

Council Tax

Ways to reduce your bill

Advice and support for older age

COUNCIL TAX SAVINGS

£

Thank you

We would like to thank everyone who shared their experiences for this guide and those who reviewed it.

Our publications

In this guide you'll find references to our other free publications. To order them, call **0800 319 6789** or visit **independentage.org/publications**.

If you would like this information in a different format (such as large print or audio CD), call us on **0800 319 6789**.

While some information may apply across the UK, generally our guides cover England.

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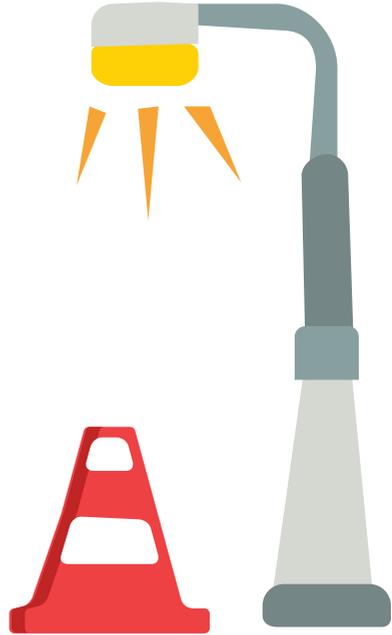
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1. How does Council Tax work?

Council Tax pays for local government services, such as police and fire services, rubbish collection, libraries, road repairs and street lighting. How much you pay depends on the area you live in and the value of your home.

Council Tax applies whether you're renting or a homeowner.

Homes are divided into eight tax bands based on their market value. You might qualify for discounts, exemptions, or help to pay, depending on your situation. This guide looks at how you might be able to reduce your bill.



2. Council Tax exemptions

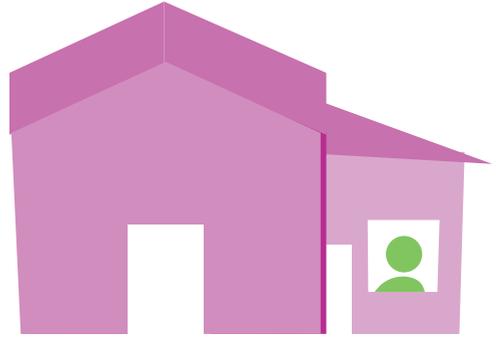
Sometimes, you might not need to pay Council Tax at all.

Homes are sometimes exempt from Council Tax, either indefinitely or for a specific period. For example, a home might be exempt if:

- it's unoccupied because the person who lived there has moved because they need to be cared for – eg they've moved to a care home or are living with a relative
- it's unoccupied because the person who lived there has moved to care for someone else
- everyone living in a home has been medically certified as 'severely mentally impaired'. For example, this might be the case if they have dementia, Parkinson's or a serious mental health condition. They'd also need to be claiming certain disability benefits to qualify, eg Attendance Allowance



- there's a self-contained annexe and the person living there is a dependant relative of the person who owns the main property – a dependant relative



is someone 65 or over, severely mentally impaired, or substantially and permanently disabled. Only the annexe would be exempt from Council Tax, not the main property.

Your council decides whether a home is exempt and the rules can be complicated. If you think your home might be exempt, call us on **0800 319 6789** to arrange to speak to an adviser, or find advice locally, for example at Citizens Advice (**03444 111 444, citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/contact-us/search-for-your-local-citizens-advice/**). You can also call us for advice if you're unhappy with your council's decision.

3. Council Tax Support

Council Tax Support helps people with a low income to pay their Council Tax. Each council sets its own rules, so schemes vary. You may qualify if you have no income or a low income. If you (and your partner) have savings over £16,000, you won't qualify unless you're receiving Guarantee Pension Credit.

Council Tax Support is means-tested – the council will look at how high your income and capital (eg savings) are to work out whether you qualify. If you do, the reduction you get will depend on:

- your income and capital
- whether you're over State Pension age
- how the scheme works in your area
- your circumstances (eg who else you live with).



Ask your local council for details of their scheme ([gov.uk/apply-council-tax-reduction](https://www.gov.uk/apply-council-tax-reduction)). You could also try our online benefits calculator ([independentage.org/benefit-calculator](https://www.independentage.org/benefit-calculator)) or call us on **0800 319 6789** to arrange a benefits check.

You might also want to check whether you're eligible for Housing Benefit. Read our factsheet **Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit** for more information.

