



# National Graduate Development Programme **2017**

## Candidate information brochure

Local councils need people with the leadership and management skills to shape its future, and the national graduate development programme (ngdp) for local government exists to meet this need.



# Introduction

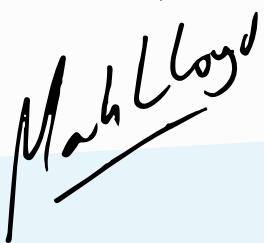
When you think of your local council, what first comes to mind: council taxes, libraries, and rubbish collection? If any of these things pop into your head, you would be right, but what you might not know is that councils do so much more.

Councils provide a huge range of services to local people and employ millions of others across the country. From making sure our children get access to a top quality education to supporting businesses to thrive in our local areas, councils are helping people every day to live happy and prosperous lives.

But it's not just the services councils provide, it's the people that work for councils who are truly making a difference. Councils are full of people who have chosen to work in local government because they want to help others and make a difference to people's lives and the environment in which they live. After many years working in local government, in a wide range of roles, I can honestly say that it is tremendously rewarding. If you have ever thought about working in local government, our national graduate development programme for local government (ngdp) is the perfect place to start.

The ngdp will give you a broad understanding of local government and give you hands on experience working for a council, helping you to develop your leadership skills for a long and rewarding career. If you want a career that literally changes people's lives, working in a council, our ngdp is the perfect answer.

Best wishes,



**Mark Lloyd**  
Chief Executive  
Local Government Association

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# What is the ngdp?

The ngdp is a two-year graduate management development programme, run by the Local Government Association (LGA).

The programme has been set up to provide local councils with the high-calibre managers that communities need by giving committed graduates the training and opportunities to make a positive impact. We provide you with experience working for a dynamic, exciting and socially responsible employer: the ngdp is your launch pad to a successful leadership career.

Our trainees are employed by a participating local council on a two-year, fixed-term contract and enjoy placements in key areas such as policy and strategy, front-line service delivery and operations. This broad experience enables trainees to form a real and detailed understanding of the many different aspects of local government and the issues relating to delivering services to local communities. Over the two years, trainees also benefit from being part of a national peer group, joining an established knowledge-sharing network and participating in an accredited learning and development programme.

The ngdp likes to recruit graduates from all different backgrounds, universities and degree disciplines; our aim is to reflect the diverse communities that we serve.

We are looking for people who have the right values and attitudes and who can demonstrate their motivation for a career in the public sector.

These are:

1. working with others
2. persuasive communication
3. planning and organisation
4. drive for results
5. analysis and problem solving
6. motivation for learning and personal resilience
7. commitment to local government and the wider community
8. leadership potential.

The ngdp is highly regarded by councils, graduates and the wider sector, ranked in the Times Top 100 Graduate Employers and Guardian UK 300. It has a wide alumni network working at senior levels across the public sector, having provided a pipeline of consistently high calibre trainees to over 150 authorities through nineteen cohorts.



# Learning and development

The learning and development programme is currently delivered through residential modules, distance learning, networking and a variety of regional events. Our trainees are expected to gain a qualification in leadership and management by the conclusion of the programme.

The overall purpose of the programme is to develop future leaders and managers within local government.

## **The objectives of the programme are:**

- to enable participants to critically evaluate the challenges facing local government
- to provide participants with high level capabilities in strategic management and leadership, grounded in a public sector context
- to provide participants with a strong understanding of key local government areas of work and management
- to enhance personal effectiveness as a leader and manager
- to increase self-awareness and awareness of others.

## **Content will include:**

- models of leadership development
- financial management training
- procurement and commissioning in local authorities
- project and people management
- community engagement
- how to work in a political context
- how to deliver results
- developing self.

## **Careers after the ngdp**

- 89 per cent of our graduates are employed in permanent jobs within one year of the ngdp
- 88 per cent of ngdp alumni are employed by a local council when they finish the programme, over half of whom in the same local authority where they were placed for the first two years after the programme
- 85 per cent percent of ngdp alumni who are currently working outside of the public sector have been moving between public and private sector jobs since they finished the programme
- over 70 per cent of the ngdp alumni who transition to a role in the private sector work in a managerial role

Although you are expected to work hard and pursue study outside of working hours, you'll find that local councils are very flexible employers and supportive of a genuine work/life balance.

