

Help with council tax

Money, grants and benefits

Find out more about
ways to help reduce
your Council Tax bill
and how to claim



Help with Council Tax

If you have Parkinson's, or care for someone who does, you might be worried about how you'll manage financially. But there is financial support available, so it's important to find out what you're entitled to.

Here we explain what's available to help with your Council Tax, who qualifies and how to claim.

The information in this publication is correct as of June 2024, but is subject to change. Our most up-to-date information is on our website at **parkinsons.org.uk/benefits**. Our helpline can also give advice on benefits. Call **0808 800 0303** or email **hello@parkinsons.org.uk**

What is Council Tax?

Your local council charges Council Tax to pay for services they provide for you. It applies in England, Scotland and Wales.

Every local council places the properties in their area into eight bands (nine in Wales) depending on how much they're worth. The lowest band (A) pays the least Council Tax and the highest (H in England and Scotland, and I in Wales) pays the most.

The band that applies to your home will be written on your Council Tax bill. How much each band pays varies from council to council.

Northern Ireland has a different system. There, you pay 'rates'. How much each household owes is calculated using the 'rateable capital valuation' of their property.

There are many different ways to reduce your Council Tax bill, depending on your personal circumstances.

For example, you can get discounts dependent on your situation. This includes discounts if you have a certain number of people in the house. There are also means-tested benefits that take into account your income and/or savings, such as Council Tax Support.

Help to pay when you can't afford it

There are four ways to reduce your Council Tax bill if you have low income and savings:

- Council Tax Support
- Second Adult Rebate
- Discretionary Payments
- Discretionary Relief

Each of these is described in this information.

Some people may qualify for several forms of discount at the same time, so it's possible to combine different ways of reducing your Council Tax bill. Your council should explain how to do this on its website.

Council Tax Support

In England, Scotland and Wales, if you receive one of the means-tested benefits below, you'll probably receive a substantial amount of help with your Council Tax bill:

- Income Support
- Income-based/new-style Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related/new-style Employment and Support Allowance
- High levels of Tax Credits
- Universal Credit

As your income increases, the level of help you'll receive with your Council Tax bill decreases.

Each council in England and Wales has its own way of calculating how much help you'll get towards your bill. It's best to check with your local council or visit the [advicelocal](http://www.advicelocal.uk) website: **www.advicelocal.uk**

In Scotland, there's one national system to calculate how much help you'll get. Please contact your local council for details.

Pensioners in England, Scotland and Wales can receive 100% help with their bill if they receive the Guarantee element of Pension Credit or have an income low enough to qualify for this benefit.

For all age groups and locations, the amount you get may be reduced if other adults live in your property, such as grown-up children.

This is known as a 'non-dependent deduction'.

Second Adult Rebate

This is aimed at single people who can't claim the 25% Council Tax discount given to all people living alone because another adult (who is not their partner) lives at the same address. Not all councils offer this rebate and some restrict it to pensioners only.

To qualify, the other adult must be on a low income and not be liable for the Council Tax bill.

There are different levels of help available depending on the benefits the second person receives or how much income they get.

You can't claim Second Adult Rebate at the same time as Council Tax Support.

Discretionary Payments

You might be able to get a Discretionary Payment if you're finding it difficult to pay your Council Tax bill.

Discretionary Payments are means-tested (they take into account how much income and savings you have). You'll be asked for a lot of evidence to prove you can't afford your Council Tax bill.

Discretionary Payments are a short-term solution, and can cover up to a year.

Each council has complete discretion (they can decide) on who they offer this support to, and how to offer this support. Each council has its own way of deciding who is given a payment.

If you've been refused a Discretionary Payment and think the decision is wrong, you can always ask the council to look at its decision again.

The funding for Discretionary Payments comes from central government.

Discretionary Relief

Discretionary Relief is one type of Discretionary Payment. The 1992 Local Government Finance Act granted local councils the power to locally finance and pay Local Relief for your Council Tax bill if paying the bill is causing you 'severe financial hardship'.

Each council has complete discretion in how they choose to award this relief, and who they decide to give it to. Most councils don't offer this help.

Help to pay because of your situation

There are three ways to reduce your Council Tax bill that look at your personal situation, and not how much income or savings you have. They are:

- Status Discount (including severe mental impairment)
- Disability Reduction
- Unoccupied and exempt accommodation

Each of these is described over the next few pages.

