

Council Tax Benefit



Do you need help with this leaflet?

Maybe English is not your first language, you have difficulty reading it because the print is too small, or you are not sure what it means.

Please phone **01395 517446**.

What is council tax benefit?

Council tax benefit is a national scheme run by councils. It helps you pay your council tax if you are unemployed or on a low income.

Who can apply for council tax benefit?

You can apply for council tax benefit if you are liable to pay the council tax for where you live and you and your partner have less than £16,000 in savings (this limit does not apply if you get the Guarantee Pension Credit).

You cannot get council tax benefit if you are not the person who is liable to pay council tax in your household.

There are special rules for students. Please contact us (see back page) to find out if you are in one of the vulnerable groups of students who can claim.

How do I apply for council tax benefit?

Ask us for an application form (contact details are shown at the end of the booklet). Fill it all in then send it back to us with all the information we have asked for. If you need help reading the

form or filling it in, please ring our **Helpline 01395 517446**. Sometimes we may be able to arrange for one of our officers to visit you at home.

If you apply for either Income Support (IS) or Income Based Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA (IB)), you may receive a Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit claim form (HCTBI). You should fill in this form and send it back to the Department for Work and Pensions, who will send it to us.

You can claim both housing benefit and council tax benefit.

How much council tax benefit will I get?

Council tax benefit can pay for up to 100% of your council tax charge.

The amount you get will depend on many different things, for example:

- how many children you have;
- whether you have a partner;
- how much income and savings you and/or your partner have;
- if anyone in your household is disabled;
- how much rent you have to pay;
- whether anyone who lives with you could help with the council tax.

What happens if I have other adults living in my home?

You may get less benefit if you have friends, relatives or anyone over 18 living in your home. These people are called 'non-dependants' and they are expected to make a contribution towards housing costs. We may take an amount out of your benefit for each non-dependant who lives in your home. This is called 'a non-dependant deduction'.

Non-dependants do **not** include:

- your partner
- a child you get Child Benefit for
- people in full-time education
- people on youth training schemes.

We will **not** make a non-dependant deduction if:

- you or your partner get Attendance Allowance or the care part of Disability Living Allowance;
- you or your partner are registered blind;
- the non-dependant is a paid carer provided by a charitable or voluntary organisation;
- the non-dependant is under 25, and on Income Support (IS) or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA).

If you are aged 65 or over, and a non-dependant moves in, we will not make a non-dependant deduction for the first 26 weeks after the date that they move in.

When will you pay my council tax benefit?

Benefit is normally paid from the Monday following the date that we receive your application form. Benefit cannot normally be backdated (see next page), so it is important that you return your form immediately.

How do you pay council tax benefit?

If you qualify, we pay the benefit directly to your council tax account. If your benefit stops, we take it away from your council tax account.

Whenever council tax benefit is given or stopped, we will send you a new council tax bill to show you what, if anything, you still have to pay.

How long do I get council tax benefit for?

Council tax benefit is normally ongoing once we have awarded it, unless your circumstances change in any way.

If you move house, or your circumstances change, you must let us know straight away. We will ask you to fill out a short form so that we can amend your claim.

You must let us know about any changes when they happen, even if you are not sure whether the change will affect your council tax benefit or not.

What are changes in circumstances?

These are any changes that could affect the amount of benefit you get.

Here are a few examples:

- changes to the income or savings of anyone in your home;
- changes to your rent or tenancy (except council rent increases);
- if you, or anyone in your home, moves out, either temporarily or for good;
- if anyone moves into your home;
- if you, or anyone in your home, goes into hospital;
- if you stop getting Income Support (IS) or Job Seekers Allowance (JSA).

You should tell us about all changes that may affect your council tax benefit. If you are not sure, tell us anyway and we will let you know if your council tax benefit has changed.

Can you backdate council tax benefit?

Sometimes we may be able to backdate your claim for up to 52 weeks if you can show that you have a good reason (or 'good cause') why you did not claim sooner.

If you want us to consider your case to have your benefit backdated, you must write to us giving your reasons.

You do not have to fill in a special form. You can write the information on your application form, or send us a separate letter.

Benefit rules do not allow us to backdate a claim simply because you did not know how to make an application for benefit. On its own, this would not be enough to show 'good cause'. But, when taken together with other facts, it might be considered as a contributing factor.

Can I still get help if I don't get benefit myself?

Yes, you may be able to get a 'second adult rebate' even if you do not get either housing or council tax benefit.

If you are the only person in your household liable to pay council tax and you share your home with one adult (or more) who cannot help pay towards the council tax charge because they are on a low income, you may qualify for 'second adult rebate'.

This rebate can reduce your council tax charge by up to 25% and it is not based on the money you have but on the money other people who live with you have.

Ask us for a copy of our Second Adult Rebate leaflet to find out more about it.

Are there any other council tax reductions I could get?

Yes, there is a range of discounts, exemptions and 'disregards' you could qualify for. (A disregarded person is someone who is not counted when we work out how many people make up your household).

These reductions include:

- 25% for single occupiers
- 10% for second homes
- disablement reduction
- student disregard or exemption
- carer disregard or exemption
- 'granny annexe' exemption.

These are just a few from the wide range of reductions and exemptions.

Discounts and exemptions helpline

Phone **01395 517447** for full details or visit the council tax section of our website **www.eastdevon.gov.uk**.

What are my responsibilities?

- 1.** Make sure you fill out your application form as fully as possible so that we can work out your entitlement promptly.
- 2.** If we ask you for more information, please send it without delay. It may affect the date we can start paying your benefit if you do not let us have the information we need.
- 3.** Make sure you send us the original documents we ask for, not photocopies.
- 4.** Read your award letter carefully to check that the information we have based your benefit on is correct. If we have made a mistake, or used the wrong information, please tell us straightaway.
- 5.** Contact us immediately if there is a change in your circumstances.

Contact us



Phone:

Our Benefits and Council Tax Helpline
01395 517446 between 8.30am and 5.00pm



Visit us at:

- **The Council Offices, Knowle, Sidmouth**
daily between 8.30am and 5.00pm
- **Exmouth Town Hall** daily except Wednesday
from 9.00am to 1.00pm and 2.00pm to 4.30pm
- **One of our regular surgeries** in
Axminster, Seaton or Honiton
(phone **01395 517446** for dates and times)



Write to us:

Housing Benefits
East Devon District Council
Knowle, Sidmouth EX10 8HL



Email us:

benefits@eastdevon.gov.uk

Visit our website:

www.eastdevon.gov.uk