

## HELP WITH COUNCIL TAX

### 1. What is council tax?

Council tax is a charge made by your local authority to cover services which they provide for you. The amount of council tax that you must pay varies from authority to authority but all assessments are based on the property band that applies to your home.

Each dwelling in Great Britain is given a valuation and then placed on a valuation list in one of eight broad valuation bands, starting with the lowest, band A to the highest, band H (A to I in Wales). The band that applies to your dwelling will be written on your council tax bill.

Some properties are exempt from the council tax; see Paragraph 2 below.

There are three types of help you can get with your council tax bill:

- the Council Tax Discount scheme (see Paragraph 3);
- the Disability Reduction scheme (see Paragraph 4); *and*
- the Council Tax Reduction schemes (see Paragraph 5).

You can get help through all three schemes at the same time if you satisfy the conditions for each of them.

### 2. Exemptions from council tax

Your property may be exempt from council tax if:

- it is empty because you now permanently live in a care home or hospital
- your home is occupied only by students
- your home has been left empty because you are a student
- everyone in your home has a severe mental impairment
- your home has been left empty because you are providing care

For more information about exempt properties contact DIAL on 01736 759500.

### 3. The Council Tax Discount scheme

You can get a discount of 25% off your bill if you are the only person living in your home or if all the other occupiers are '*disregarded*' for council tax purposes. You can get a 50% discount off your bill if you and all the other occupiers are disregarded. Those who are disregarded include:

- people who are considered to be '*severely mentally impaired*';
- carers;
- people in a hospital, a care home, or certain kinds of hostel;
- anyone whose 'sole or main residence' is elsewhere; *and*

- young people, students, student nurses, youth trainees, apprentices, and certain other groups.

For a full list contact us at DIAL or Cornwall Council. Your council may automatically grant a discount, but you can also apply for one.

## **Second homes**

Local authorities have the power to reduce the discount offered on furnished second homes.

Local authorities also have the power to reduce or remove completely the discount offered on long-term empty properties that are substantially unfurnished.

## **4. The Disability Reduction scheme**

You can get a reduction on your bill if you or someone in your home is '*substantially and permanently disabled*' and one of the following applies. You (or they):

- have a room (other than a bathroom, kitchen or toilet) which is used to meet your needs e.g. for the purposes of dialysis, treatment or for the storage of equipment;
- have a second bathroom or kitchen used to meet your needs; *or*
- have enough space in your home to use a wheelchair indoors.

If any of these apply, the bill for your dwelling is reduced to the next lowest band. If you are already in a Band A property, you will have your bill reduced by one sixth.

Disability reductions are available in all types of dwellings, including care homes and hostels.

Contact your local authority to apply for a disability reduction. There is no time limit for backdating this reduction.

## **5. The Council Tax Reduction schemes**

### **England and Wales**

Your local authority is required to have a Council Tax Reduction scheme in place. Each authority in England has a different scheme. Contact your local council or an adviser on 01736 759500 for more information.

There is an online calculator to work out the local support in your area at [www.counciltaxsupport.com](http://www.counciltaxsupport.com). Contact your local authority/council to apply for a council tax reduction.

### **Discretionary payments**

You may be able to get temporary discretionary payments if your local authority thinks you need additional help with your council tax. Contact your local authority for more information.

## **6. Students and council tax**

If you are a full time student, you do not normally have to pay council tax. If you have a non-student partner, although you are not liable to pay council tax, your partner is. He or she may be able to get help from one of the three schemes detailed above.

If you live in a property which is wholly occupied by students (including students temporarily absent from their course), the property is exempt from council tax. You also do not have to pay council tax if you live in a student hall of residence.

If you share a property with non-students, the non-students will be liable to pay council tax but you will not. For those non-students who do have to pay, you are disregarded for council tax discount purposes (see Paragraph 3 above).

### **Disability Rights UK Student Helpline**

For further information on the above and the support that is available for disabled students, please contact the [Disabled Students Helpline](#):

Tel: 0330 995 0414  
(11am-1pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays)

Email: [students@disabilityrightsuk.org](mailto:students@disabilityrightsuk.org)

The helpline provides free information and advice to disabled students in England, their parents, carers and key advisers about opportunities in post-16 education and training. This includes further and higher education and apprenticeships. We also provide general information on the Equality Act as it applies to education and give advice on UK students' entitlement to welfare benefits.

## **7. Appeals**

You can appeal against decisions on:

- council tax exemptions;
- council tax liability to pay;
- where you are resident;
- whether a council tax discount applies;
- whether a disability reduction applies;
- council tax reduction awards; and
- discretionary payment award decisions.

You should first go to the local authority. There is no time limit for lodging the appeal, but you should put your appeal in writing. If it is refused, you can appeal to the:

- Valuation Tribunal for England <https://www.valuationtribunal.gov.uk/about-us/vte/> within two months of receiving the decision, or within four months of your original appeal if your local authority has not responded.

If you need any further support or information please contact DIAL on 01736 759500 or you can refer directly to the link below:

[www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org)

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