

April 2024



# Council Tax and Council Tax Reduction



# Who we are

**Age Scotland is the national charity for older people. We work to improve the lives of everyone over the age of 50 and promote their rights and interests.**

**Our vision** is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

**Our mission** is to inspire, involve and empower older people in Scotland, and influence others, so that people enjoy better later lives.

**We have three strategic aims:**



**We help older people to be as well as they can be**



**We promote a positive view of ageing and later life**



**We tackle loneliness and isolation**

# How we can help

**We know that growing older doesn't come with a manual. Later life can bring changes and opportunities to your life and you may need to know about rights, organisations and services which are unfamiliar to you.**

That's why we provide free information and advice to help you on a range of topics including benefits and entitlements, social care, legal issues such as Power of Attorney, housing and much more. All of our guides are available to download for free from our website, or you can contact our helpline team to have copies posted to you for free.

Our **helpline** is a free, confidential phone service for older people, their carers and families in Scotland looking for information and advice.

Later life can bring times when you just need someone to talk to. Our **friendship line** is part of our wider helpline and older people can call us for a chat. We're here to listen, provide friendship and offer support.



**Call us free on: 0800 12 44 222**  
**(Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm)**



**Visit [agescotland.org.uk](https://agescotland.org.uk)**  
**to find out more.**



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# Understanding Council Tax

Council Tax can be complicated as there are rules about who is liable to pay the bill, how the bill is calculated and how the bill may be reduced.

This guide looks at the rules most likely to apply to older people in Scotland. If your situation is not covered, or for more detailed advice, call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222**.

## What is Council Tax?

Council Tax is a property-based tax which is charged on homes such as flats and houses, houseboats and mobile homes.

Each property receives one Council Tax bill.

Council Tax is managed by your local council; you should contact them if you have any queries about your bill, or to apply for a reduction, discount or exemption.

## How is Council Tax worked out?

Every home is placed in one of eight Council Tax bands depending on what its value was in 1991. The lowest band is A and the highest is H. Each council sets the charge for band D properties in their area. The charges for other bands are then worked out as a proportion of the band D charge.

Changes in house prices since 1991 do not affect Council Tax valuations. However, changes to a property, such as an extension or change of layout, can lead to the Council Tax band of a property being changed when it is sold.



## Who has to pay Council Tax?

The person responsible for the Council Tax bill is usually someone who lives in the property as their normal home. They may be the homeowner, or they might be renting the property from a private landlord, council or housing association. Sometimes more than one person is responsible for the bill, for example a couple living together, joint owners or joint tenants.

If you rent from a landlord who lives with you, or if you live in a care home, hostel, or religious community, the owner of the property is responsible for the bill.





## Paying your Council Tax bill

Council Tax bills are usually sent out in March each year. As long as you are not behind with your Council Tax payments, you have the right to pay your bill over 10 instalments. Many councils also allow you to pay over 12 months, or make weekly payments.

There are usually several different ways you can pay, for example by Direct Debit, through online banking or in cash using Paypoint or Payzone cards.

Paying your Council Tax bill is important. If you don't pay on time the council will send you a reminder notice. If you continue not to pay, they may take court action, which will increase the amount you owe.

If you are struggling to keep up with your payments, contact your council to discuss it with them, as they may be able to offer different payment arrangements.

