

DRAFT LABOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT
TRADE UNION PRINCIPLES 2025
(For adoption LGA Labour AGM 1 July 2025)

General Principles

- This agreement outlines how the Labour government, in partnership with Labour councils, and local government trade unions in England will work together to safeguard and deliver quality public services and employment.
- It outlines the principles we will follow to foster good relationships with each other. Trade unions and Labour councillors are part of the same labour movement and share the same values of equality, social justice and solidarity.
- These values will be reflected in our working relationships.
- The overarching aim is to contribute to a national renewal that serves the interests of working people.

Addressing Fiscal Challenges and Rebuilding Public Services

The Labour government acknowledges the severe fiscal inheritance and the significant challenges left by 14 years of Conservative governance, including substantial cuts to local government funding and reported in-year £22 billion "black hole" in public finances. The Labour government is committed to delivering economic stability with strong fiscal rules, rebuilding the public finances, aiming for no return to austerity measures.

- Labour councils and trade unions will work collaboratively with the Labour government to secure necessary funding and strategic investment to rebuild and enhance public services, prioritising the needs of the most vulnerable.
- This will involve a joint commitment to maximising council funds and delivering quality services, supported by the government's aim to provide multi-year funding settlements, fair funding and capacity support to councils, recognising the acute financial challenges local government faces.
- The government's "Plan for Change" aims to make real improvements in the lives of working people by tackling crumbling public services.

Promoting Good Industrial Relations

- Labour groups and councils will maintain an ongoing, open, and comradely dialogue between trade unions and the political leadership, as they do with other key stakeholders.
- Labour councils will be committed to strengthening existing consultation structures in a positive and constructive way, working with trade unions to improve these structures to reflect the changing needs of councils and the workforce.
- Labour group leaders will demonstrate leadership in fostering good relationships with trade unions and will seek to maintain continuous dialogue with trade union representatives, both formally and informally. Aligning with Labour's broader commitment to fostering a "new partnership with business and trade unions".

Exemplary Employment Practice

Local authorities should function as exemplars of good employment practice within their local areas and economies.

Labour councils will:

- Practice and promote quality employment policies and procedures for in-house and outsourced employees.
- Consult with trade unions on all employment practices and procedures.
- Strive to become Foundation Living Wage employers for direct and outsourced employees, aligning with Labour's commitment to making the minimum wage a genuine living wage that accounts for the cost of living, with the National Living Wage for those 21 and over increasing to £12.21 per hour from 1 April 2025.
- Review and minimise the use of agency staff to generate savings and provide stable, quality employment.
- Strive that exploitative zero-hours contracts are not used either in-house or for outsourced services, and where feasible, ensure travel time between visits is paid to all homecare workers employed by external providers, as part of implementing 'Labour's Plan to Make Work Pay'.
- Provide training and career development for all staff to enhance performance, pay, and job satisfaction.
- Ensure sufficient, well-trained human resource managers to respond fairly and effectively to current and future challenges.
- Implement and promote the prospective Employment Rights Act, once passed.

Local Government Pension Scheme

The LGPS is a well-managed, funded scheme which meets the needs of the majority of employees – not just the highly paid.

Labour councils are part of the employers' side involved in the LGPS and will:

- Actively promote membership of the scheme to all council employees.
- Involve the local trade unions and staff in discussion on any proposed changes to the scheme.
- Encourage external providers to seek 'admitted body' status and commission services on that basis.
- Seek to minimise investment management costs and invest ethically.

Promoting Equality

Labour councils recognise that the majority of their employees are women, many in part-time jobs, and that action needs to be taken to ensure that their workforces reflect their diverse communities and other 'protected' groups.

Labour councils will:

- Ensure that the requirements of the Equality Act and the Public Sector Equality Duty are met and reflected in fair employment practices which challenge discrimination and in workforce data collection and planning.

- Reflect the Part-Time Worker Regulations in their employment practices.
- Ensure that equal pay for work of equal value is maintained through regular equal pay audits and reviews of pay and grading structures.
- Provide equal access to career development opportunities to women and other 'protected' groups in the Equality Act.
- Apply equality law and principles when commissioning services.

These efforts align with Labour's commitment to introducing a landmark Race Equality Act, to enshrine in law the full right to equal pay for Black, Asian, and other ethnic minority people, strengthen protections against dual discrimination and root out other racial inequalities. Labour will also implement disability and ethnicity pay gap reporting for large employers (those with more than 250 staff). Labour prioritises women's equality, including strengthening rights to equal pay and protections from maternity and menopause discrimination and sexual harassment.

Promoting In-House Services

Labour councils recognise the value of in-house services and believe that they provide flexibility and quality, maximizing the use of public funding. In-house services will be preferred providers, subject to the council's duty to achieve best value. Labour councils will:

- Be committed to consulting with trade unions throughout the procurement process, particularly concerning potential employment and service quality issues.
- Regularly monitor and review outsourced services, subject them to 'challenge' and provide relevant evidence - including comparative costs - before renewing contracts.
- Include an in-house option in as many tendering exercises as possible.
- Give in-house services proven not to be delivering value for money every opportunity to make the required improvements to avoid costly tendering and outsourcing procedures.
- Ensure that outsourced contracts are based on provision of decent pay, conditions and pensions, which are regularly monitored.
- Monitor outsourced contracts to ensure payment of – at least - the National Living Wage, travel time and statutory sick pay.

Strengthening Public Education and Local Authority Involvement

The Labour government is committed to transforming the education system and raising school standards for every child by investing in state schools, expanding childcare, and modernising the curriculum. Labour councils believe that well-run, local schools that provide good education are vital components of strong communities.

Labour councils will work in partnership with the Labour government to support and strengthen the public education system, improve inclusivity and expertise in mainstream schools, and ensure local authorities have a key role in school admissions, SEND inclusion, and place planning. The government's "Plan for Change" emphasises ensuring a "best start to life for children" and equipping them with skills for the future, including through measures like free breakfast clubs in every primary school.

Further commitments include recruiting 6,500 new teachers, opening 3,000 new primary

school-based nurseries, establishing Skills England to coordinate skills development with industry and unions, reforming the Apprenticeship Levy into a flexible Growth and Skills Levy, and guaranteeing two weeks' work experience for every young person.

Planning reforms under Labour also aim to facilitate the building of new towns and social/affordable homes, which can include schools.

Strengthening Trade Union Rights and Partnership

Labour councils recognise the positive contribution that trade unions and trade union members make in our workplaces and value their constructive relationship, and their commitment to the delivery of good quality public services. The Labour government is committed to creating a partnership between business and trade unions by implementing 'Labour's Plan to Make Work Pay':

This will include:

- Strengthening the collective voice of workers through their trade unions.
- Making it easier for trade unions to gain access to workplaces, secure statutory recognition, and take industrial action in the event of a dispute.
- Aiming to reverse damaging aspects of the previous government's Trade Union Act which undermined the deduction of trade union subscriptions through payroll (DOCAS) and facility time.
- Ensuring facility time, negotiated and agreed locally, continues to play a valuable role in creating responsive local services and good industrial relations.
- Actively promoting trade union membership among employees and external service providers, and ensuring access to trade union members by recognized trade union officials.
- Continuing to develop effective industrial relations strategies with trade unions and supporting union learning agreements and quality training for representatives.