and received, a lot of support. My two years at Woking was a steep learning curve that did much to prepare me for a more senior role as area parks supervisor at Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, which is where I work now.

In 16 years at Basingstoke I have seen many changes and been part of team that has faced a multitude of challenges. Development opportunities at Basingstoke are second to none and I have been fortunate to grow with the job. Following several reorganisations, I am currently the operations manager for a newly formed and multi-disciplined street care section.

After being at Basingstoke for a while, I was conscious that despite my various promotions and my strong practical background (I was once a good gardener), I wanted to develop my managerial and administrative skills. I was given the opportunity to study for a diploma in management at Reading University and received excellent support from the council's training officer and my immediate manager. My graduation day was a very proud moment.

I have never sat down and planned my career, but I have been fortunate to have received so much help and worked in an environment where career development matters that I am now in a position to help others to develop their careers. I have worked with many other colleagues to ensure Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council is an employer that trains staff and provides them with opportunities to develop. I hope this will go some way to repaying all those within local government who have given me a chance in the past.

local government talent:
careers

highways and maintenance

Councils build, manage and maintain a large majority of our roads. Some of the work is contracted out to private companies, but in these cases councils still employ staff to oversee the work and manage the contracts.

Civil, highways, drainage and transport engineers are involved in the planning, development and building of roads, bridges and tunnels. They are supported by technical assistants who provide detailed plans, drawings and research, and manual workers such as roadworkers who carry out the building work on site. Staff are also employed to monitor and maintain street lighting.

planning and licensing

Planners, supported by planning technicians, are concerned with the conservation, development and improvement of an area. Anyone wishing to build on or develop land within a council area must first apply for permission from their local planning department.

Planning departments also employ a range of specialist staff in particular areas such as transport planning or urban design and conservation. Licensing officers have a responsibility to ensure that public entertainment premises follow health and safety laws and that private hire vehicles such as taxis or school buses are safe to ride in.

trading standards

Trading standards officers protect consumers and businesses by enforcing the laws that govern the purchase, hire or sale of goods or services. For example, checking that items in shops are not faulty, ensuring that food is correctly weighed and labelled or investigating rogue traders.

Trading standards officers ensure that legislation designed to protect the consumer is followed. They make visits to shops, pubs and other businesses to make sure that they are following the law and to give legal advice.

Sometimes, if businesses are breaking the law, it is necessary to prosecute. In these cases trading standards officers are called upon to give evidence in court.

Technicians and enforcement officers provide specialist support in all of this work. Consumer advisers provide expert advice to the public and business relating to consumer goods and services.

waste management

A variety of staff are involved in the safe collection, disposal and recycling of our rubbish. Refuse workers collect rubbish and dispose of it. Waste management officers oversee the service and develop and review policies to ensure safe and efficient waste disposal. Recycling officers have responsibility for council recycling strategy and help to plan and develop recycling projects.

did you know local government is a huge service provider – education, environmental health, housing, social services and many more, all of which benefit the local community and affect everyone's lives?

focus on

a career in
planning



the work

Town planning is the process required by law, which is used to manage the built and natural environment around us. Planning permission is needed for most types of building work and changes to the use of buildings.

Development control officers deal with applications for all types of building development. They may be involved with small household extensions or work on major developments. For example, development control officers in the planning department at the London Borough of Lambeth have dealt with the planning application for one of the capital's most popular tourist attractions – the London Eye.

Policy officers are involved in drawing up planning policies and guidelines for the local area, which are then used to decide whether or not development proposals are acceptable. Planning departments also have specialist officers dealing with listed buildings, conservation areas, trees, and enforcement against unauthorised development. There are also links to work in the regeneration field.

career development

Sheree, from the London Borough of Lambeth, is a team leader and manages a team of eight development control officers. Initially she joined Lambeth as an administrative officer and decided to pursue a planning career when she was offered the opportunity to study for a first professional qualification. She started on a day release course supported by the council and achieved a town planning degree.

