

Council Tax Support Scheme 2017

We asked people what they thought of the current Council Tax Support Scheme and some small changes we were proposing to make to it. The consultation ran between 7 October and 22 November 2016. The Council's E-panel were invited to take part. It was also hosted on our website, with links on Facebook and twitter. A press release was issued to promote the consultation along with adverts in the Council's noticeboards.

Overall there were 76 respondents to the online survey, 54 (74%) of which agree that the current Council Tax Support scheme is fair and 19 (26%) do not.

Do people think the current Council Tax Support scheme is fair?

The respondents who do not believe the Council tax support scheme is fair largely think this is due to the following:-

- a) Non-dependent working adults should be contributing more than £3.74 per week
- b) Some working age claimants may not have the financial means to pay the first 20% of their Council Tax.
- c) Claimants living in large home don't receive reduction proportional to those living in smaller homes as they might not have the option to trade down to a smaller one.

Please see Appendix A for full comments.

Should people with severe disabilities or those who receive war pensions still receive Council Tax support?

63 (82%) respondents agree people with severe disabilities or those who receive war pensions should continue to receive the full Council Tax support and 13 (17%) do not.

The respondents who do not agree believe Council Tax should be based on affordability not disability or the receipt of a war pension.

Please see Appendix B for full comments

Should backdating of claims be reduced from 6 months to 1 month?

64 (84%) respondents agree that the backdating of claims should reduce from 6 months to 1 month to match the rules already in other welfare benefits and 12 (16%) do not.

The general consensus of those who did not agree, was that the people who fall into this category may not immediately be aware of the option to claim and reducing it to 1 month was too short.

Please see Appendix C for full comments.

Do people think the amount of time a claimant can stay outside of Great Britain before Council Tax Support stops should reduce from 13 weeks to 4 weeks?

63 (83%) respondents agree that the amount of time a claimant can stay outside of Great Britain before Council Tax Support stops should reduce from 13 weeks to 4 weeks and 13 (18%) do not.

A common theme which arose amongst those who did not agree was that each case should be looked at individually as it should depend on why the claimant was abroad, with some suggesting 6 weeks instead.

Please see Appendix D for full comments

Do people agree that the way claimants' needs allowances are calculated should match the calculation in other welfare benefits?

63 (83%) respondents agreed that the way claimants' needs allowances are calculated should match the calculation in other welfare benefits and 13 (17%) do not agree.

The explanations given by those who do not agree include not understanding and / or disagreeing with the way welfare benefits are calculated

Please see Appendix E for full comments.

For any Other Comments about Council Tax Support – see Appendix F

Appendix A: Comments of those that think the current scheme is not fair

people living in large homes may not have the option to trade down to a smaller one but get no extra help to offset this

I am personally struggling to pay my council tax even though both my partner and I work and we are not entitled to any help.

As a disabled person I receive extra money each week I receive £100 a week pip then I receive £127 a week esa so I can easily contribute towards the council tax and services

Just because people on higher wages don't get help but possibly still need help.

Council tax is paid on property. There could be non-dependent adults earning very high wages but still only have to pay part of the council tax.

Non -dependent adults if working should contribute at least £10 per week

It doesn't apply to old age pensioners

Those on Employment & Support Allowance or Universal credit equivalent are NOT in work because of their health/disability & thus are penalised because they have to pay 20% of their Council Tax. If they are on JSA then they ARE available for work & hence should pay 20%.

I live in a Band B property. 'Every working age claimant pays the first 20% of their Council Tax bill' - Do you find that this is successful or do you find that you end up having to deal with claimants who simply cannot afford the shortfall and/or have to pay it from their child benefits/tax credits, going without in the meantime? Would it not be fairer to ask the DWP to account for

I don't understand why claimants living in large homes don't receive a reduction proportional to those claimants living in smaller homes. Everything else about the scheme seems fair.

Undue burden on the tax paying public.

Too complicated!

Why should we pay as much as people living in larger homes when we are pensioners?

Non dependant grown up children should be contributing a far higher minimum amount than £3.74 per week.

Working age claimants - I am concerned that there may be some who fall into this category who don't have the financial means to pay the 20%; is there a way in which, on an exception basis, those in particularly hard circumstances can be exempt? Larger Homes - is this a percentage (i.e. 20%) or is it an amount (£s)? Should there be a transition period (say 6 months) for those who fi

I got 100% support when I received Pension Credit. The following year, I was just £1.47 a week over the limit for Pension Credit but losing it meant that I also lost all the help with my council tax, and the £140 Warm Home discount. So I was then liable for 75% (I get the single person discount) of my Council tax on a much smaller income - that is definitely not fair.

Appendix B: Should people with severe disabilities or those who receive war still receive Council Tax support?

