

Help with Council Tax

If you have Parkinson's, or care for someone who does, you may have some concerns about how you will manage financially. But there is some financial support available, so it's important to find out what you are entitled to.

This information explains what schemes are available to help with your Council Tax, who qualifies and how to claim.

What is Council Tax?

Council Tax is a charge made by your local council to cover services that they provide for you. It applies to England, Scotland and Wales. There is no Council Tax in Northern Ireland, which still has a system of rates.

The amount of Council Tax that you must pay varies from council to council, but all assessments are based on the property band that applies to your home. Each dwelling in Great Britain is placed on a valuation list in one of eight broad valuation bands (nine in Wales). The lowest is band A and the highest is band H (A to I in Wales). The band that applies to your home will be written on your Council Tax bill.

Some properties are exempt from Council Tax, including properties that are occupied solely by a person or people who are classed as 'severely mentally impaired'. This applies to some people with Parkinson's and dementia or other cognitive problems (see page 2 for more details). Contact your local council for a full list of Council Tax exemptions.

There are three types of help you can get with your Council Tax bill:

- the Council Tax Discount scheme
- the Disability Reduction scheme
- the Council Tax Reduction schemes

You can get help through all three schemes at the same time if you meet the conditions for each one.

Council Tax Reduction schemes

You may be eligible for Council Tax Reduction (sometimes called Council Tax Benefit) if you're on a low income or claim certain benefits. There are different arrangements in England, Wales and Scotland.

England and Wales

Your local council is required to have a Council Tax Reduction scheme in place. Each local council in England and Wales has a different scheme. Contact your local council to apply. You can also visit counciltaxhelp.net, an independent online resource, to find details of the support schemes in your area.

Scotland

The Scottish Government has set up a single system of support. Contact your local council to apply.

Discretionary payments

You may be able to get temporary discretionary payments if your local council thinks you need additional help with your Council Tax. Contact your local council for more information.

Council Tax discounts

You can get a discount of 25% off your bill if you are the only person living in your home or if all the other occupiers are 'disregarded'.

You can get a discount of up to 50% off your bill if you and all the other occupiers are disregarded, depending on the policy of your council.

People who are disregarded include:

- people who are considered to be 'severely mentally impaired' (see below for how this can apply to people with Parkinson's)
- some carers (the carer can't be a partner, must live in the same house and must provide care for at least 35 hours a week)
- people in a hospital, a care home, or certain kinds of hostel
- anyone whose 'sole or main residence' is elsewhere
- young people, students, student nurses, youth trainees, apprentices and certain other groups

For a full list, contact your local council. Your council may automatically grant a discount, but you can also apply for one.

Severe mental impairment and Parkinson's

The term 'severely mentally impaired' can apply to people with Parkinson's who have a severe impairment of 'intelligence and social functioning', such as dementia.

You need a certificate from your doctor to prove this and you must be entitled to a qualifying disability or sickness benefit. These include Disability Living Allowance care component (middle or highest rate), Attendance Allowance, Personal Independence Payment daily living component and Universal Credit limited capability for work or work-related activity components.

You can see a full list of 'severe mental impairment' qualifying benefits at parkinsons.org.uk/helpcounciltax

The second adult rebate

A discount known as the 'second adult rebate' may also be available if you live with one other person and their income is low enough.

This applies in Scotland to people of all ages. In England it applies to people who have reached Pension Credit qualifying age, although some English local authorities choose to offer the discount to people of working age too. It does not apply in Wales.

The discount is:

- 25% if the other person is on income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance or income support
- 15% if the other person has a gross income under £193 a week
- 7.5% if the other person has a gross income between £193 and £249 a week

The Disability Reduction Scheme

You can get a reduction on your bill if you or someone in your home is 'substantially and permanently disabled' and one of the following applies. You (or they):

- have an additional room (other than a bathroom, kitchen or toilet) which is used to meet your needs (for example, a bedroom, or a room for treatment or storing equipment)
- have a second bathroom or kitchen used to meet your needs
- have enough space in your home to use a wheelchair indoors

If any of these apply, the bill for your home is reduced to the next lowest band. If you are already in a Band A property, you will have your bill reduced by one sixth.

Disability reductions are available in all types of dwellings, including care homes and hostels. In Scotland, the council water charge can also be reduced under this scheme.

Contact your local council to apply for a disability reduction.

How can I appeal a decision?

You can appeal against decisions on:

- Council Tax exemptions
- Council Tax liability to pay
- where you are resident
- whether a Council Tax Discount applies
- whether a Disability Reduction applies
- Council Tax Reduction awards
- discretionary payment award decisions

You should first go to your local council. There is no time limit for lodging the appeal, but you should put your appeal in writing. If it is refused, you can appeal to one of the following bodies:

- the Valuation Tribunal for England (www.valuationtribunal.gov.uk) within two months of receiving the decision, or within four months of your original appeal if your local council has not responded.
- the Valuation Tribunal for Wales (www.valuation-tribunals-wales.org.uk) within two months of receiving the decision, or within four months of your original appeal if your local council has not responded.
- the Valuation Appeal Committee in Scotland (www.saa.gov.uk) within four months of your original appeal.

More information and support

Parkinson's nurses

Parkinson's nurses provide expert advice and support to people with Parkinson's and those who care for them. They can also make contact with other health and social care professionals to make sure your needs are met.