- There are no standardised regional variations for salary progression; however, in the current economic climate you may find during your time on the programme that salary increases may be affected by local conditions.

# Benefits

# Participating councils

There are over 350 local councils in England and Wales and everyone is eligible to apply to be part of the ngdp. Not all local councils participate each year: we usually work with over 50 different local authorities. For a list of the councils who took part last year and those signed up for the coming year, please see our website. Candidates who are successful in the selection process will be provided with a full list of participating councils for their cohort in early April 2017.

We give you the opportunity to express your location preferences by council and by region, but we will also expect you to be flexible about where you will work depending on the supply of and demand for specific placements. We will try and take into account any special circumstances, wherever possible.

## Councils

In total there are five possible types of council in England.

**1. County councils** – cover the whole county and provide services across these areas including children's services and adult social care. Within the area covered by a county council there will be more than one district council.

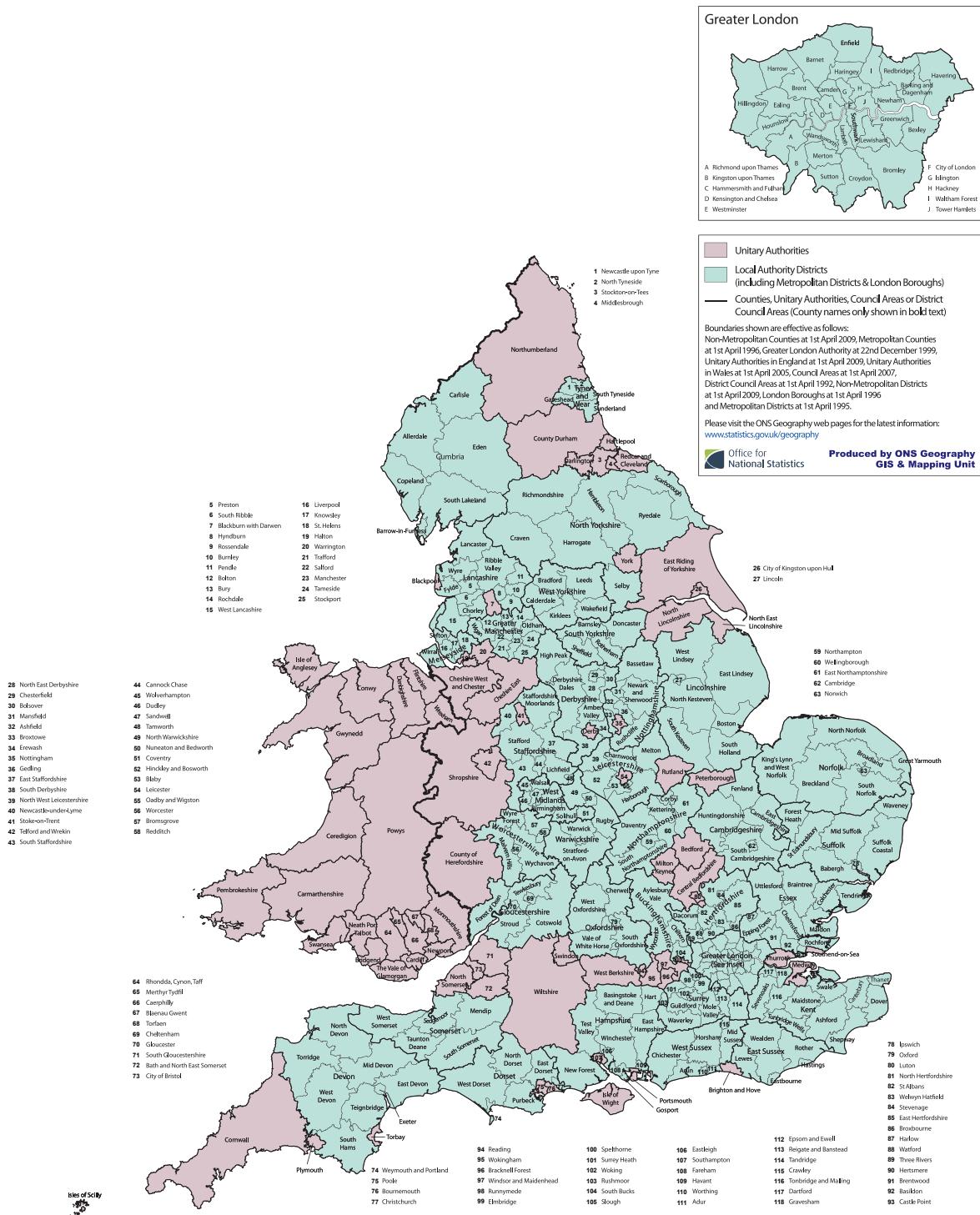
**2. District councils** – cover a smaller area, providing services such as housing, local planning, waste and leisure but not children's services or adult social care. They can be called district, borough or city councils.

