

Employee Benefits





Employees have access to a wide range of benefits at Ards and North Down Borough Council

In addition to a competitive salary, the Council supports all staff in their career aspirations through learning and development opportunities. Other key benefits include:

- 35 days of annual leave (including bank/public holidays), rising to 38 days after 5 years of service, and 41 days after 10 years of service.
- Northern Ireland Local Government Pension Scheme (Council contributes 19% of salary).
- Health benefits: Westfield Healthcare Scheme; Leisure Centre Membership; Cycle to Work Scheme.
- Flexi scheme and Time Off in Lieu (TOIL) for relevant suitable posts.
- Home-working and hybrid working options for relevant suitable posts.
- Plus much more...

More information about these benefits, and many others, are highlighted in the following pages.



Salary

Ards and North Down Borough Council pay scales are those recommended by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC), except where otherwise notified.

NJC pay scales are agreed nationally for Local Government Services by the employer and trade union sides of the National Joint Council.

For employees appointed on a salary scale, increments are normally granted on 1 April each year until the maximum of the scale is reached. However, persons appointed between 1 October and 31 March in any year will be entitled to an increment after 6 months and then subsequently granted on 1 April each year until the maximum of the scale is reached.

Pension Scheme

Employees are automatically enrolled into the Local Government Pension Scheme (NILGOSC) provided they meet the criteria. The employer contributions Council make are very generous at 19% and as an employee you will pay a rate between 5.5% and 8.5%, depending on your salary.

There are options to contribute more to boost your pension and the Scheme also provides protection for your family in the event of your death.

For further information visit nilgosc.org.uk

Leave Entitlement

The Council offer generous leave entitlement.

On appointment employees automatically receive 23 days annual leave per holiday year (1 April – 31 March) plus 12 Public Holidays.

Leave is calculated in hours and on a pro-rata basis where applicable. Entitlement increases with service as follows:

| | Annual leave | Public Holidays | Total days |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| Commencement | 23 | 12 | 35 |
| Five years of Service | 26 | 12 | 38 |
| Ten years of Service | 29 | 12 | 41 |



Flexi scheme

ANDBC operates a flexible working hours scheme (flexitime). Staff eligible for the Flexi scheme, must be in attendance during core hours but have flexibility, subject to the needs of the service, on arrival, departure and lunch times. For example, employees on the scheme could have flexibility to start work between 8am-10am and finish work between 3.30pm-6pm, subject to Line Manager approval.

Up to 16 hours off per monthly flexi period may be granted if extra hours are worked (contractual hours over the flexi period).

Time Off in Lieu

Time off in Lieu (TOIL) is accrued when an eligible employee works at least an additional 15 minutes (before 8am or after 6pm for those on Flexi) or at weekends and either cannot claim overtime payment for those hours or by mutual agreement, wishes to have time off in lieu of payment.

Home working and hybrid working options

Ards and North Down Borough Council values the retention of skilled and experienced employees. The Council recognises that agile working can increase staff retention and improve staff morale and can reduce absenteeism and allows employees to adapt to service needs and to improve their work-life balance. The Council will endeavour where possible to facilitate agile working where it is consistent with service delivery and where employees meet set criteria.

Part time and job share working options

The Council will endeavour where possible to facilitate flexibility where consistent with service delivery and where employees meet set criteria. A Flexible Working Arrangements Policy is in place which outlines the process involved if an employee wishes to apply to work on a part time or job share basis. There are also opportunities for employees in the pension scheme, to apply for Flexible Retirement, meaning they can access their pension but continue working on a reduced hours basis for a period before retiring fully.



The Council recognises the importance of good health and wellbeing and have a range of mechanisms in place to support staff in this regard.

Leisure Centre Membership

To promote the health and wellbeing of employees, Ards and North Down Borough Council provides membership of the gym, pool and fitness classes at Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex in Newtownards [ABMWLC], Comber Leisure Centre and Portaferry Sports Centre. Corporate membership is offered to permanent employees of the Council and employees on long-term, fixed or temporary contracts of more than 12 weeks.

Westfield Healthcare Scheme

Council provide Level 1 Westfield Healthcare cover to permanent employees and temporary employees with contracts of 12 weeks or more. The cover provides a range of valuable cash benefits and services. Employees receive money back, up to set limits, towards the cost of essential healthcare including new glasses or contact lenses, dental treatment, physiotherapy, chiropody and diagnostic consultations.

Access for employees and their resident family to a 24hr Freephone Counselling and Advice Line is included and up to 6 face-to-face counselling sessions (including Cognitive Behavioural Therapy).

The service provides confidential guidance on medical, legal or domestic issues from experienced counsellors, lawyers and medical advisors. From stress, bereavement or relationship advice to health and money worries, you'll be able to talk to a qualified counsellor any time day or night.

Occupational Health

The Council utilise an Occupational Health provider who carries out referrals on request from the Human Resources service. Employees may be referred to Occupational Health for pre-employment screening, to identify any reasonable adjustments and support for declared health conditions and to assess if an employee is fit for work. In addition, employees may be offered an Occupational Health referral for advice and support.



