

Make a Difference, Be a Councillor



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About this guide



This is an easy read of Make a difference, be a councillor.

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-  Section 4

We have split this guide into sections to make it easier to read.



The words or phrases in **blue are ones we think need explaining.**



We have explained what **blue words or phrases mean at the end of this guide.**

About this guide



This guide aims to provide information to help you consider becoming a **councillor**.



A councillor is a member of the council who is elected by people in a local area.



This guide covers key areas such as:



- The role and what is required of councillors

About this guide



- **How to become a councillor**



- **The positive effect you can have as a councillor.**



We have made this guide with the help of disabled councillors to share their experiences.

What does a council do?



Councils are involved in three main areas:



- **Representing** the voice of the local community



- **Providing services** to meet the needs of local people



- **Making the lives of local people better**

What does a council do?



Different councils work in different ways.



The way councils work depends on what type of council they are.



In England there are several types of council:



District councils



Borough councils

What does a council do?



**Find out more about council types here:
www.local.gov.uk/about/what-local-government**

How are councils run?



Most councils are run in the same way as the government, with a **cabinet**.



A cabinet is a group of councillors who make most of the decisions about what the council does.



Some councils are run in other ways.



Find out more about how councils run at:

www.local.gov.uk/our-support/councillor-development/new-councillor-hub/introduction-1

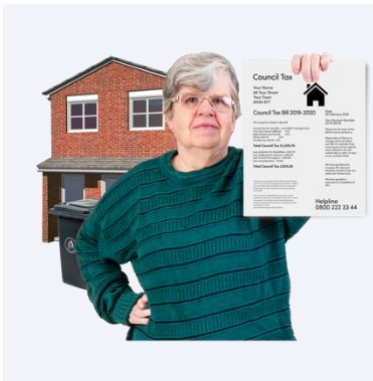
How are councils run?



Councils and local services are mostly funded by:

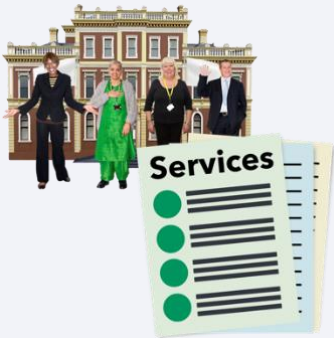


- Payments from the **government**



- Collecting **council tax** from local people

What services does the council provide?



Councils may run more than 800 services.

Some of the services include:



Education and learning



Social services and health



Housing



Bin and recycling collection



Roads and street lighting



Arts, sports and culture



Planning



Transport



Leisure and recreation services



fire and rescue services

What is a councillor?



Being a councillor is about giving back to the community.



Being a councillor is about working hard to make a difference in the lives of local people.



A councillor **represents** their local community.



Councillors raise awareness of issues in their local community.

What is a councillor?



There should be councillors that represent a lot of different people in the community.



It is important for people who want to be councillors to understand the needs, views and interests of different groups in the community.



Different groups in the community include:



Young people



Older people



Disabled people



Ethnic backgrounds

What is a councillor?



Religions



LGBTQIA+



16 out of every 100

About 16 out of every 100 councillors have a disability.



20 out of every 100

About 20 out of every 100 people in the UK have a disability.



This means there need to be more councillors with a disability.

Council elections



Councillors are elected for 4 years.



You can stand for election as a member of a **political party**, or as an **independent candidate**.



Elections happen at different times depending on where you live.



Don't worry if the next elections are a long way away.

Council elections



There is a lot to do and learn to become a councillor.



It is important to make sure you have enough time to research the resources and support available to you.



Talk about your needs with:



- **Your council**

Council elections



- Your political party (if you are a member of one)



- Any organisations that will be able to offer you support



Organisations include the Local Government Association:

www.local.gov.uk/

Why do you want to be a councillor?



There are many reasons why you might want to be a councillor:



- **You might be concerned about what is happening in your local community**



- **You want to use your skills and experiences bring about positive change**



- **You may have some great ideas of how to make the local area better**

What do councillors do?



Councillors have lots of things they do and responsibilities.

Some responsibilities are:



- **Attend formal council meetings**



- **Help make **strategies**, **policies** and plans to promote the interests of your community**



- **Respect other people's views even if you do not agree with them**

What do councillors do?



