

LABOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT TRADE UNION PRINCIPLES 2020

1. General Principles

This agreement outlines how Labour councils and the 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.

2. Blame for the Cuts

Labour is an anti-austerity party. We believe that austerity is a political choice not an economic necessity.

Local government has borne the brunt of the Conservative government's cuts since 2010. On average, councils have lost 60% of their government funding. This is having a massive and detrimental impact on local public services and the workforce. Labour councils will do all they can to shield the most vulnerable from the impact of the cuts, while making clear to all residents that the cuts to local services have been caused by the Conservative government's austerity agenda.

Labour councils and trade unions will work together to explore ways of generating income from in-house services and maximizing council funds before making cuts. We will unite in solidarity to campaign against Conservative cuts and highlight and secure the funding needed.

3. Promoting Good Industrial Relations

Labour groups and councils will have an ongoing open and comradely dialogue between the unions and the political leadership, as they have with other key stakeholders.

Labour councils will be committed to working through existing consultation structures such as Corporate Joint Committees in a positive and constructive way. Councils will work with the trade unions to improve those structures where necessary, 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 a dialogue and ongoing discussion with trade union representatives, both on a formal and informal basis.

4. 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
- Review and minimise the use of agency staff, to generate savings and provide stable, quality employment
- Ensure that 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.
- 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.

5. 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 minimize investment management costs and invest ethically.

6. Promoting equality

Labour councils recognize 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.

7. Promoting In-House Services

Labour councils recognize 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.

8. Opposing forced academisation of schools and free schools

Labour councils believe that well run, local schools that provide good education should not be forced to become academies and also oppose diverting public money into free schools.

The Government's agenda is a waste of money, undemocratic and bad for education. Labour Councils oppose the government's forced academisation and free school agenda and will actively campaign against these changes.

9. Opposing the Trade Union Act

Labour councils recognise the positive contribution that trade unions and trade union members make in our workplaces. We value the constructive relationship that we have with our trade unions and we recognise their commitment - and the commitment of their members - to the delivery of good quality public services.

Labour councils are opposed to the attacks on deduction of trade union subscriptions through our payroll (DOCAS) and facility time which were enshrined by the government's Trade Union Act. Labour councils will actively and publicly oppose any further undermining of trade unions. Labour councils oppose these attacks on local democracy and on our right to manage our own industrial relations. Facility time should not be determined or controlled by the Government. Labour councils believe that facility time, negotiated and agreed by us and our trade unions to suit our own specific needs, has a valuable role to play in the creation of good quality and responsive local services and good industrial relations.

Labour councils believe that DOCAS arrangements are best agreed locally. We see this as an important part of our positive industrial relations. It is a cheap and easy-to-administer system that supports our employees. This system is an administrative matter for local councils and should not be interfered with by the UK government. Labour councils will:

- Actively promote trade union membership among our employees and external service providers
- Ensure access to trade union members by recognized trade union officials among in-house and outsourced employers
- Seek to continue and develop our own effective industrial relations strategies with the trade unions
- Do all we can to maintain our autonomy with regard to facility time and the continuing use of check-off
- Aim to reach formal agreements with the trade unions on all aspects of the Trade Union Act, including facility time and check off
- Promote union learning agreements and quality training for representatives