Working Age
Council Tax Reduction Scheme
2026-27

'Summary Guide'

Council Tax Reduction Guide

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2. What is Council Tax?

Council Tax is a local tax collected and used by councils to fund local services including education, refuse collection and social services as well as the Police Authority and Fire & Civil Defence. The Council receives money from the government and income from Business Rates. This is not enough to cover the whole cost of Council services, and the difference is made up by Council Tax.

Council Tax is based on a banded property valuation of dwellings. The amount you pay will depend on the number of adults living in the property and the Council Tax band the property is in.

The amount payable by individual taxpayers will vary due to exemptions, discounts and other reductions, which might apply.

The Council Tax charges, by property band, for Wirral Council are published each year on the Council's website at www.wirral.gov.uk/council-tax/council-tax-bands-and-charges-charges

3. Who has to pay Council Tax?

Usually one person, called the liable person, is responsible to pay Council Tax. Nobody under the age of 18 can be a liable person. Couples living together will both be jointly and severally liable. This applies whether the couple is married, cohabiting or in a civil partnership.

4. What is Council Tax Reduction?

Council Tax Reduction is financial help for anyone who is on a low income to pay their Council Tax.

Council Tax Reduction for Working Age applicants is calculated in line with the Working Age Council Tax Reduction Scheme which is decided by the Council. Each Council sets its own 'Working Age Scheme' depending on the finance available and also the needs of its area

The Council Tax Reduction Scheme for Pension Age applicants is set by Government and is the same for all local authorities within England.

The Council has decided to introduce a new Working Age Council Tax Reduction Scheme to be fairer to all applicants, to reduce the costs of the scheme and to make the scheme easier to understand and administer.

This document sets out the rules for the Working Age Council Tax Reduction Scheme which comes into effect on 1 April 2026.

The changes made by the Council will **NOT** affect the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for Pension Age applicants. Pension age applicants will continue to be entitled to Council Tax Reduction up to a maximum amount of 100% (subject to their resources and needs).

5. Who is considered to be a Working Age applicant?

For the purposes of the Working Age Council Tax Reduction Scheme, a person and their partner must be:

- 18 years old or over; and
- less than state pension age (this will vary depending on your date of birth).

If you are working age and have a partner who is of state pension age, you will be considered to be a mixed age couple (one of working age and one pension age) and will be considered as a pension age couple for Council Tax Reduction purposes.

If, however, you or your partner claim Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related), Income Based Jobseekers Allowance or Universal Credit, then you will automatically be treated as a working age case and will be assessed under the Working Age scheme.

6. Who can get Working Age Council Tax Reduction?

Anyone who has a liability to pay Council Tax in the England can apply for Council Tax Reduction, but entitlement will depend on your household circumstances and how much income and capital you have.

If you live with your partner, either one of you can claim Council Tax Reduction (as long as you are both named on your Council Tax bill), and your income and capital will be assessed together. This applies whether you are married, cohabiting or in a civil partnership.

7. Who cannot get Council Tax Reduction?

- People with no liability to pay Council Tax;
- People who own a property but do not reside in it (Empty properties or Second Homes);
- Working Age Claimants with savings or capital **over** £6,000 or if they live with a partner and have combined savings over £6,000;
- People who have come from overseas (including UK citizens) must prove that they are able to reside in the UK **and** must have their home (habitual residence) in the Council's area;
- People who have been absent from their premises for either 4 weeks (if outside of the UK) or 13 weeks within the UK. There are some exceptions, but the Council must be sure you will be returning to your home; and
- Most students don't have to pay Council Tax therefore are not entitled to Council Tax Reduction but there are a few situations in which a student may be liable to pay.

8. How do I make a claim?

The person who is liable to pay the Council Tax bill can make a claim for Council Tax Reduction. The Council offers a range of options to help you apply. You can:

- Apply on-line using the Council's website at www.wirral.gov.uk/benefitsapplication. The quickest and easiest way to make a new claim is via our on-line claim form.

- Currently, a helpline is available for those who might need help filling in or making applications. If you need help with your application, please phone the One Stop Shops team.

Working Age Council Tax Reduction is an income based discount, so evidence may be required regarding your identity, income and capital. The Council will advise you about this when you make your claim.

9. How is my Working Age Council Tax Reduction calculated?

To work out your Council Tax Reduction the Council will look at the following:

- **Council Tax** - your current yearly Council Tax charge will be converted to a weekly amount;
- **Income** - money that you and your partner have coming in including earnings, some benefits and things like occupational pensions, your savings and your partner's savings and any other form of capital;
- **Non-dependants** - other adults who live with you and could help with paying the Council Tax

You will normally get maximum Working Age Council Tax Reduction (see note 10 below) less any deductions for non-dependants if you receive one of the following passported benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
  Income-related Employment and Support Allowance

If you do not get a passported benefit the money you have coming in (your net income) is compared with the income levels of the discounts available.