- Take part in voting



- Reviewing decisions and policies



- **Represent** the views and needs of local people



- Tell the community about information they need to know

What do councillors do?



- **Speak on behalf of the community**



- **Help lead and bring the community together**



- **Casework – helping residents with problems and ideas**



- **Represent your political party if you are a member of one**

Barriers to becoming a councillor



You cannot be stopped from becoming a councillor because you are a disabled person.



The **Equality Act** requires political parties and public authorities to make **reasonable adjustments**.



This makes sure disabled people take part in elections in the same way as non-disabled people.



Once you are elected, reasonable adjustments must also be made by councils to help you carry out your work as a councillor.

Barriers to becoming a councillor



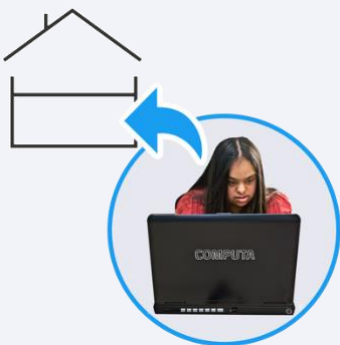
Examples of reasonable adjustments include:



- **Doing things another way, such as allowing someone with social anxiety disorder to have their own desk**



- **Making changes to the workplace, like installing a ramp for a wheelchair user or an audio-visual fire alarm for a deaf person**



- **Letting people work in a suitable area, such as on the ground floor for a wheelchair user if there are no lifts**

Barriers to becoming a councillor



Changing equipment, for instance providing a special keyboard for someone who has arthritis



You do not pay for any reasonable adjustments you need.



You may also be able to receive a grant from Access to Work to help you carry out your work.



Find out more here:
www.gov.uk/access-to-work

Who can be a councillor?



Anyone can be a councillor, but you do have to meet some **legal criteria**.



On the day of nomination, you must be:



- Aged 18 or over



- Be a UK, EU or commonwealth citizen and either

Who can be a councillor?



- be **registered to vote** on the current register with the council



- or have either worked or lived in the council area for one year



- be an owner or tenant of any land or premises in the council area for one year.



There are some reasons you cannot stand in an election to be a councillor.

Who can be a councillor?



You cannot stand to be a councillor if:



- **you work for your council, or**



- **hold a politically restricted post for another area, or**



- **you are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order, or**

Who can be a councillor?



- you have served a prison sentence (including suspended sentences) of three months or more within five years prior to the election, or



- you are a member of the police, armed forces or a judge, or



- you have been disqualified under any legislation relating to corrupt or illegal practices



For more information you can check the Electoral Commission website: www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/local-elections-england

How do I become a councillor



You will need to be officially **nominated** before the election.



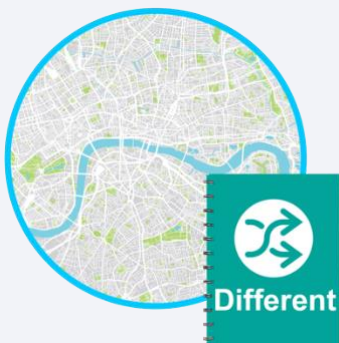
To do this, you will need to submit a nomination paper which details your name, address, and **political status**.

10 Signatures

John Smith S Franks
D W Kane Fred Lee
Amy Tray T May
G Prince P G
Steve Jones L



The nomination paper needs to be signed by 10 people who are registered to vote from your **ward**.



Rules for nomination are different in the Greater London Area.

How do I become a councillor



All the necessary documents must be submitted 19 working days before the day of the election.



There are guides of what you need to do on the Electoral Commission website:
www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent



The way to become a councillor is different between **political party candidates** and **independent candidates**.



The Local Government Association provides support for people who want to stand in council **elections**.