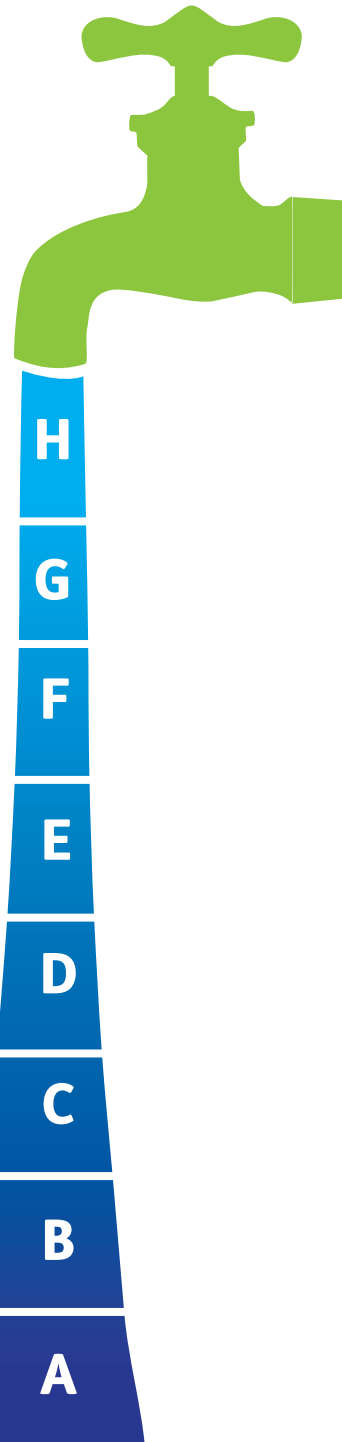
You may also be entitled to help with your Council Tax bill in some situations. The next section of this guide explains some of the types of help that are available. You can also speak to the Age Scotland helpline for advice, and for a free benefit check to see if you are entitled to any financial help with your Council Tax.



## Water and sewerage charges

If your home has mains water or a connection to public sewerage, your Council Tax bill will usually include charges for these from Scottish Water. If you get a discount or reduction on your Council Tax you may also get a discount on your water and sewerage charges.

For example, if you are getting a 25% discount because you are the only person living in your home, or because only one adult in the property is counted for Council Tax purposes, you will also receive a 25% discount on water and sewerage charges.







# Help with the cost of Council Tax

Depending on your circumstances, you may not have to pay the full amount of Council Tax. You might be able to get a reduction, discount or exemption by applying to your local council. If you are eligible for more than one type of help, you will be given the help that makes your Council Tax bill the lowest.



## Council Tax Reduction

You may be able to get a reduction on your Council Tax bill if you have a low income or if you claim certain benefits. In some circumstances, the amount of Council Tax you need to pay may be reduced to zero. You will still need to pay water and sewerage charges, but these may also be reduced. This discount should be applied automatically to your bill.

Situations that may entitle you to Council Tax Reduction:

- you have a low income and less than £16,000 in savings
- you get the Guarantee part of Pension Credit, regardless of your savings
- your home is in band E, F, G or H and your income is less than £321 per week if you are single, or £479 a week as a couple
- you get certain benefits, such as Attendance Allowance, Adult Disability Payment, or a carer benefit, or you have an ‘underlying entitlement’ to a carer benefit. Getting these benefits may give you a further reduction if you are already eligible for Council Tax Reduction for any other reason.

The Council Tax Reduction you get will depend on:

- your household income and savings
- your residency status
- whether you receive certain benefits
- who else lives with you and their circumstances.



## How to apply for Council Tax Reduction

You will need to contact your local council to apply for Council Tax Reduction. You can find their contact details by entering your postcode at [www.gov.uk/find-local-council](http://www.gov.uk/find-local-council) or call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** for help finding the right number.

You will usually need to provide evidence of income and savings for yourself, your partner if you have one, and any other adults who live with you. If you do not have all this information when you apply, you can fill in what you do have and send the rest within a month.

Council Tax Reduction can be backdated in certain circumstances, so it is worth asking about this when you claim. For example, if your income changed because you reached your State Pension age and you did not apply for Council Tax Reduction immediately, you can have your claim backdated for up to 3 months. You can also have a claim backdated for up to 6 months if you can show you had a good reason for not applying sooner, for example because you were in hospital.

If you are successful in getting Council Tax Reduction, it is important to let the council know straight away of any changes to your income or household that might affect your eligibility.



## Second Adult Rebate

Second Adult Rebate may reduce your Council Tax bill if someone lives with you who is not a partner or dependent child. They must have a weekly income of less than £333 before tax, be over 18, not pay you rent as a sub-tenant or boarder, and not be paying Council Tax themselves.