**3. Unitary authorities** – there is just one level of local government responsible for all local services. Unitary authorities can be called a council (eg Medway Council), a city council (eg Nottingham City Council) or borough council (eg Reading Borough Council).

**4. London boroughs** – each of the 32 boroughs is a unitary authority.

**5. Metropolitan districts** – effectively unitary authorities, the name being a reference to a past organisational arrangement. They can be called metropolitan borough or city councils.

# Local authorities England and Wales



# ngdp stories

## Abbey City of Wolverhampton Council

I applied to the ngdp in my final year of university having always been interested in the public sector, and I learned more about the scheme at Wolverhampton through networking with an existing ngdp graduate at a public sector careers event. Wolverhampton is in its fourth year of participating in the scheme, has flexible placement opportunities and is really well supported by placement coordinators and existing graduates. It is managed by two heads of service who are ex-ndgp grads! Six months into the scheme, I completed my first placement which was governance based. This was a varied role, predominantly based in Democratic Support, and involved liaising with politicians, coordinating various committee meetings, transformational change and support with key mayoral events like Remembrance Sunday. One of my first projects was being responsible for organising a mayoral event with high profile guests from overseas, in partnership with Wolverhampton University.

### Advice for applicants

The scheme is run and managed differently at different councils, so my advice to any graduate applying to the scheme is to do some good research about how the scheme works at the councils of their choice, particularly how placements are secured.

## George Nottinghamshire County Council

Being on the ngdp has provided me with opportunity and agency, enabling me to reach my full potential and to help local residents from the most vulnerable sections of society – so far my work has focussed on children's social care and children and adolescent mental health services.

At the start of April I started working in the team responsible for commissioning child and adolescent mental health services. This has been my favourite placement so far as the topic area appeals to my altruistic sensibilities and has also been tailored to my self-identified personal development needs. After my first placement I felt I needed more experience working with partners across organisations and in this placement my work has involved working with stakeholders across public health, NHS England, clinical commissioning groups, councils and, of course, service users.

### Advice for applicants

My main piece of advice for potential applicants is to apply! The ngdp is not solely for graduates with specific degrees from certain universities – regardless of your academic discipline, if you have a passion for public service the programme is for you. Taking trainees at my authority as an example I attained a Bachelor's in International Development Studies from a former polytechnic, one of my colleagues has a Master's degree in International Relations from a university overseas and the third graduate has a PhD in Material Sciences – there is no cookie cutter applicant that the LGA looks for, have confidence in your abilities and apply.



## Toby London Borough of Brent

I have done two of my four placements so far. I started in the leader of the council's office, which gave me a really interesting strategic overview of how a local authority is run at the highest level. I also gained invaluable experience of working at a political interface, and learning about political sensitivity and awareness. Not many local government officers get this experience early in their careers so having worked directly with politicians should put me in a strong position in my future career.

In my second placement I was based in the Employment, Skills and Enterprise team, where my role focused mainly on commissioning. My favourite project so far has been to create a package of bespoke employment support for individuals with learning disabilities. I was given considerable scope and responsibility to identify what was needed, consult with residents and external providers and present a business case to senior managers to deliver a brand new service for people with learning disabilities.

### Advice for applicants

My advice to anyone applying to the ngdp is to do your research. Find out as much as you can about current trends and buzzwords in local government, and keep up-to-date with major policy changes in the news.