Mental Health Charter

The Council signed up to the Equality Commission's Mental Health Charter in 2019. This Charter sets out 5 commitments to promote and integrate mental health initiatives throughout the organisation. The main aim of the Charter is to encourage a culture towards everyone in the organisation having a responsibility to create an environment that promotes well-being and to look after their own mental health. The aim is to remove the stigma of mental health so that people can come forward without thinking it may be detrimental to their employment opportunities.

Employee Health and Wellbeing Support

The Council prioritises employee wellbeing and has trained and qualified Mental Health First Aiders who provide confidential support and signposting to any staff member struggling for whatever reason. The Here2Help app is actively promoted and accessible on all Council phones and employees are supported and encouraged to look after their mental health through adopting the Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing message and partaking in the various activities delivered by the Employee Health and Wellbeing Group.

The Employee Health and Wellbeing Group comprises of representatives of all departments and delivers a wide range of activities for all staff to enjoy. Based on the principles of Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing, there are physical events and taster sessions (step challenge, five-a-side football, boxercise, watersport, etc), craft activities (silver jewellery making, pottery, mosaic, etc), walking groups, stress management and relaxation classes (yoga, mindfulness, etc) and lots more. Annual health checks and flu vaccines are also offered free of charge.

Stay Well, our dedicated health and wellbeing website, contains details of all events, activities and much more information on health-related matters with links to reliable partner organisations for extra support.

Regular updates and key health messages are also provided in the staff newsletter.

Occupational Sick Pay Scheme

The Council provides a generous occupational sick pay scheme for those employees who are unfortunately unable to attend work due to sickness.



Ards and North Down Borough Council aims to create a well-managed working environment that supports employees and their families to balance family and work. The Council provides all statutory entitlements as a minimum but also enhances a number of entitlements by providing the following additional benefits:

Enhanced Maternity Pay

In addition to statutory entitlements, employees who meet eligibility criteria will be entitled to enhanced maternity pay for 12 weeks.

Enhanced Paternity Pay

In addition to statutory entitlements, employees who meet eligibility criteria will be entitled to enhanced paternity pay for the first week (paid at normal pay).

Enhanced Adoption Pay

In addition to statutory entitlements employees who meet eligibility criteria will be entitled to enhanced adoption pay for 12 weeks.

Marriage/Civil Partnership Leave and Pay

Marriage/Civil Partnership leave with pay for three days will be granted to an employee on the occasion of their marriage or civil partnership ceremony.

Other Family Friendly arrangements

Shared Parental Leave and Pay, Unpaid Parental Leave and Unpaid time off to deal with domestic emergencies.



Learning and Development Opportunities

Every day is a learning day! Our annual Training Plan includes both essential and employee requested events. We invest over £300,000 each year!

Part-Time Study Options

We provide a dedicated budget to support our employees to study further, giving time off work to attend college if necessary. Our Learning, Training and Development policy sets out the criteria. Funding availability is advertised in our employee ezine, News and Info.

Mentoring Scheme

Our Mentoring to Inspire Scheme is rolled out annually and offers an accredited bank of mentors who empower employees to progress in their career to the next level.

Coaching with Integrity Programme

Each year we train between 10 and 12 accredited internal coaches, helping us foster a coaching culture and community.

Pride in Performance

The Pride in Performance Conversation is a mutually beneficial one-to-one discussion that an employee has with their line manager. It results in joint agreement on enhancing performance and identifies learning and development needs.

Recognition and Long Service Awards

We actively recognise our employees through our employee ezine, highlighting the many colleagues who go the extra mile. Our Christmas Celebration directorate events recognise individual and team achievements, providing an opportunity for time out and to say thank you. The annual Long Service and Graduation Awards recognise those who have reached the admirable milestone of 25 years' service, as well as those who have attained a part-time study qualification.

Career Breaks

Many employees have availed of a career break of up to two years under one of the following criteria:

- to care for children/dependents
- to care for elderly or sick relatives
- to undertake full time study
- to undertake voluntary work
- to stay overseas
- to start a business and become self-employed.



Cycle to Work Scheme

Cycle2Work is a government initiative which offers the most cost-effective way to get new cycling equipment. Ards and North Down Borough Council allow you to purchase a bike/equipment through their scheme, meaning you do not have to pay tax or national insurance on these products – saving you up to 43.25%! This reduced cost is then simply deducted out of your payslip over 12 or 18 months. The scheme is normally opened twice per year.

Westfield Rewards Discount Scheme

Employees in the Westfield Healthcare scheme have access to the Westfield Rewards exclusive discount site, providing savings from leading retailers and big brands like M&S, Sainsburys, Boots and B&Q. Save £100s per year with money off vouchers, reloadable discount cards or receive cashback.



Working for Ards and North Down Borough Council

Our Vision

Ards and North Down is a vibrant, connected, healthy, safe and prosperous place to be.

Our Values

We uphold the following values: Progression | Respect | Integrity | Delivery | Excellence

Investor in People

Ards and North Down Borough Council were awarded the We Invest in People Silver Accreditation in 2020.

As an Investor in People, we invite you to grow your career with us.