During her studies she worked in several different teams within the department, so that she could gain experience of different aspects of the profession. She eventually chose to specialise in development control and has, more recently, completed the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Business Development and Financial Accountancy course, which has helped develop her management skills.

getting in

To be a planner you need good negotiation and interpersonal skills and a degree in town planning. Qualifications can be gained either as a full or part-time student on an undergraduate or postgraduate degree course, or as a day release student from your workplace. If you then wish to specialise in a particular area of work, such as a conservation officer, you can go on to study this specialist subject.

More information about planning and building control qualifications is available from the Royal Town Planning Institute:
www.rtpi.org.uk/careers-and-membership

local government talent:
careers



employee
profile

council:
Nottinghamshire
County Council

job title:
personnel
assistant

name:
Iris

I came to England a number of years ago from Montserrat following volcanic activity which made it unsafe for me and my family to stay there. For the first time in 25 years I found myself out of work. When I moved to England it was unsettling for my family, so I chose to stay at home for a while to support my children. Once they were settled at school I knew it was time to return to work.

I've been working for Nottinghamshire County Council for just over a year. Originally I applied for a New Deal vacancy in the pensions section and although I was unsuccessful at securing that role, I was offered a temporary position in the Bridge to Work team helping the performance and finance manager.

When my temporary contract ended, my New Deal Lone Parent adviser informed me of an administrative job in the council's personnel section. The council had been a good employer and I thought that continuing to work there would be an excellent opportunity, so I applied and was successful.

My role as personnel assistant involves providing administrative support to the personnel officers including updating records, filing, telephone work, preparing information for meetings, travel allowance claims and getting contracts ready for staff. To do the job I needed some previous office experience, good numeracy and IT skills and good customer service and communication skills for dealing with internal and external customers.

I like the people I work with; they have all made me feel really welcome. It's great being back at work as I'm able to support my family and buy my children the little treats that they were used to in Montserrat. To start with, coming back to work was difficult, and certainly, adapting to a new country has been a big challenge. When I first returned to work it took me a while to re-build my confidence and self-esteem. However, with the support of my colleagues, I now feel fully settled and am familiar with the role and my work surroundings.

In future I hope to broaden my experience within local government.

supporting your community

Councils require a number of support functions that hold their organisations together. These functions have a huge impact on council services and are vital to the smooth running of the organisation. From administrators and ICT technicians, to marketing officers and solicitors, there is a whole range of staff employed to ensure that the council can successfully support both its employees and its community.

administration and customer service

Administrators and clerical staff work in all council departments and have varying levels of responsibility. Some may be involved in routine administrative tasks such as filing, photocopying, letter writing, inputting data into computers and answering telephone enquiries. Others may supervise office staff, carry out research, manage budgets, write reports and get involved in project management.

Some administrators have specific responsibility for supporting council committees. Customer service advisers and other front-line staff such as receptionists are the public face of the council. Customer service staff deal directly with enquiries and complaints either by telephone, in writing or in person.

democratic services

Local councillors are the democratically elected representatives of local people. It is their job to decide how the council should spend its budget. There is a number of council staff that support councillors in their work. Democratic services officers play a key role in advising council committees on procedures and legislation. Scrutiny advisers provide advice to the council's scrutiny committees. Elections officers and managers are involved in the organisation and smooth operation of local council elections.

development

Community development officers work with local community groups to find out more about their needs. As a result council services can be developed to fit these needs better. Economic development officers are responsible for sourcing funding to improve the local economy and encouraging business development and investment opportunities.

finance

Councils manage large budgets and must make sure that the public money they are spending is used efficiently and effectively. To ensure good financial management councils employ a range of accountants, auditors and finance officers to monitor spending, prepare annual accounts and investigate any financial problems. There are also council tax officers, benefits staff and cashiers who deal directly with collections from and payments to members of the public.

local government talent:
careers



employee profile

council:
Gateshead
Council

job title:
ICT equipment
officer

name:
Kris

I joined Gateshead Council three years ago when I was 19, as a business administration trainee. I was placed in a clerical role within ICT services. To get on to the scheme, I needed four GCSEs at grade C or above or equivalent; I had an advanced GNVQ in business. I had two interviews and a series of selection tests before being offered the job.