4. Council Tax discounts

If you live alone

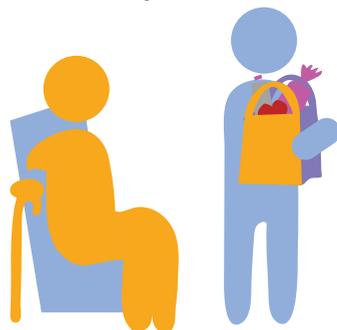
Full Council Tax rates are based on at least two people living in a property. If you live alone, you're entitled to a 25% reduction. To make sure the discount is applied, contact your council to let them know you live alone.

You can find your council's contact details at [gov.uk/find-local-council](https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council) or in the phone book.

If the person you live with is disregarded

Not everyone is counted for Council Tax purposes. This means you'll be treated as living alone if you only live with someone who is, for example:

- severely mentally impaired
- a full-time student
- a long-term hospital patient
- a live-in care worker.



If everyone who lives in your home is disregarded, you'll still have a Council Tax bill, but you'll get a 50% reduction.

Check with your local council if you're not sure whether the people you live with are disregarded for Council Tax.

5. The Disabled Band Reduction Scheme



You might qualify for this if you live in a larger house than you'd otherwise need because you or another adult you live with is substantially and permanently disabled. There is no general test for this – if you think it might apply to you, speak to your council. For example, you

might have an extra bathroom needed by the person because of their disability, or extra space inside your home for them to use a wheelchair.

What discount could I get?

If you qualify, your Council Tax will be reduced to the band below yours (eg from band E to band D), or by one sixth if your home is in the lowest band.

Contact your local council to find out more and apply for the scheme.

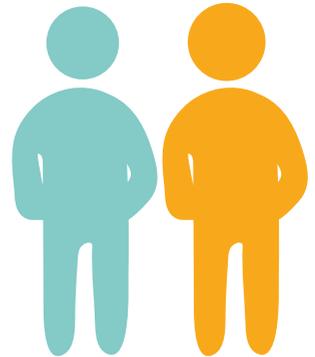
6. Second Adult Rebate

If you're living with another adult who has a low income and isn't your partner, you may be able to get Second Adult Rebate. Your income and capital is ignored – only the circumstances of the second adult are considered – so you might want to apply for it if your savings are too high to claim Council Tax Support.

People who are disregarded for Council Tax purposes or who are joint owner or joint tenant of the property with you don't count as second adults.

You can't get both Second Adult Rebate and Council Tax Support.

If you qualify for both, your council must award you whichever is higher.



What rebate could I get?

The amount your Council Tax is reduced by depends on the income of the second adult and what benefits they're claiming. There are three levels of rebate: 7.5%, 15% and 25%.

Ask your local council for more information and details of how to claim.

7. FAQs

Can I spread the cost of my bill?

Council Tax is usually paid over 10 months of the year. You can ask to spread the cost over 12 months instead. Contact your council to arrange this.



I've heard I can challenge my Council Tax band. How does that work?

You can get your Council Tax band reviewed if you think it's wrong. However, be aware that you could be moved to a higher band not just a lower one. Contact Citizens Advice for advice (**03444 111 444**, [citizensadvice.org.uk](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)).

Can I get discounts backdated?

Yes – you can ask for discounts to be backdated to when you were first eligible for them and there's no time limit to apply for a discount. If you're over State Pension age, you can ask for Council Tax Support to be backdated by up to three months.

Helpline story

Our Helpline adviser Abdi says:

“ We get lots of calls from people wondering if they can reduce their Council Tax bill. One thing people are often not aware of is that they can get a discount if a doctor agrees that someone in their household should be considered ‘severely mentally impaired.’ For example, a recent caller told us that he was a carer for his wife, who had late-stage dementia. She was getting the higher rate of Attendance Allowance and he was getting Carer’s Allowance, but it hadn’t occurred to him that they might be able to get other financial help. I advised them that they should be getting a 25% discount on their Council Tax bill, and that some councils also let you backdate your claim, so they could be owed a refund! ”



About Independent Age

Whatever happens as we get older, we all want to remain independent and live life on our own terms. That's why, as well as offering regular friendly contact and a strong campaigning voice, Independent Age can provide you and your family with clear, free and impartial advice on the issues that matter: care and support, money and benefits, health and mobility.

A charity founded over 150 years ago, we're independent so you can be.

For more information, visit our website
independentage.org

Call us for information or to arrange free, impartial advice from an adviser. Lines are open 8.30am–6.30pm Monday to Friday and 9am–1pm Saturday. Freephone **0800 319 6789** or email **advice@independentage.org**



advice and support for older age

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