People with severe disabilities receive pip and the rates can be quite high so again they could easily contribute towards council services

As long as they are certificated severe disabilities and not just say so.
Same reason as above, there could be others in the property earning high wages.
It's not about disability it's about ability to pay.
Should be based on affordability not disability
I agree with the disability element, but not the war pension. Unless they qualify in some other way then simple receipt of a war pension should not make any difference. They could actually be quite wealthy and easily able to pay, without getting support.
It would be wrong to assume that if someone is disabled, they are in need of financial support.
Needs to be means tested.
There are other benefits they could use some other. Why should people who are working pay full amount when many are struggling?
Why if you receive a war pension are you any different from other people? People with disabilities already receive allowances.
Those with disabilities get quite substantial allowances; so ought to be paying a little towards council tax.
Because they have little financial difference to others claiming this benefit.

Appendix C: Should backdating of claims be reduced from 6 months to 1 month?

People don't always know they can claim help straight away, reducing the number of months it can be backdated penalises them at a time when things are hard enough.
Because some people may not be aware of council tax benefit support that may really need it and may be struggling to pay. It could help them greatly to have it backdated 6 months.
People who fall into this category may not immediately realise that they are entitled to this support and they should not lose the ability to back-claim once they understand.
Life it tough for some people why make it harder, and what is the difficulty with a 6 month back date. How much in real terms are we talking about both in cash and as % of total council income?
Are you also going to agree that the backdating of overpayments should also reduce to 1 month?
There is a big difference between 6 months and 1 month. Why not reduce the backdating period to, say, 3 months?
Not everyone is aware they could have claimed, it disadvantages them.
For someone, who may be "vulnerable" and find it difficult to organise their lives, 1 month may be too short. Try, say 3 months, and review in a year's time?
I think 3 months would be fairer. I probably wouldn't claim straight away as I'd expect to find a job, it may take more than a month to realise you are having difficulties / or are going to remain ill in the case of illness. I agree that 6 months is too long.
The rule on other benefits isn't fair either, so don't copy it.

Appendix D: Should the amount of time a claimant can stay outside of Great Britain before Council Tax Support stops should reduce from 13 weeks to 4 weeks?

Is this because only rich people can go abroad?
Some people are taken outside the UK for work reasons, these should be exempt, however people claiming with 2nd homes abroad should be reduced to 4 weeks
I lived in Australia and paid tax on my private pensions, which was totally unfair, I was told by HMRC that I could not have state pension increases as such benefits were restricted to UK Domiciles, which of course is not true. People who are overseas and cannot return on time
I think you should look at each case on its own merits and at whether the travel is for medical reasons (including close family and friends), business/employment or pleasure.
Again, there is a big difference between 13 weeks and 4 weeks. Why not reduce this absence period to, say, 6 weeks?
People may be supporting family members elsewhere, on a cruise / holiday during winter months.
Should be zero
I think it could be between 6-8 weeks.
Again, I am concerned that vulnerable people, may be left in a difficult situation. Unlikely, possibly, given what is being addresses here, but is there some way you can "support" exceptional cases without creating too bureaucratic a system ?
There needs to be a caveat to this. Someone may be abroad to get treatment for an illness that could take longer than 4 weeks. They may also have to support a dying / seriously ill relative who lives abroad. No one should feel pressured to return just to claim council tax sup
A person working overseas (including Armed Services) may have family here who should continue to pay Council Tax.

Appendix E: Do people agree that the way claimants' needs allowances are calculated should match the calculation in other welfare benefits?
The changes in welfare benefits rules are often arbitrary and are purely to save money at the expense of the most vulnerable in our society. You should not copy that.
The current level is more appropriate as DWP benefits do not sufficiently take into account the amount needed to live on without full council tax support.
don't really understand the system
The 'amount to live on' calculated by Government is not an adequate amount. It is too much in administration, for too little saving, to work out balancing figures all the time. Just set the amount and support the people in most need in your borough please.
Other benefits have been cut in an unfair way, Council Tax should not follow it.

Appendix F: Do you have any other comments about Council Tax Support?
I don't think things like DLA, PIP, carers allowance, pension credit etc. should come into effect
Don't reduce claim if abroad due to medical treatment
No
Save money by not attempting to buy every piece of unused/available land in the borough.

The disabled badge has been open to abuse I wonder if you have been able to tighten up on this?
no
In all cases Financial assets and income should be taken into account
All other benefits should be taken into account
How about being more draconian in the pursuit of unpaid council tax?
n0
No
None
Should be made fairer for those who cannot work (may be working age but CAN T due to health get job
No but as usual with FBC consultations why do I have to justify why I do not agree with the statement
it should be assessed on an individual basis
CTS should not be given to single parents unless the partner has died.
Support should be the exception, not banded as at present.
Should make the whole process very quick and simple!
No
I think CTS is essential for certain groups of people as is the case now. It is a lifeline for many.
No
Council tax support for stays outside UK should be reduced to zero. They should not be subsidised
I am not against keeping a tight rein on expenditure, but don't hit the vulnerable.
It shouldn't stop as a result of losing Pension Credit by a small margin. It should be tap