

# On the job



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## Graduate trainees are helping Luton Council realise its potential – and it's not too late for other councils to take advantage of the LGA's national graduate development programme

**A**n organisation is only as good as its people. It may seem obvious, but it's a principle that cannot be taken for granted. It's also something for which we in local government must plan if we are to best meet the needs of the communities we serve.

For Luton Council, it's all about securing the best talent to deliver the Luton Investment Framework – our ambitious, but achievable, plan to attract £1.5 billion of inward investment over 20 years and improve the life chances of local people.

We recruited our first national graduate development programme (ngdp) trainees in October 2016, and it quickly became clear the benefits of this scheme flowed both ways. Ask any member of staff who has worked with them and they will agree that our talented national management trainees are already making an impact across the authority.

Securing such high-quality trainees provides an obvious benefit to the council, proving that our offer of genuine development is attractive and spreading the word to other young people.

When they started, our recruits were a little surprised that they would have direct access to the chief executive and myself. But we are keen to give them real responsibility. We make sure they are making a difference – that's what they came into the public sector to do.

We also want to be challenged by our recruits, and have plans to involve them in a Reverse Coaching Scheme. There are gaps in the knowledge of staff of all ages, throughout all organisations. This scheme is about thinking, 'we have a need, who could fill it?'; regardless of age or position within the authority.

*"We want to be challenged by our recruits"*

These are remarkable people, and we are helping them to realise their own potential and the potential of our authority.

Two of our trainees have started blogs, in which they share their Luton experience with their peers. These are genuine and unadulterated opinions from people who are experiencing our authority first-hand. This is fantastic for our employees, but also for the wider image of the council.

The ngdp's aspiration is to grow the next generation of local government directors and chief executives. We are proud to say Luton has played its part in realising this goal – and received plenty in return.

## The national graduate development programme

One of the keys to providing strong public services that improve the lives of our residents is attracting and developing the right people to lead our council teams and organisations.

Over the past 20 years, the LGA has been bringing graduate talent into the sector through its national graduate development programme (ngdp). The programme provides local government with managers and leaders who are ambitious, passionate and committed to improving public services in the best interests of our communities.

The ngdp is highly regarded by councils and graduates, and is ranked in *The Times* Top 100 Graduate Employers and *Guardian* UK 300.

It promotes the benefits of a successful and rewarding career in local government, and has provided consistently high-calibre graduate trainees to more than 160 authorities, through 19 previous cohorts.

This year, the scheme has attracted more applications than ever before, with more than 2,700 graduates applying for trainee positions in local authorities across the country.

There is still time to register as a host authority and to realise the benefits of this national, but flexible, programme within your own council.

Please visit [www.local.gov.uk/national-graduate-development-programme/ngdp-information-for-councils](http://www.local.gov.uk/national-graduate-development-programme/ngdp-information-for-councils) for more information, or email the ngdp team at [ngdp@local.gov.uk](mailto:ngdp@local.gov.uk). The deadline for applications is 30 March.