How do I become a councillor



Support provided by the Local Government Association includes:



Filling in the forms



Election timetables

Expenses



Expenses

Important Contacts



Important contact details



Find out more at:

www.local.gov.uk/about/our-meetings-and-leadership/political-composition/local-government-elections/local-elections

Standing as a member of a political party



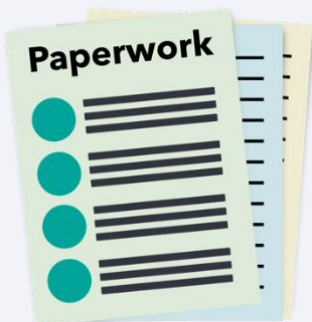
If you are standing as a member of a political party, your party will have lots of information about:



- The selection process – how political parties will pick the right candidates for election



- Campaigning to be elected



- The paperwork that needs to be submitted so your name goes on the ballot paper with the logo of your political party

Standing as a member of a political party



Get in touch with the party as soon as possible if you want to be a councillor for a political party.

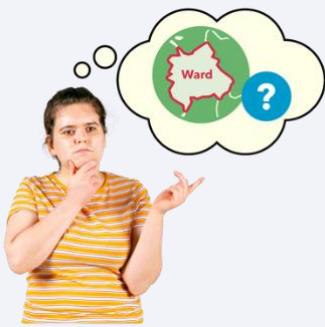


More information on standing as a member of a political party can be found on page 53.

Standing as an independent



You may decide to stand as an independent candidate.



You can decide which ward you want to stand for.



You control your own campaign, which means you will be responsible for:



- **Working out your views on local issues and services**

Standing as an independent



- Organising your **campaign strategy**



- Making and giving out leaflets



- Managing your social media



There is a range of support from the LGA's Independent Group available to you: www.local.gov.uk/lga-independent

Standing as an independent



Free resources and support are available through:



Campaign Corner:

www.local.gov.uk/lga-independent/our-work/campaign-corner



Be a Councillor:

www.local.gov.uk/lga-independent/our-work/be-councillor

Campaigning



There are lots of ways to campaign.

For example:



- **Give out leaflets**



- **Knocking on doors and talking to people**



- **Have live online sessions with people through video chat.**

Campaigning



- Run events in a place that works for you. For example, a community centre.



You can ask people you know for help.



It is very important to make sure leaflets get to people before they can vote.



Please remember some people can vote by post weeks before election day.

Vote counts



The main count for votes will take place in a public building which must be accessible.



Candidates are not required to attend the main count.



If you do attend, be prepared for it to take a long time.



The main count often lasts late into the night and can start again early the next morning.

Congratulations, you're a councillor!



it isn't unusual for new councillors to feel quite scared about the tasks at hand and what to do next.



Your council will run induction training sessions when you become a councillor.



There will be support, training and networking opportunities through:



- The political parties

Congratulations, you're a councillor!



- **The Local Government Association**



- **The Local Government Association
Independent Group**

Frequently asked questions



Disabled councillors have told us about some of the barriers they've faced when standing for election.



Will I experience negative attitudes as a disabled councillor?



Some disabled councillors have experienced negative attitudes from others.



Negative or **discriminatory** attitudes are never ok and should not be happening.

Frequently asked questions



There are a number of organisations to report this to:



- Your political party if you have one



- The council



- The police

Frequently asked questions



Equality and
Human Rights
Commission

- **The Equality and Human Rights Commission**



Will campaigning for election and working at the council be accessible?



The Equality Act means that reasonable adjustments will be made for you.



Your council should be accessible and make the equipment you need available.

Frequently asked questions



You may also be able to receive a grant from Access to Work to help you do out your work. Find out more here: www.gov.uk/access-to-work



How much time will I need to spend on being a councillor?



On average councillors spend 22 hours a week on council business.



Council business can be done around other things in your life.

For example, if you have a job.

Frequently asked questions



Being a good councillor takes commitment and hard work.



There are lots of papers to read and consider so you can vote for or against a **proposal.**



Being a councillor will take up a lot of your time.



It is important to discuss this with family and friends and make sure you and they fully understand what you are taking on.

Frequently asked questions



Will there be support for me to campaign and do the job once elected?



If you are standing as a member of a party, you should discuss what support you might need with them.



There is a range of support for independent candidates from the LGA's Independent Group available at: www.local.gov.uk/lga-independent



Check with your council and the Local Government Association to see if grants are available for disabled candidates.

Frequently asked questions



Will I be paid for becoming a councillor?



Councillors do get payment called an allowance.



Councillors who have additional roles, like being a member of the cabinet, get paid more because of the extra responsibility.



This is called a Special Responsibility Allowance.