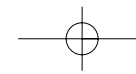
The main duties of my first role in ICT services included: dealing with incoming and outgoing post; processing sickness absence documents; filing, photocopying and faxing; processing invoices and answering related queries; and cash handling. As part of the training scheme, I also attended college one day per week to study towards an Advanced Apprenticeship in business administration.

Nearing the end of the training scheme, I applied for the post of ICT equipment officer and was delighted when I was offered the job. My main duties in my new role include: collecting deliveries of ICT equipment; checking that these deliveries are correct; inputting details of new equipment into the database; ensuring all equipment has been security tagged; and helping the second-line support team.

The thing I like most about this job is the friendly atmosphere and the fact that I am always busy. It is a practical job, which suits me down to the ground and the people I work with are extremely supportive.

I am faced with new challenges all the time; especially when we are due to take delivery of a large number of PCs.

I really enjoy my job and working for the council. In future, I would definitely like to further my education whilst continuing to work in my current role.



did you know local government is NOT the same as the civil service or central government? The civil service and central government cover national services such as the forces, prisons and the Probation Service.

human resources (HR) and training

The work of a council HR department is varied. HR officers and assistants deal with recruitment and selection, employee performance and motivation, pay and benefits, equal opportunities and diversity, health, safety and welfare, industrial and employee relations, relocation and redeployment. Training officers ensure that staff receive training and development that will enable them to deliver services more effectively.

HR and training staff are also involved in a range of strategic HR activities, such as working with managers to identify the people management implications of service plans, assisting with workforce planning to identify future skills needs and ensuring HR policies and procedures support the organisation's objectives. This strategic approach requires HR staff to be business-focused with common sense, good political awareness and influencing skills.

information & communications technology (ICT)

Effective ICT is critical to the smooth running of any organisation. Programmers, software developers, systems analysts, support/helpdesk workers, data input staff and web developers all work to support the council's computer systems and website.

E-government means that local government services must be more accessible to the public and that they should be available electronically. Council ICT staff play a key role in ensuring that this is possible.

local government talent: careers

legal services

Local councils have legal departments staffed by solicitors, barristers, legal officers and assistants who provide advice for managers and councillors. Many local government departments come into contact with different aspects of the law and need assistance with issues such as employment, the prosecution of rogue traders, landlord and tenant disputes and the purchase and sale of land or property.

marketing and public relations (PR)

As local service providers spending public money, councils are constantly under public scrutiny, therefore marketing and communications staff have to present a positive image of the organisation.

Marketing, public relations, communications and press officers are responsible for promoting the work of the council and providing information on council policy for the media. They also have a role in finding out about what local people want out of public services and what they would like to see improved.

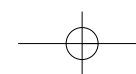
policy, research and review

Every council must undergo a Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), conducted by the Audit Commission, which shows how well they are delivering services. This assessment classifies councils in categories according to their performance, but whatever category they are in, they all have a responsibility to continuously improve services.

The research, development, monitoring and review of council policy is core to the smooth running of the organisation and the successful delivery of its services. Staff working in this area are key in ensuring that this happens.

Research officers gather, analyse and present key information, which is used both to contribute to new policies and to provide an evaluation of existing ones. Policy officers formulate policy and make recommendations to councillors and chief officers for approval. It is important that this work is done in consultation with the public, so staff run focus groups and carry out surveys to find out about local people's views.

did you know local government is the collective name for local councils/authorities?





employee profile

council:
Nottinghamshire
County Council

job title:
administration
assistant

name:
Gill

I have been working for Nottinghamshire County Council for two and a half years, and in that time have progressed up through two pay scales. Before coming to the council I was made redundant, and although I'd had good work experience in responsible positions, my confidence was low.