# How to apply

## Have you:

### obtained a 1st, 2:1 or 2:2 undergraduate degree?

- Your degree can be in any discipline.
- If your degree was not obtained in the UK, it must be the equivalent of a UK degree and meet our minimum grade.
- You are eligible to apply whether you received your degree last year, twenty years ago or if you are due to graduate in the summer of 2017. We do ask you to submit either a copy of your degree or your transcript (showing your predicated degree) when submitting your application.
- You must have obtained a 1st, 2:1 or 2:2 undergraduate degree by end of July 2017.

### got the eligibility to work in the UK?

- You must have the right to work in the UK without a certificate of sponsorship. We do not apply for certificate of sponsorship for any graduates.

### got an interest in local government and councils?

We are looking for the next generation of senior managers to work in local councils and across the public sector: you will need passion and commitment to succeed.

The application process is split into four stages:

### Stage 1

- Electronic application form via the ngdp website
- Online numerical, verbal and situational judgement tests

### Stage 2

- Video interview

### Stage 3

- A half-day, in-person assessment centre

### Stage 4

- An average of three formal interviews with councils. The exact number of interviews varies based on your availability and preferences.

@ngdp\_LGA #ngdp19  
[www.facebook.com/NGDPLGA/](http://www.facebook.com/NGDPLGA/)



# Application progression timeline

**24 October 2016  
to  
11 January 2017**

Your application to the ngdp is made up of several components. You must complete a profile including your education and employment history, then answer several questions and take verbal and numerical reasoning tests. You will also complete our situational judgement test.

All components must be completed by the closing date for your application to be considered.

**Outcome of Stage One will be announced by 26 January 2017.**

**Early February 2017**

Candidates will then complete a video interview.

**Outcome of Stage Two will be announced by 23 February 2017.**

**Throughout  
March 2017**

Every candidate who has passed the video interview stage will be invited to attend a half-day, in-person assessment centre. Using exercises designed for the ngdp, our assessment centres will give you a flavour of the ngdp experience so you and our team can decide if it's the right next step in your career.

**Outcome of Stage Three will be announced by 5 April 2017.**

**During April  
and May 2017**

Candidates who pass the assessment centre are given several opportunities to meet the councils offering places as part of the programme. Candidates request interviews at specific councils and in broader geographical regions of interest. Interviews will be arranged by the ngdp team depending on candidates' preferences and the availability of interview dates and spaces.

If you are unavailable for specific dates in April and May it is important you let the ngdp team know as soon as possible.

Councils will make their offers of employment to candidates. Based on their interview outcomes, each candidate then decides where they want to work. Once an offer has been accepted, the candidate becomes a member of Cohort 19 and their start date with the council will be arranged for autumn 2017.

**Outcome of Stage Four will be announced by 30 June 2017.**

# Frequently asked questions

## Questions for Stage 1

### **Q. Is the application process adaptable for candidates with disabilities?**

The ngdp is seeking to recruit trainees who can represent the diverse communities that councils serve and so we encourage applications from candidates with disabilities. If you have any needs or are having difficulty applying because of a disability, we will take your details and pass them onto one of the members of the graduate recruitment team.

Please contact [ngdp.support@local.gov.uk](mailto:ngdp.support@local.gov.uk) for assistance.

### **Q: Why do you use online testing?**

Our whole selection process is built to measure candidates against the ngdp's key skills and behaviours. The ngdp uses online tests to help evaluate a large number of candidates fairly and equally at the start of our assessment process. The verbal reasoning test and numerical reasoning test measure your communication, analysis and problem solving skills. We strongly encourage candidates to practice these tests in advance of applying to the ngdp.

Our situational judgement test reflects daily working life as an ngdp trainee, measuring all of our key skills and behaviours. You can prepare for this test by reviewing our key skills and behaviours.

### **Q. I require extra time with online tests due to my disability.**

We can offer candidates extra time for the online tests and assessments centres if they have documented evidence of a disability. After completing the ngdp's online application form, candidates who have a disability are strongly encouraged to send a copy of their disability report to [ngdp.support@local.gov.uk](mailto:ngdp.support@local.gov.uk)

This will be treated with strict confidence and only used to make decisions about extra time. After the need for extra time has been verified, we will work with our test providers and make the appropriate arrangements.