The role of the Parkinson's nurse varies. Each will offer different services, aiming to meet local needs. Some nurses are based in the community, whereas others are based in hospital settings.

Many Parkinson's nurses are independent prescribers. This means they can prescribe and make adjustments to medication, so someone with Parkinson's doesn't always need to see their specialist for changes to or queries about their Parkinson's drugs.

Parkinson's nurses may not be available in every area, but your GP or specialist can give you more details on local services.

You can find out more at parkinsons.org.uk/nurses

Information and support from Parkinson's UK

You can call our free confidential helpline for general support and information. Call **0808 800 0303** (calls are free from UK landlines and most mobile networks) or email hello@parkinsons.org.uk.

We run a peer support service if you'd like to talk on the phone with someone affected by Parkinson's who has faced similar issues to you. The service is free and confidential – ring the helpline to talk to someone about being matched with a volunteer.

Our helpline can also put you in touch with one of our Parkinson's local advisers, who give one-to-one information and support to anyone affected by Parkinson's. They can also provide links to local groups and services.

We also have a self-management programme for people with Parkinson's, partners and carers. It is an opportunity to reflect on life with the condition, learn about self-management and think about the future. To find out if there is a group near you, visit parkinsons.org.uk/selfmanagement

Our website parkinsons.org.uk has a lot of information about Parkinson's and everyday life with the condition. You can also find details of your local support team and your nearest local group meeting at parkinsons.org.uk/localtoyou

Visit parkinsons.org.uk/forum to chat to other people with similar experiences on our online discussion forum.

Thank you

Thank you to Disability Rights UK for updating this information sheet. Disability Rights UK also have a wide range of online factsheets relating to disability-related issues including Access to Work, education, the Blue Badge scheme, independent living and disabled facilities grants.

Visit their website: www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Can you help?

At Parkinson's UK, we are totally dependent on donations from individuals and organisations to fund the work that we do. There are many ways that you can help us to support people with Parkinson's.

If you would like to get involved, please contact our Supporter Services team on **0800 138 6593** or visit our website at parkinsons.org.uk/donate. Thank you.

Our information

All of our most up-to-date information is available at parkinsons.org.uk/information-support. If you'd prefer to read one of our printed leaflets or booklets, find out how to place an order at parkinsons.org.uk/ordering-resources or by calling **0300 123 3689**.

We make every effort to ensure that our services provide current, unbiased and accurate information. We hope that this will add to any professional advice you receive and help you to make any decisions you may face. Please do continue to talk to your health and social care team if you are worried about any aspect of living with Parkinson's.

If you'd like to find out more about how we put our information together, including references and the sources of evidence we use, please contact us at publications@parkinsons.org.uk

Help with Council Tax (WB12/2018)

Do you have any feedback about this information? Your comments will help us ensure our resources are as useful and easy to understand as possible. Please return to [Information Content team, Parkinson's UK, 215 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 1EJ](#), or email publications@parkinsons.org.uk. Thank you!

1. Please choose the option that best fits you.

- I have Parkinson's and was diagnosed in I care for someone with Parkinson's
 I have a friend or family member with Parkinson's I'm a professional working with people with Parkinson's
 Other (please specify)
-

2. Where did you get this information from?

- GP Specialist Parkinson's nurse Parkinson's UK local group Parkinson's UK local adviser
 Ordered directly from us Call to the helpline
 Other (please specify)
-

3. Has it answered all your questions?

- Yes, completely Yes, mostly Not sure Partly Not at all

4. How easy was it to understand?

- Very easy Easy Not sure Quite difficult Very difficult

5. Has it helped you manage your condition better, or make choices that have improved your life in some way?

- It helped a lot It helped a little No change It didn't help It made things worse

6. What is your ethnic background?*

- Asian or Asian British Black or Black British Chinese Mixed White British White other
 Other (please specify)
-

*We ask about your ethnicity to ensure our information is reaching a broad range of people. However, this question is optional.

Want to hear more from us?

- I would like a response to my feedback I would like to be a member of Parkinson's UK
 I'm interested in joining the Information review group, to offer feedback on Parkinson's UK information

If you've answered yes to any of these options, please complete your details below.

Name

Address

Email

Telephone

How would you prefer us to contact you? Email Post Phone

We will not pass on your details to any other organisation or third party. To find out more, read our privacy policy at parkinsons.org.uk/termsandconditions

Every hour, two people in the UK are told they have Parkinson's – a brain condition that turns lives upside down, leaving a future full of uncertainty.

Parkinson's UK is here to make sure people have whatever they need to take back control – from information to inspiration.

We want everyone to get the best health and social care. So we bring professionals together to drive improvements that enable people to live life to the full.

Ultimately, we want to end Parkinson's. That's why we inspire and support the international research community to develop life-changing treatments, faster. And we won't stop until we find a cure.

Together we can bring forward the day when no one fears Parkinson's.

Parkinson's UK

Free confidential helpline **0808 800 0303**

Monday to Friday 9am–7pm, Saturday 10am–2pm. Interpreting available.

NGT Relay **18001 0808 800 0303** (for use with smart phones, tablets, PCs and other devices).

For more information see www.ngts.org.uk

hello@parkinsons.org.uk

parkinsons.org.uk

Last updated July 2018. Next update available July 2019

Please check our website for the most up-to-date versions of all our information.

WB12