Some people may qualify for several forms of situation-based discount at the same time, so it's possible to combine different ways of reducing your Council Tax bill. This can include a combination with means-tested reductions (see above).

Your council should explain how to do this on its website.

Status Discount

Status Discount isn't means-tested (in other words, it's not affected by your income or savings).

The most common type of Status Discount is the one-person discount of 25%, available when only one adult lives in the property.

Sometimes, other people living there might be ignored too and a 25% or 50% discount might be awarded.

Adults will be ignored if they:

- are living in a shelter, hospital or care home
- are in prison or detention
- are a full-time student
- are aged 18 or 19 and in full-time education
- are under 25 and in approved training (such as student nurses, youth trainees and some apprentices)
- are a carer for at least 35 hours a week for someone who lives with them, who is not their spouse, partner or child, and who receives a qualifying benefit (see below)
- have a severe mental impairment (see next page)

Status Discount for carers

You'll receive a discount if you care for someone for 35 hours a week or more; the person you care for lives at your address, but isn't your spouse, partner, child or parent; and the person you care for receives one of the following benefits:

- the high or middle rate of the care component of Disability Living Allowance (only the high rate in Scotland)
- either rate of the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment or the enhanced rate of Adult Disability Payment (Scotland)
- Attendance Allowance (only the high rate in Scotland)
- Armed Forces Independence Payment, **or**
- the highest rate of Constant Attendance Allowance

Status Discount for severe mental impairment

Health conditions like dementia can cause a 'severe mental impairment', but many conditions can lead to an impairment of cognitive or social functioning that can be described as a 'severe mental impairment'. Some people with Parkinson's may fit this description. Ask your GP if you think this could be the case for you.

You're eligible for a Status Discount if you have a certificate from a medical professional (such as your GP or consultant) which confirms that you have a permanent 'severe mental impairment'. In addition, you must also receive one of the following benefits:

- the high or middle rate of the care component of Disability Living Allowance
- either rate of the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment or Adult Disability Payment (Scotland)
- Employment and Support Allowance

- Attendance Allowance
- Armed Forces Independence Payment
- Constant Attendance Allowance
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- Incapacity Benefit
- Income Support with a disability premium
- Universal Credit with either of the limited capability elements
- Working Tax Credits with either of the disabled workers elements, **or**
- You're over State Pension age and you would get one of the above benefits, but because of your age you don't qualify.

This is not a complete list – please check with your council for a comprehensive list of exempt people.

If you live alone and you're 'severely mentally impaired', you're completely exempt from paying Council Tax – see 'Exempt and unoccupied accommodation' on page 11.

It's possible for more than one person in a property to be ignored. For example, if a sister provides 35 hours or more care per week for her brother who has a severe mental impairment and he qualifies for the enhanced rate of Personal Independence Payment, both the sister and brother will be ignored. And if they're the only two people in the house then they will get a 50% discount on their Council Tax bill.

The Disability Reduction Scheme

This scheme in England, Scotland and Wales is not means-tested so it doesn't take into account your income or savings. You don't have to receive any benefits to get it either.

If you qualify, the scheme reduces your Council Tax bill by one banding, for example, from Band C to Band B, if your home has been adapted or changed in some way for someone with a substantial and permanent disability.

To qualify, your home should have at least one of the following:

- an additional bathroom or kitchen (which has been added for a disabled person to use)
- a room (other than a toilet, bathroom or kitchen) which is used mainly by a disabled person for treatment or therapy
- enough space in the property for a wheelchair to be used indoors (the property may have been adapted to cater for wheelchair use)

Each council has its own application form for the Disability Reduction Scheme. Councils always assess eligibility through a home visit, so they can see the changes you've made. The reduction can be backdated to the date you made the alteration(s) to your home.

Disabled Person's Allowance (Northern Ireland)

Disabled Person's Allowance is Northern Ireland's equivalent of the Disability Reduction Scheme.

It gives you a 25% discount in rates for any household where the property has been adapted or has had additional facilities added to suit a disabled person's needs.

Exempt and unoccupied accommodation

Some properties and some people in certain circumstances are completely exempt from Council Tax liability (meaning you don't have to pay).