### **Q. I applied to the ngdp a few years ago. Can I apply again?**

The ngdp's assessment process changes every year. Although you weren't successful previously, you may have gained the skills and experience we need this year.

## Questions for Stage 2

### **Q. Why do the ngdp use video interviews?**

We introduced video interviewing in 2016 to give our team a wider picture of candidates' interest in the ngdp and passion for working in local government. Candidates' answers will be assessed against the ngdp's key skills and behaviours.

### **Q. What is the video interview?**

The ngdp will send you details of how to log into the video interview portal. You are given the opportunity to practice taking questions before starting the interview. Once you have entered the interview, you will be asked a number of questions, recording an answer after each question. You will be able to watch your answer and re-record a new answer once per question, should you wish to do so.

### **Q. How should I prepare for the video interview?**

Although this is not a formal interview, make sure you have chosen an appropriate location for you to record your responses: somewhere quiet, private and bright will reduce the number of distractions for you and for our assessors. Councils may see clips of your answers prior to in-person interviews, so keep in mind that you are making a first impression. Please review our key skills and behaviours in advance and ensure you have a good understanding of the ngdp.

### **Q. Who will be scoring my video interview?**

Trained members of the ngdp graduate team and/or trained assessors.

# Frequently asked questions

## Questions for Stage 3

### **Q. I am not available to attend any of the assessment centres dates.**

Unfortunately places at the assessment centres are distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. Due to limited space at our facilities and the requirement for group work with other candidates as part of the assessment centre, we are unable to offer alternative dates for assessment.

### **Q. What happens at the assessment centres?**

The assessment centre will usually last four hours and will consist of a written exercise, a group exercise and an individual briefing exercise. There are usually 10-20 candidates at each assessment centre so you will have the opportunity to meet other potential trainees. The ngdp team will also be on hand to answer any questions and provide information about your next steps.

### **Q. Can I claim for expenses for attending the assessment centre?**

Yes, however we will only reimburse travel expenses and there is an upper limit for all claims. You must keep all your receipts in order to claim reimbursement.

### **Q. When will I know the outcome?**

The assessment centre outcomes will be announced by 5 April 2017.

### **Q. Will I get feedback from the assessment centre?**

All candidates who attend an assessment centre will be given feedback on their performance. If you are successful and enrol on to cohort 19, this will be given by your support co-ordinator within the council. If you are unsuccessful, you can arrange telephone feedback with a member of the ngdp team.

## Question for Stage 4

### **Q. How do I know what council to choose?**

There are over 350 authorities in England and Wales but not all local councils participate each year: we usually work with between 40 and 70 different local councils. For a list of the councils who took part last year and those signed up for the coming year, please see our participating authorities page. Candidates who are successful in the selection process will be provided with a full list of participating councils for their cohort in early April 2017.

### **Q. I only want to work in one specific location (ie London).**

If you pass the assessment centre, you will be given the opportunity to rank your top three councils and top three regions of preference. In some regions and/or for specific councils, we have a higher level of demand for interview spaces than there are spaces available. While we will do our utmost to ensure that candidates have an equal opportunity to interview with councils of preference, we cannot issue guarantees. It is also the prerogative of each council to select their trainees on the basis of interview performance. If you are interest in working for a specific council or in a specific region, we recommend that you attend as many interviews as the ngdp can arrange for you within that region/area. This increases your chances of obtaining one or more job offers in or near the place you prefer.

### **Q: Can I defer if I am offered a job at the end of the assessment process but do not want to start work for another year?**

No, unfortunately we do not offer deferrals as council participation changes each year. Our selection process is also updated annually and so candidates must go through each stage to be fairly and equally assessed against other candidates.

### **Q: Do you pay relocation expenses?**

It will depend on the benefits package offered by individual authorities – some do and some do not.

### **Q. I have exams over the interview period.**

Due to the nature of the council's working pattern, it is extremely difficult to arrange interview times around each individual candidate. Please email [ngdp.support@local.gov.uk](mailto:ngdp.support@local.gov.uk) as soon as you know that final exams may clash with interviews.

If you have a question which isn't covered above, please contact:  
**[ngdp.support@local.gov.uk](mailto:ngdp.support@local.gov.uk)**







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please contact us on 020 7664 3000.  
We consider requests on an individual basis.