The amount of financial support will be limited to the level of support offered for a home in Council Tax Band D liability, even if your property is in a higher band.

1O. What discount is available for Working Age Council Tax Reduction

The maximum level of discount available to working age applicants is 50% of your weekly Council Tax. Working Age applicants will be required to pay a minimum of 50% of their Council Tax.

The discount you will be awarded depending on your net income (applicant and partner) and the level of discount available. The levels of discount are shown below:

		Weekly Net Income					
Discount Level	**Band**	**Single**	**Single + 1 Dependent**	**Single + 2 Dependents**	**Couple**	**Couple + 1 Dependant**	**Couple + 2 Dependent**
50%	Band 1	£0.00 - £130.00	£0.00 - £182.00	£0.00 - £250.00	£0.00 - £182.00	£0.00 - £236.00	£0.00 - £306.00
40%	Band 2	£130.01 - £182.00	£182.01 - £234.00	£250.01 - £286.00	£182.01 - £234.00	£236.01 - £286.00	£306.01 - £338.00
30%	Band 3	£182.01 - £234.00	£234.01 - £286.00	£286.01 - £338.00	£234.01 - £286.00	£286.01 - £338.00	£338.01 - £390.00
20%	Band 4	£234.01 - £286.00	£286.01 - £338.00	£338.01 - £390.00	£286.01 - £338.00	£338.01 - £390.00	£390.01 - £442.00
Nil	Band 5	£286.01+	£338.01+	£390.01+	£338.01+	£390.01+	£442.01+

If your net income varies then it may affect the level of discount you receive but only if you move into another band.

Net income is the amount of income we assess after making certain disregards as follows:

- **Weekly Earnings** (less tax, National Insurance, 50% of any pension contribution and £20 per week earnings disregard per claim)
- **Weekly Other Income.** This includes other sources of income including payments and benefits. Some benefits are disregarded and where an applicant or their partner or dependant receives a disability benefit, a further £50 per week is disregarded when calculating the household's weekly income.

Where you have another adult (not your partner) living with you, they are called Non Dependants. A deduction may be made from your Council Tax Reduction. More details are shown later.

11. What income is taken into account?

If you or your partner receives Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance, this is the only income the Council takes into account.

If you do not receive one of the above benefits you must tell the Council about all of the income you and your partner receive so that your Council Tax Reduction can be calculated.

The Council uses net income from earnings from an employer or allowable expenses from self-employment; this is what is left after tax, national insurance and half your pension contributions are deducted.

If you receive Universal Credit the Council will use the income from your Universal Credit calculation to calculate any entitlement to support. However, the Council will deduct the following elements:

- Housing Element;
- Limited Capability for Work and Work Related Activity Element;;
- Disabled Child Element;
- Carer Element; and
- Child Care Element

Some other forms of income are disregarded in the calculation:

- Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments
- Attendance Allowance
- Child Benefit
- Child Maintenance
- War Disablement Pension
- War Widows Pension
- Adoption Allowance
- Fostering Allowance
- Special Guardianship Allowance
- Permitted Earnings (i.e. earnings allowed by the Job Centre Plus for people receiving certain sickness benefits)
- Charitable or voluntary payments

You must tell the Council about all of the income you receive even though it may not be included in your calculation.

12. What about my savings?

If you have savings over £6,000 you will not be entitled to Council Tax Reduction. Savings of less than £6,000 are ignored, but you must still tell the Council about them.

The Council needs to know about money you and your partner have in:

- A bank or building society;
- Shares;
- National Savings Certificates;
- Any property (except the one you live in);
- Land you own; and
- Any other savings or capital you have

13. What happens if other adults (non-dependants) live with me?

A standard deduction of £5 per week will be made for any Non Dependants.

Non-dependant deductions are not deducted from your Council Tax Reduction if you or your partner are:

- registered blind, or
- in receipt of Attendance Allowance, or
- in receipt of the care component of Disability Living Allowance, or
- in receipt of the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment, or
- in receipt of an Armed Forces Independence Payment

Non-dependant deductions are not deducted from your Council Tax Reduction if one of the following applies to the non-dependant:

- they are a full time student, or
- they are a member of the armed forces away on operations, or
- they are a person disregarded for the purposes of Council Tax discount.

14. The calculation works like this:

- Your weekly Council Tax liability is calculated,
- If there are any non-dependants in the household, we apply the non-dependant deduction,
- Your net income is calculated, and
- The discount available will be calculated based on your Income Band.

The figure you are left with is the amount of weekly Council Tax Reduction that you will receive.

Example

Harry is 57, single and lives in a band A property.

He works and his net income is £150.00 per week after tax, National Insurance, 50% of any pension contributions, and £50 per week earnings disregard has been applied.

Harry's 26 year old son, John lives with him and John is working.

Harry's entitlement is calculated as follows:

Council Tax Liability (weekly) £30.00
Non-dependant deduction £5.00 (for John)
£30.00 - £5.00 = £25.00 Council Tax liability used in the calculation.

