

A basic guide to Council Tax Support 2017/18



North Tyneside Council

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What is Council Tax Support (CTS)?

Council Tax Support is a scheme to help people on low income or welfare benefits pay their Council Tax.

The amount of support you are entitled to depends on the amount of income and capital you have, your household circumstances and whether you are working age or pensionable age.

The maximum amount of Council Tax Support

From April 2017 Council Tax Support is now calculated on:

- 87.5% of your Council Tax liability, if you are a working age claimant; or
- 100% of your Council Tax liability, if you are a pensionable age claimant.

What is meant by pensionable age?

A person who is 'pensionable age' is someone who has reached the age to qualify for State Pension Credit; and either he/she or his/her partner (if he/she has one) are not claiming Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance (income-based), Employment and Support Allowance (income related), or Universal Credit (when this is implemented).

If either the claimant or their partner is claiming Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance (income-based), Employment and Support Allowance (income-related), or Universal Credit then they will be treated as a working age claimant.

Who can claim Council Tax Support?

With a few exceptions, anyone who is liable for Council Tax can claim Council Tax Support. The main exceptions are:

- Some people with capital and/or assets of £16,000 or more
- Certain people from abroad
- Certain students

You must be living in the UK to claim Council Tax Support. If you are from overseas or have recently come to live in the UK you may not be entitled to claim, depending on your immigration status.

How do I claim?

There is no automatic entitlement to Council Tax Support and we must have a valid claim to consider entitlement.

If you make a claim for Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance (income based) or Employment Support Allowance (income related) the information that is used for these claims is passed to the Local Authority if you want to make a claim for Council Tax Support.

If you make a claim for Pension Credit, and you also want to claim Council Tax Support the information that is used for your Pension Credit claim is passed to the Local Authority.

If you claim Universal Credit or have any other income not mentioned above you will need to complete an online application form, this is available at www.northtyneside.gov.uk. For further guidance you can visit a local Customer First Centre.

You must provide the necessary information or documentary evidence as requested on the claim form in support of your claim; failure to do so may delay your claim.

Sometimes we will write to you and ask you to fill in another form or to provide some further information or evidence. If we do this, you must supply what we have requested within one month. Failure to provide it within the time limit may result in loss of entitlement.

What will you use to work out my Council Tax Support?

When we work out your Council Tax Support we take into account a number of things such as:

- the age, health, income and capital for you and your partner if you have one
- your Applicable Amount (we will tell you more about this later in this booklet)
- any dependant children that live with you
- the age and income of any non-dependants that live with you (non dependants are explained in more detail later in this booklet)
- the Council Tax you pay

What savings are taken into account?

We need to know about all of your savings and investments. This includes things like Shares, National Savings Certificates, Investment Plans and any other properties you own. You need to tell us about all Bank or Building Society accounts that you have even if they don't have any money in them or you only use them to have benefits or wages paid into them.

If you have savings or investments worth £16,000 or more, and you are not claiming Guarantee Pension Credit, you are not entitled to Council Tax Support.

- For working age claimants we ignore any savings up to £6000 and for every £250 or part of £250 that you have over £6000, we add £1 a week to your income.
- For claimants who are pensionable age we ignore any savings up to £10,000, but for every £500 or part of £500 that you have over £10,000, we add £1 a week to your income.

What expenses are taken into account?

We can take into account some expenses such as deducting 50% of pension contributions if you work. If you are working or considered to be in remunerative work we can take into account child care costs if you use registered childcare.

What is an Applicable Amount?

This is the amount we compare your income against to decide how much Council Tax Support we can award you. The level of Applicable Amount depends on how your household is made up. We take into account you, your partner (if you have one) and any children you have and add in any Premiums you may be entitled to.

Additional allowances called 'Premiums' are awarded in certain circumstances for example if you or your partner is elderly or you, your partner or a dependant child is disabled.

