

Your guide to local authorities

What is a local authority?

Local authorities, which are often called local councils, are local government bodies that are responsible for providing a range of public services to communities in a particular area. The type of services they provide include education, social services, rubbish collection, housing, leisure facilities, planning applications and many more.

Different local authorities are responsible for different services. In some parts of the UK, all services are provided by a single tier authority (often called a unitary authority), whereas in other areas services may be split between two or three different tiers (such as county, district and parish or community level authorities).

How do I find out who my local authority is?

The government's website has a handy '[Find your local council](#)' feature, which allows you to enter your postcode to find your local authority/authorities.

How do I contact my local authority?

Your local authority's website will have a 'contact us' link on its homepage. This is usually at the very top of the page or right at the end, so you may need to scroll down to the bottom of the page to find the details. You can contact your local authority by phoning or emailing the switchboard who can then direct you to the most relevant person or team.

If you have difficulty in speaking to someone at the local authority in person, another route is to get in touch with your local councillor instead.

Local authority councils are made up of members, also known as councillors, who are elected by the local community. They represent different electoral areas called divisions or wards. Find out which councillors represent the area in which you live and contact them with your query – they should be able to help or point you in the right direction.

A list of councillors will be available on your local authority's website, along with their contact details. On the homepage of the website, look for a section called 'about my council', 'my councillors', 'councillors and committees' or similar. You could also look for 'councillors' in the A to Z of services, or use the search box function if you can't easily find the details.

Once you've found the list of councillors, look for a 'your councillors by ward' option to quickly see which councillors represent the area you live in, or search 'find your councillor' using your postcode if this option is available.

You can also find your local councillors and email them directly on the [Write To Them website](#).

Certain councillors will be responsible for specific portfolios (areas of the council's work) – for example, someone may be the portfolio holder for the environment and/or climate – so they will be a useful person to get in touch with. Ask your local ward councillor who the portfolio holders are or contact the local authority's customer services team to find out.

Local authorities have committees made up of a small number of councillors who scrutinise local authority decisions on a specific topic – contact your local authority to see if it has an environment and/or climate committee. The committee will likely have a specific email address, or you can contact the chair directly.



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