



Working at a local authority

What is a Local Authority?

In England, there are more than one million people who work in local government across a range of different types of authorities (including local councils). These local authorities provide more than 800 different services to local communities. Each council often does very similar things, but we each do them slightly differently to reflect our specific local needs.

Here at the London Borough of Hounslow, we are a local council, which is the most common type of local authority.

We are responsible for a wide range of vital services that are delivered to the local community, following general policies of how this should happen. These policies are decided upon by local people, who have been elected as local representatives. These people are called councillors and act as the voice of the local community.

The range of services provided by any council, including Hounslow, is enormous! The most well known ones are:

- housing
- the running of some schools
- looking after parks
- providing street lighting
- waste and recycling collections
- providing social care to the most vulnerable people in the local area
- deciding on local planning applications
- making sure cafes, restaurants and takeaways are safe to eat in and from

This is just the tip of the iceberg. We also look after many other things like:

- looking after historic buildings
- pest control

There are literally hundreds of different services we provide to the public. The list is so large that most people are surprised when they hear what we do, including other people who work for the council itself!

You can read more about Local Government on the Local Government Association website [here](#) and on our public website [here](#).

What is a Councillor?

Councillors are local people, who have been elected as local representatives and are the voice of the local community.

Councillors work with local people and partners, such as local businesses and other organisations, to agree and deliver on local priorities. They work out what needs to happen locally, set policies to do this and then make decisions addressing practical local needs which are part of these policies.

There are elections every four years in all London councils. This process is what makes local councils different to most other organisations. What we do is genuinely decided upon by our “customers” (the residents of Hounslow), who via their elected councillors are effectively the “board of directors”. This is called local democracy.

What is an Officer?

Local councils are made up of councillors and officers. You are a council officer!

Our role is to carry out the decisions that councillors have made.

We are usually permanent council staff and we deliver the actual services to local residents on a daily basis.

In our professional role as officers we cannot act politically – like the Civil Service in Whitehall, we are impartial and we must carry out the decisions made by our democratically elected members – whether or not we personally agree with them.

Find out more...

You can find out more about the council on our public website, [here](#).

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