The Family Premium will no longer apply to new claims made after 1 May 2016 where there is a responsibility for a child or young person or for current claims where there is responsibility for a child for the first time or a first child is born after 1st May 2016.

Those with an existing claim who had responsibility for a child at the 30 April 2016 will continue to receive the Family Premium until that responsibility or the Council Tax Support claim ceases. Once this has occurred after 1st May 2016, the Family Premium will not be reinstated if the claimant reclaims Council Tax Support in the future.

Generally for new claims made from April 2017 there is a maximum of up to two child personal allowances included in the Applicable Amount. This follows the rules for Housing Benefit.

What is a non-dependant?

We call any adult who lives in your household but is not your partner, a 'non-dependant'. We normally deduct some of your benefit for each non-dependant who lives with you. This is called a non-dependant deduction. There are two sets of rates of deductions, one for working age claimants and one for pensionable age claimants. The amount that we take off depends upon the income and age of the non-dependant.

We won't make any deduction for a non-dependant if you are blind; receive the care component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Attendance Allowance (AA), Personal Independence Payments (PIP) or Armed Forces Independence Payments (AFIP)

How will you work out how much Council Tax Support I am entitled to?

Working age claimants

From April 2017 the maximum amount of Council Tax Support you can claim is 87.5% of your Council Tax liability after any other discounts have been applied. Depending on your circumstances this will reduce further if your income is above your Applicable Amount, or you have non dependant charges applied.

If you are receiving:

- Jobseeker's Allowance (income-based), Employment and Support Allowance (income related), or
- Your income is below your applicable amount, and
- You have no non-dependants.

You will be entitled to maximum Council Tax Support (from April 2017 this will be 87.5% of your Council Tax liability for the current year).

However if you don't get any of the above mentioned benefits and your income is above your applicable amount, we will take 20p off the maximum Council Tax Support for every £1.00 of your income that is over your applicable amount.

Example 1

Mrs Jones has income which is £2.00 over her Applicable Amount, so the maximum Council Tax Support which is 87.5% of her council Tax liability is reduced by 40 pence per week (20% of £2.00).

Pensionable age claimants

The maximum amount of Council Tax Support you can claim if you are of pensionable age is 100%. Depending on your circumstances this will reduce further if your income is above your Applicable Amount.

If you are receiving:

- Pension Credit Guarantee, or
- Your income is below your Applicable Amount and
- You have no non-dependants

You will be entitled to maximum Council Tax Support (100% of your Council Tax liability for the current year).

However if you don't get Pension Credit Guarantee and your income is above your Applicable Amount, we will take 20p off the maximum Council Tax Support for every £1 of your income that is over your Applicable Amount.

Example 2

Mrs Smith has income which is £2.00 over her Applicable Amount, so the maximum Council Tax Support which is 100% of her council Tax liability is reduced by 40 pence per week (20% of £2.00).

Is there a minimum amount of Council Tax Support?

There is no minimum amount of Council Tax Support.

When will Council Tax Support start?

Generally a claim will start from the Monday following the date the claim is made, although there may be circumstances when a claim can start earlier depending on when a tenancy starts.

Can you backdate my claim?

Council Tax Support can be backdated in certain circumstances.

Working age claimants, can only have their new claim backdated by a maximum period of **four weeks**. You will need to prove that you had 'good cause' for not claiming sooner and that 'good cause' existed throughout the whole of the period you are claiming backdated benefit for.

For pensionable age claimants the maximum period for backdating is three months. However Pensioner claimants do not have to prove 'good cause'.

You can request that your Council Tax Support is backdated on the application form, when you first make your claim or when you receive your decision notice.

What is an Extended Payment?

Extended Payment is an extra four weeks of Council Tax Support which you may be entitled to, if you or your partner start work after receiving certain state benefits for six months. We pay this at the same rate as you were getting before you started work.

How will I be paid?

Council Tax Support will reduce the amount of Council Tax you have to pay.

If my circumstances change do I have to tell you?