Frequently asked questions

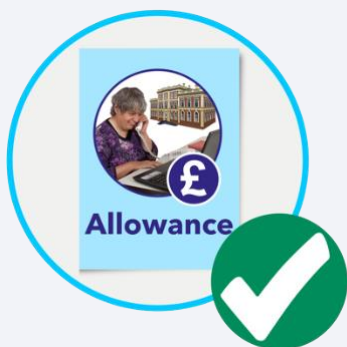
Expenses



Councillors also get **expenses** paid while doing council business on things like travel.



Will being a councillor affect my benefits and taxes?



The allowance as a councillor will count as income.



This will affect **tax** and means-tested benefits.

Frequently asked questions



Examples of means-tested benefits:



Universal Credit



Employment Support Allowance



Benefits that are not means tested will not be affected by your allowance as a councillor.

Examples include:



Personal Independence Payments



Disability Living Allowance

Frequently asked questions



Any grants you get for being a councillor are not counted as income and will not affect tax or benefits.



Use a benefits calculator to help you work out how a councillor's allowances will affect your means tested benefits:

www.entitledto.co.uk/

Further information



To learn more about becoming a councillor, you can contact us at: becouncillor@local.gov.uk



You can also contact the Local Government Association's political offices:



LGA Conservative Group

lgaconservatives@local.gov.uk
020 7664 3264



LGA Independent Group

independent.groupLGA@local.gov.uk
020 7664 3206

Further information



LGA Labour Group

martin.angus@local.gov.uk

020 7664 3134



LGA Liberal Democrat Group

terry.stacy@local.gov.uk 020 7664 3235

rob.banks@local.gov.uk 020 7664 3204

skype: lgalibdems



There is a wide range of support relating to life as a councillor such as frequently asked questions and resources on the following websites:



Be a Councillor resource:

www.beacouncillor.org.uk

Further information



The Electoral Commission

www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent



The Local Government Association

www.local.gov.uk



All LGA resources are accessible and can be produced in any alternative format requested.



You may need to request alternative formations for resources other organisations have made.

Blue word glossary



Cabinet - A group of councillors who make decisions about what a council does.



Campaign strategy - A plan for how you will carry out your campaign to become a councillor.



Candidate - A person who is running to become a councillor in an election.



Council tax - A payment that households make to councils.



Councillor - A person who is elected to represent their local area in a council.

Blue word glossary



Discriminatory attitude - treating people differently by making assumptions about a person or group of people based on their differences.



Election - When people vote to decide who they would like to represent them in government.



Equality act - A law that protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in society.



Equality and Human Rights Commission - An organisation that protects people against discrimination.



Ethnic background - A group of people who share a common race, religion, language, or other characteristic.

Blue word glossary

Expenses



Expenses - An amount of money that you spend for business, which can be returned to you by an organisation.



Government - A group of people who make decisions about a country, or a local area, and represent the views of the population.



Independent candidate - A person who is running to become a councillor that is not part of a large political party.



Legal criteria - A set of rules or requirements that you must meet.



LGBTQIA+ - A shortened version of the term Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Asexual.

Blue word glossary



Nominated - When a person is put forward to run in an election.



Policy - A way of doing things, or a set of guidelines, to help with decision making.



Political party - Whether you are a member of a political party or independent.



Proposal - A plan or suggestion, especially a formal or written one, put forward for consideration by others.



Reasonable adjustment - Changes that are made to remove or reduce disadvantage for a disabled person and make things more accessible.

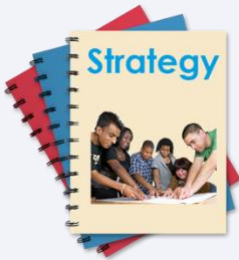
Blue word glossary



Registered to vote - Whether you are on the electoral role in your local area and can vote in an election.



Represent - To speak on behalf of a person, or a group of people.



Strategy - A plan of action to achieve a long-term aim.



Tax - A payment by a person to their council or government which is used to fund public services.



Ward - A division of a city or borough which is represented by a councillor.

Local Government Association details:

Local Government Association

18 Smith Square
London SW1P 3HZ

Telephone: 020 7664 3000

Email: info@local.gov.uk

Website: www.local.gov.uk

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

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