You're exempt from paying if you or your property meet one of the following criteria:

- Everyone living in the property is under the age of 18.
- You're in prison.
- You're in hospital or a care home.
- You're living away from the property elsewhere to care for someone and the property is unoccupied.
- You're a student studying elsewhere and the property is unoccupied.
- Everyone in the property is a full-time student.
- The only person living in the property has died and probate has yet to be granted (after probate has been granted, the property is exempt for a further six months too).
- Occupation of the property is forbidden by law (for example, because of planning restrictions or it's derelict).
- The property has been repossessed.

- The person living in the property who is liable to pay Council Tax has been declared bankrupt and the property is part of the bankruptcy.
- All the resident(s) of the property is/are severely mentally impaired.

This is not a complete listing. Please check with your council for a comprehensive list of exempt properties and exempt people.

If everyone living in the property is severely mentally impaired, they must also each receive one of the qualifying benefits listed under the heading 'Status Discount for severe mental impairment' (see pages 8-9).

Secondly, a qualified medical practitioner (usually your doctor) must confirm to the council that in their medical opinion, all resident(s) of the property have an impairment of their cognitive and social functioning that appears to be permanent, and they are, as a result, 'severely mentally impaired'.

How can I appeal a decision?

In the first instance, you should appeal a Council Tax decision to your local council. If it isn't resolved, in England and Wales it then goes to the Valuation Tribunal. In Scotland it goes to the Valuation Appeals Committee.

You can appeal against decisions on:

- Council Tax exemptions
- Council Tax liability to pay
- where you are resident

- whether a Status Discount applies
- whether a Disability Reduction applies
- Council Tax Support awards
- Discretionary Payment award decisions
- Council Tax banding

There is no time limit for lodging an appeal, but you should put your appeal in writing. If an appeal to your local authority is refused, you will be able to appeal to the relevant body:

- 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 hasn't 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 hasn't 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 have specialist experience and knowledge of Parkinson's. They can:

- support people coming to terms with their Parkinson's diagnosis
- help people to manage their medication, so they get the best results and fewer side effects
- make referrals to other professionals such as speech and language therapists and physiotherapists

Some nurses are based in the community, such as your GP surgery. Others are based in hospital settings and clinics.

Talk to your GP or specialist for more details on speaking to a Parkinson's nurse.

Parkinson's UK information and support

Whatever your journey with Parkinson's, you're not alone.

From the moment you or someone you care about is diagnosed, we have information and support for you.

Speak to one of our friendly expert advisers, including specialist Parkinson's nurses, care advisers, and benefits and employment advisers. We've got information and advice on all aspects of living with Parkinson's.

Get help managing your diagnosis. Our information packs, webinars, courses and support groups can help you and your loved ones understand your Parkinson's diagnosis and better manage your symptoms.

Read our up to date, reliable health information. Our website, booklets and magazines can help you better understand Parkinson's. They're full of tips and advice on managing your condition and supporting a loved one.

Find ways to get active, stay active and live well with Parkinson's. Whatever your fitness level, we'll help you find the right activities for you.

Connect with other people with Parkinson's, families, friends and carers. Across the UK, in your local area or online. We'll help you meet others who understand what you're going through, because they're going through it too.

Find out more

- Call our helpline on **0808 800 0303** or email **hello@parkinsons.org.uk** to speak to an expert adviser.
- Visit **parkinsons.org.uk/information-and-support** to read our information or find support that's local to you.
- Call **0330 124 3250** or visit **parkinsons.org.uk/order-print-booklets** to order free printed information.

Thank you

Thank you very much to everyone who contributed to or reviewed this information.

Thanks also to our information review group and other people affected by Parkinson's who provided feedback.

Feedback

If you have any comments or feedback about our information, please call **0800 138 6593**, email **feedback@parkinsons.org.uk**, or write to us at Parkinson's UK, 50 Broadway, London, SW1H 0BL.

If you'd like to find out more about how we put our information together, or be part of the team that reviews our health content, please contact us at **healthcontent@parkinsons.org.uk** or visit our website at **parkinsons.org.uk/health-content**.

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 Care team on **0800 138 6593** or visit our website at **parkinsons.org.uk/donate**.

Thank you.

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We're Parkinson's UK,
the charity that's
here to support every
Parkinson's journey.
Every step of the way.

Free confidential helpline **0808 800 0303**
Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm,
Saturday 10am to 2pm (interpreting available)
Relay UK **18001 0808 800 0303** (for textphone users only)
hello@parkinsons.org.uk | parkinsons.org.uk

Parkinson's UK, 50 Broadway, London SW1H 0DB



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