Nottinghamshire County Council

Council tax discounts and reductions for people with disabilities and their carers

Discounts (also known as disregards)

A discount on your Council Tax bill does not depend on your income or savings or those of anyone you live with. It depends on who, if anyone, lives in your house.

It is possible to be exempt from paying Council Tax for many reasons, but when applying discounts, a home will qualify for a 50% discount if no-one over 18 lives there. A 25% discount applies if one adult lives there. Any household with two or more people over 18 must pay the full Council Tax bill.

When adding up how many people live in your home, certain people are 'invisible'. This could be because they are carers or because they have a disability.

For example if two people live together and one is invisible they will get a 25% discount because they are treated as a one person household.

Carers

Carers are 'invisible' if they are living with a person and caring for them for at least 35 hours a week. The person being cared for must be getting the **higher rate** of Attendance Allowance or the **higher rate** of the care component of Disability Living Allowance. The person being cared for must also be over 18 and **not** the partner of the person looking after them.

For example, Mrs Green is divorced and lives with her mother who she looks after for 35 hours a week. Her mother gets the higher rate of Attendance Allowance. They qualify for a 25% discount because as a carer Mrs Green is 'invisible' and so the house is treated as having only one adult living there.

If there are two people living with the disabled person and each cares for the person for 35 hours a week (and are not their partner) it is possible for **both** carers to be 'invisible' and therefore make it more likely that the household will qualify for a discount.

People with a severe mental impairment

People with a severe mental impairment who live alone are totally exempt from Council Tax if they have a mental condition which affects their ability to manage things on their own. This includes people who for example have a severe mental illness, a learning disability or Alzheimer's disease.

To receive this exemption a person must also be claiming a disability benefit such as Incapacity Benefit, Employment and Support Allowance, Severe Disablement Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance (middle or highest rate care component) or the disability premium included in their Income Support or be over pension age and would have been entitled to one of the above benefits if under pension age.

People with a severe mental impairment that do not live alone are 'invisible' and so they and the person they live with may get a discount on their Council Tax.

For example, Mrs Green's mother suffers from Alzheimer's disease and receives the higher rate of Attendance Allowance. She is classed as 'invisible' because she has a severe mental impairment. Mrs Green is also 'invisible' because she cares for her mother for at least 35 hours a week. They will get a 50% discount on their Council Tax as there are no 'visible' adults in the house.

Disabled Reduction

Qualifying for a disabled reduction **does not** depend on the amount of income or savings you have. You may get a reduction if anyone who lives in your home (including yourself or any children) is permanently disabled and your home contains:

- A room that is needed by and mainly used by the person with a disability because of their disability, for example, if a couple sleep in separate rooms because one is disabled. Or the disabled person has to sleep in a downstairs room because due to their disability they are unable to get upstairs;
- A second bathroom or kitchen needed by a disabled person;
- Enough floor space to use a wheelchair in the house.

These facilities or rooms do not have to be specially installed or adapted, they just have to be needed by someone living in the house because of their disability.

The amount of Council Tax you pay depends on which one of the eight valuation bands your home is placed in; Band A for the cheapest properties up to Band H for the most expensive.

If you qualify for this reduction, your home will be treated as if it were in the lower valuation band than the one originally allocated. For example, if your home is in Band D, you will pay the lower amount of a home in Band C and so on. If you qualify and live in a Band A property you will receive a reduction in your bill of one sixth of your bill.

For example, your Band A Council Tax bill is £1050. If you qualify for a reduction your £1050 bill will be reduced by £175, as this amount is one sixth of your bill.

'Older Person's Flats' – Exempted from Council Tax

A property which includes a separate self contained unit (often known as a 'Granny' flat) which is the home of a relative who is aged 65 or over who is disabled will not be assessed as a separate dwelling. This means that there will be no Council Tax to pay for the flat and the bill for your main property will not increase either.

Carers unoccupied home – exempted from Council Tax

Carers who leave their own home (owned or rented) unoccupied to provide care elsewhere can have their own home exempted from Council Tax.

This applies if the person you provide care for is old, disabled, ill, has or previously had alcohol or drug dependence or has previously had mental illness or disorder.

You, the carer, must be absent from your own home because of these caring responsibilities.

How to claim a discount, disabled reduction or exemption

To claim a discount, reduction or exemption the person responsible for paying the bill needs to contact the Council Tax office of their local council. They will then send you a form to complete. In some cases your doctor may need to provide information to help your claim or someone from the council may visit your home.

There is no limit on backdating the discounts and reductions to when the scheme started in April 1993, as long as you fulfil the qualifying conditions.

The telephone numbers of the local Council Tax offices are :

Broxtowe – 0115 917 7777
Ashfield - 01623 457400
Mansfield – 01623 463463
Gedling – 0115 901 3901
Newark & Sherwood – 01636 650 000
Bassetlaw – 01909 533234 or 533 258
Rushcliffe – 0115 981 9911

If you are refused a discount or disabled reduction

If you are refused a disabled reduction or discount you need to write to the council to tell them why you disagree with the decision.

If they do not change their mind you can appeal to the local valuation tribunal.

If paying your Council Tax causes you hardship you can ask the Council to use their discretion to reduce your bill by the amount of the reduction or discount that you have been refused. It is best to seek advice at this stage to check you have a good case (see below).

Remember it is possible to get both a discount and a reduction on your bill, plus you can claim a rebate on your Council Tax bill if you or the people you live with have a low income.

If you need further advice on the above discounts and reductions you can find out where your nearest advice centre is located by calling Nottinghamshire County Council on the contact details provided below or visit our benefit advice pages at www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/benefitsadvice

Contact information:

Phone: 08449 80 80 80
Monday to Friday: 8am to 8pm
Saturday: 8am to 12 noon
(Calls cost 3p a minute from a BT landline. Mobile costs may vary).

Email: enquiries@nottscc.gov.uk
Website: www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk
Minicom: 01623 434993

Phone 08449 80 80 80 if you need the information in a different language or format.