I saw this job advertised in the council's job opportunities bulletin. It was advertised through the New Deal scheme, which helps unemployed people back to work, and was exclusively for New Deal candidates. As I was on New Deal 50+ at the time, I decided to apply.

My previous office experience certainly helped, but the essential requirements were: good literacy and numeracy; computer skills; organisational skills; and most importantly the ability to be flexible and work well with others.

My job involves supporting a team of managers who work on labour market initiatives helping unemployed people back to work.

My role includes: monitoring the performance of the team; helping co-ordinate recruitment activities; assisting with the organisation of meetings and events; ordering goods and services for the team; interacting with managers, jobcentre staff and clients; supporting less experienced staff; and general administrative duties as required.

The work can be challenging. I have had to learn a new way of working and initially there was a lot to learn about a variety of projects and working for a number of managers, all wanting different things done for different times. However, I like my job and really enjoy being able to help people back to work, who are in a similar situation to the one I was in before I joined the council.

I've been on various internal training courses including equal opportunities, customer service and minute taking. I'm also working towards my NVQ level 2 in business administration. In future, I hope to stay with the council and continue to progress into roles with greater responsibility.

focus on

a career in
accountancy

the work

Accountants in local government are responsible for ensuring that councils make the best use of public money. This responsibility spans a range of activities: preparing budgets and accounts; monitoring spending; ensuring that correct financial records are kept; and giving advice to managers and councillors on financial matters.

Accountants work with all departments and may be involved with council tax, staff pensions, school budgets, the cost of social care provision, internal audit and many more areas of the council's work.

career development

There may be opportunities for a range of staff, such as administrative and finance assistants, accountancy assistants and accounting technicians, to study whilst working, in order to gain professional accounting qualifications and become accountants.

As an accountant, you may be able to take part in a continuing professional development programme through a professional institute, which will help you improve your skills and knowledge. Possible opportunities for promotion beyond the role of accountant may include principal accountant, director of finance and chief executive.

getting in

Many councils run specific trainee schemes in accountancy, most of which require a minimum of five GCSEs grades A-C including English and maths, plus two A-levels (or equivalents). Some of these schemes may be specifically for graduates, in which case you may also require a good degree in any discipline. You can also train as an accountant if you have three to five years' relevant work experience.

More information about careers and training in accountancy is available from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy www.cipfa.org.uk

how do you find a job in local government?

Whatever your educational background, whatever your age, whether you have little work experience or a lot, there are routes into local government for everyone.

want more local government careers information and links to local council websites?

Visit www.LGtalent.com which provides over 200 career descriptions, links to all local councils in the UK, interviews with local government employees, 'day in the life' diary entries, advice on applying for local government jobs and general information about working in local government.

looking for a job in local government?

The official recruitment website for local government, www.LGtalent.com, lists thousands of jobs every week in councils throughout the UK and is visited by 100,000 job seekers every month. A jobs-by-email facility provides visitors with instant updates whenever a suitable job is put on the site.

Comprehensive searches by region, occupational group and salary band allow access to targeted vacancy information. Candidates can view employer brochure pages and download application forms, job descriptions and further details.

are you a recent graduate?

Local government is one of the largest graduate employers in the country. Graduates are taken on by all local councils in all service areas and can often complete professional training while working.

The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) manages the national graduate development programme (ngdp), which aims to recruit high calibre graduates who will be capable of becoming senior managers in local government within 10-15 years.

The programme lasts for two years and is based around a series of core placements within a host council, supported by membership of the Graduate Leadership Academy, which includes a postgraduate qualification in local government management, skills development and mentoring. It offers graduates the opportunity to use their skills and knowledge to influence important local issues that affect everyone.

More information about the ngdp and details of how to apply can be found at www.ngdp.co.uk

The IDeA also runs the local government talent pool; an online database of graduates interested in working in local government. The talent pool offers graduates the opportunity to showcase their skills and experience to potential local council employers, who are able to search the pool and invite suitable candidates to apply for jobs within their organisations.