If you have a change in your circumstances that you think might affect your entitlement you must tell us about it – you can use the online change in circumstance form, but we may still need evidence of the change. You must do this without delay and within 21 days at the latest. If you fail to notify a change in circumstances you may be liable to prosecution or the Local Authority could impose a penalty.

Changes you should tell us about

The list is not exhaustive but a change in your circumstance could be something like:

- Any of your children leave school or leave home;
- Anyone moves into or out of your home, including lodgers and sub tenants;
- Your income or the income of anyone living with you changes;
- Your savings or investments change;
- You or anyone living with you becomes a student, goes into hospital or a nursing home, goes into prison, or changes or leaves a job.

Changes in circumstances are effective generally from the Monday following the date of change.

What if I have received too much Council Tax Support?

You could receive too much Council Tax Support because you have had a change in your circumstances that meant you are not entitled to as much, if this occurs we will amend the amount of Council Tax you have to pay.

What if I am unhappy about my Council Tax Support?

If you are unhappy about a decision on your Council Tax Support you should write to us and tell us why. You can request a statement to explain your Council Tax Support within one month of receiving your Council Tax Support notice.

The Local Authority will write to you within two months of when you requested a statement and explain how we have calculated your Council Tax Support.

If you are still unhappy you can make an appeal directly to the Valuation Tribunal and ask them to look at your case.

If you prefer, you can write directly to the Valuation Tribunal without requesting a statement from us first.

What is Second Adult Rebate?

From April 2013 Second Adult Rebate can only be claimed by pensionable age claimants. When we work out Second Adult Rebate we use the income and circumstances of other adults who live with you. You can only claim Second Adult Rebate if you are the only person who has to pay Council Tax for your home and you have other adults living with you. It cannot be paid if the other adult is a partner or rents a room in the home.

The most Second Adult Rebate that you can claim is 25% of your Council Tax liability. If you are eligible for both Council Tax Support and second adult rebate, we will work out which one will reduce your bill the most and grant you that entitlement.

Useful contact numbers

Working Homes Outreach Team

The Working Homes Outreach Team can help you with employment advice; they provide one to one advice on job search, support with application forms, interview coaching and provide access to training.

Tel: (0191) 643 8504

Email: employability.skills@northtyneside.gov.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau

Telephone advice line: 0344 245 1288

www.ntcab.org.uk

StepChange

Debt charity

Tel: 0800 138 1111

www.stepchange.org

Five Lamps (Registered charity)

General enquiries, utility bill arrears, support & guidance moving into work.

Tel: 01642 608316

Email: info@fivelamps.org.uk

Jobcentre Plus

Tel: 0800 055 6688

www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus

Money Advice Service

Tel: 0300 500 5000

www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk

You can get more information at www.gov.uk it provides information on public services in one place.

Council contact details

Telephone Contact Centre
Tel: 0345 2000 101
Monday to Friday, 7.30am - 8pm

Email:
contact.us@northtyneside.gov.uk
benefits@northtyneside.gov.uk
envirolink@northtyneside.gov.uk
nt.repairs@kier.co.uk

Killingworth Customer First Centre

White Swan Centre, Citadel East, Killingworth, NE12 6SS

Monday to Thursday 9am - 4.30pm
Friday 9am - 4pm

North Shields Customer First Centre

Northumberland Square, North Shields, NE30 1QU

Monday to Thursday 9am - 4.30pm
Friday 9am - 4pm

Wallsend Customer First Centre

16 The Forum, Wallsend, NE28 8JR

Monday to Thursday 9am - 4.30pm
Friday 9am - 4pm

Whitley Bay Customer First Centre

York Road, Whitley Bay, NE26 1AB

Monday to Thursday 9am - 4.30pm
Friday 9am - 4pm

Report fraud

Tel: 0800 854 440
Text phone: 0800 328 0512



North Tyneside Council

North Tyneside Council
Revenue and Benefit Services
Quadrant East, The Silverlink North
Cobalt Business Park, North Tyneside, NE27 0BY