As Harry is single with no dependant children, net income of £150.00 means that Harry will get a discount of 40% as he falls into Band 2.

40% of £25.00 = £10.00 per week Council Tax Reduction

Therefore, based on the above calculation, there will be £20.00 per week Council Tax to pay.

15. When will my Council Tax Reduction start from?

Normally your claim will start from the Monday after the Council receives your application form. It is very important that you complete your on-line application form as soon as possible because it affects the date your Council Tax Reduction claim will start.

16. Can my Council Tax Reduction be backdated?

If there was a reason which stopped or delayed you claiming Council Tax Reduction, you can ask for your claim to be backdated for a maximum period of three months. You must explain what caused the delay and provide evidence of your income and circumstances for that period. Any award of a back-date of Council Tax Reduction is made solely at the discretion of the Council.

17. What documents will I need to provide?

You will need to provide details of:

- Identity and national insurance number for you and your partner;
- Your income and savings;
- and details of other adults that live with you

When looking at your claim the Council may contact you asking for more information, if they do this, please send the information quickly as a delay may affect your benefit.

18. How will I know how much Council Tax Reduction I will receive?

You will receive a Council Tax Bill detailing the level of reduction you have been awarded.

If you qualify for Council Tax Reduction it will be paid directly onto your Council Tax account, and you will receive a reduced bill. This will tell you how much your new Council Tax amount is and how much you need to pay each month.

19. How long is my Council Tax Reduction paid for?

Council Tax Reduction is paid for as long as your circumstances stay the same.

The Council may check the information used to work out your level of Reduction from time to time. To do this the Revenues and Benefits Team may telephone you, send you an email, send you a letter, or visit you.

You must give them the information they need when they contact you so they can carry on paying your Council Tax Reduction.

20. What changes do I need to tell the Council about?

Council Tax Reduction is based upon your individual circumstances so you must let the Council know if your circumstances change.

When things change at home or at work you will need to tell the Council. You will also need to tell the Council when your income and/or savings change.

Please tell the Council about changes within one calendar month of the date of the change. This applies to all members of your household.

Examples of changes that you should tell the Council about:

- You and your household move address;
- You gain or lose a partner. This includes a partner of the same or opposite sex
- You or your partner cease to receive Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance or Employment Support Allowance;
- You start or stop receiving Universal Credit;
- Changes to your Universal Credit award for instance, changes in Elements or earnings;
- You or your partner start or stop receiving any benefit or income;
- Benefit for you or your partner increases or decreases;
- You or your partner start or cease work;
- You or anyone in your household have a pay rise or any other increase in income;
- Someone leaves or joins your household;
- Your family has increased due to the birth of a child; or
- You are temporarily absent from your home.

21. If I've been paid too much Council Tax Reduction, what will happen?

If you have been paid too much Council Tax Reduction your entitlement will be recalculated.

The Council will deduct any amount of Council Tax Reduction that was not due to you from your Council Tax account.

The Council will issue you with an amended Council Tax Bill increasing your monthly instalments to include the reclaimed amount.

22. What can I do if I do not agree with the Council's decision?

If you do not agree with any decision the Council makes regarding your Council Tax Reduction you can ask for this to be looked at again.

If you want to know more about the decision or if you think it is wrong, you should get in touch with the Council.

If the decision is changed in your favour, then you will be sent you a new decision and you will have two months to appeal from the date of this new decision.

If you disagree with the Council's decision about your Council Tax Reduction, you have the right to appeal to an independent body, the Valuation Tribunal. You can do this online at www.valuationtribunal.gov.uk. You must send your appeal to the Tribunal within two months of the date of your Council Tax Reduction decision.

You can also get independent advice about your claim by contacting Citizens Advice.

23. Can I get any additional help

The Council operates an Exceptional Hardship Fund. Any applicant that is experiencing exceptional hardship may apply for additional support. They applicant will need to declare all of their income and expenditure and the Council will decide whether any further help can be provided.
www.wirral.gov.uk/council-tax/problems-paying-your-council-tax

It should be noted that only **essential** expenditure will be taken into account when assessing any potential additional help.

24. What other Council Tax discounts are available?

There are other potential Council Tax discounts available to any person who is:

- A single occupier (the only adult in the household)
- Certain students, school leavers and youth training trainees
- People who live in residential homes, nursing homes, mental nursing homes and hostels providing a high level of care
- Residential hospital patients
- People in prison
- People who are severely mentally impaired
- Certain carers and certain care workers
- Apprentices and Foreign language assistants
- Members of religious communities
- Members of visiting forces, international HQ and Defence organisations
- Member of the household who is over 18 but their parent/guardian is still entitled to receive child benefit for them
- Homes for Ukraine.

If you feel you or anyone in your household may satisfy the above criteria, please apply on-line at http://www.wirral.gov.uk/discount