Register with the local government talent pool at www.LGtalent.com

local government talent:
careers



employee profile

council:
Bristol City
Council

job title:
job shop
admin
assistant

name:
Suk

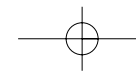
I joined Bristol City Council recently as an apprentice in the recruitment team. My job involves working in the council's job shop, where I have direct contact with the public giving help with council job vacancies and application forms and providing general administrative support for the team.

I applied for the job after seeing an advert in the local paper and felt that the Apprenticeship offered excellent prospects. I also liked the idea of working for a larger organisation.

I've gained a lot of confidence since working for the council and have learnt how to communicate effectively with my team members and the public. I've built up my administration experience and have gained a sound knowledge of how the recruitment service operates. As part of my Apprenticeship, I attend college one day each week to study for an NVQ level 2 in business administration. The Apprenticeship scheme is a great opportunity and gives young people like me a chance to gain a career in a well-respected organisation.

My line manager has been really supportive and is pleased with my progress. She's happy with my contribution to the work of the team and feels I'm fitting in well with other team members. The council is positive about recruiting young people and has been willing to give me the chance to show my potential.

In the future, I would like to move up within the council, although I'm not sure yet what my ideal job is. I'm discovering that there is such a huge range of jobs on offer within the organisation, and working in the job shop, I'll be able to learn more about the variety of jobs I could apply for later on.



local government talent:
careers

Some councils run their own graduate training programmes in different occupational areas, as well as general fast-track schemes in management. You should contact your local council HR department directly to find out whether they run this sort of programme.

A wide variety of opportunities for graduates are also available outside such training programmes to work as technicians, assistants and administrators. You can find these advertised at www.LGtalent.com

are you a student?

A strong academic background no longer guarantees graduates a job in today's competitive market. Students need to develop important skills during their time at university or college that can only be gained from work experience. Many local councils offer work placements, either during university vacations or as part of a university course.

To find out whether your local council runs a placement programme, you should contact them directly and speak to someone in the HR department.

want to find out what it's like to work in local government?

Local councils regularly offer work experience to school pupils either through their school or on an individual basis. It could be for a few weeks during term-time, if agreed with the school, or it could be during school holidays.

For example, Kate first worked with Eastleigh Borough Council on a two week work experience placement when she was at school. She then returned to the council as a clerical assistant on a work placement as part of her college course. After she finished college, she successfully applied for a junior administrative post within the council's personnel department and has been working

there full time ever since, progressing to the position of personnel assistant. Kate says, 'I really enjoy my job and my motivation has remained high, due to the good development opportunities I have received.'

To find out about possible work experience opportunities within your local council, you should contact them directly and speak to someone in the HR department.

have you recently left school or college?

Many local councils run specific training programmes for young people who have just left school or college. Often Apprenticeships are available in a wide range of occupational areas and there is an opportunity to earn money whilst continuing to learn and gain a qualification.

More information about Apprenticeships is available at www.apprenticeships.org.uk

To find out whether your local council runs any youth training programmes, you should contact them directly and speak to someone in the HR department.

Young people can also get more advice on careers and training from the Connexions service. For details of your local Connexions office check www.connexions.gov.uk

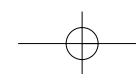
thinking of changing your career?

People no longer stay in one job for their entire working lives. Sometimes people gain experience outside local government and then move into the sector because they want to contribute to the local community. Others decide that they would like a change in direction and may want to gain training in a new career area. Or others simply want a new challenge in a different job. Local government can offer all these things.

To search for jobs in local government go to www.LGtalent.com

did you know local government spends over £70 billion a year – councils are funded by grants from central government, business rates, council tax and fees and services such as car parks, parking permits and the hire of sports facilities.

did you know there are over 11,000 town, parish and community councils in the UK?



did you know there
are over 21,000
democratically elected
local councillors in
England and Wales?

acknowledgements

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Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, Bristol City Council, Eastleigh Borough Council, Gateshead Council, Jobsgopublic, London Borough of Havering, London Borough of Lambeth, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames and Nottinghamshire County Council.