If you qualify for both Council Tax Reduction and Second Adult Rebate, the council will give you the one that helps you most.

## Single Person Discount

Council Tax charges assume that there are two or more people over the age of 18 living in each home. There is a 25% discount on the bill if only one person counts as living there, regardless of your income and savings. The discount applies to the water and sewerage part of your bill too.

People who live in a property but do not count for Council Tax purposes include:

- someone who receives a disability benefit like Attendance Allowance, whose doctor has completed a certificate to say that they are severely mentally impaired (see the next page)
- a live-in carer, whether paid or not, caring for 35 hours or more a week for someone who receives a disability benefit like Attendance Allowance. This does not apply if you are caring for your partner or dependent child.



## Severe mental impairment exemptions

People who are assessed as having a severe mental impairment may be entitled to a Council Tax exemption. This will include some people who are living with dementia. This exemption means that:

- if one adult living at the property has a severe mental impairment, and only one other adult is living there, the property is treated as a single-adult household. They will therefore get the Single Person Discount of 25% off their Council Tax bill.
- if all adults living at the property have a severe mental impairment, they will get a 100% discount, meaning they will not be charged any Council Tax.

To qualify as having a severe mental impairment, a doctor must sign a certificate saying the person has a severe mental impairment. The person must also be eligible for a disability-related benefit such as Attendance Allowance, Adult Disability Payment (daily living component) or Personal Independence Payment (daily living component).



## Disability Reduction Scheme

The Disability Reduction Scheme may reduce the amount you need to pay if you or someone you live with, has a permanent disability, and you have one of the following:

- an additional bathroom or kitchen for the use of the disabled person
- a room (other than a bathroom, kitchen or toilet) mainly used by the disabled person to meet their needs
- extra space indoors which is needed so someone can use a wheelchair.

The Disability Reduction Scheme reduces your Council Tax payment by one Council Tax band, or reduces the amount you have to pay if you are already in the lowest band.

## Unoccupied property exemptions

Some councils will offer a discount on Council Tax if a property will be unoccupied because:

- you are in the process of renovating it
- it is up for sale or rent.

Each council gets to decide for themselves if they will offer a discount, how much they will offer and for how long.

If a property has been empty for 12 months or more and does not qualify for a discount, the council is allowed to charge double the amount of council tax.



## Second homes and holiday homes

Councils can decide to offer a second homes discount of between 10% and 50% on furnished second homes or holiday homes. These are homes that are not anyone's normal home but are lived in for at least 25 days per year. If the home is job-related or is a purpose-built holiday home, a 50% discount should be given. However, in most cases councils do not have to offer a discount, and many charge the full rate. Check with your local council to find out their rules.

## Other discounts

Councils can make other discounts available in their area, for example because of hardship or a natural disaster. Governments can also agree rebates for eligible households to tackle specific problems, such as the cost-of-living rebate in 2022.

## What if my application is turned down?

If you disagree with a decision you have received about an application for Council Tax Reduction, Exemption, Discount or Liability, you can ask the council to look at the decision again. You have two months from the date of the decision to do this. You should write to them explaining what you think they have got wrong, and a council employee who was not involved in the original decision will review it. You will get a letter when the review has been completed, telling you whether the decision has changed.

If you are still unhappy with the decision, you can ask the Local Taxation Chamber for an independent review. You must do this within six weeks of the council's review decision.

You can contact the **Local Taxation Chamber** on **01698 390 012** or see their website **[www.localtaxationchamber.scot](http://www.localtaxationchamber.scot)**.



# Useful contacts

## Age Scotland helpline: 0800 12 44 222

The Age Scotland helpline provides information, friendship and advice to older people, their relatives and carers.

If you need an interpreter call **0800 12 44 222** and simply state the language you need e.g. Polish or Urdu. Stay on the line for a few minutes and the Age Scotland helpline will do the rest.

You can call us for a copy of our publications list. You can also download or order publications at **[www.agescotland.org.uk](http://www.agescotland.org.uk)**.

## Citizens Advice Scotland

Citizens Advice Scotland has developed an online calculator that can help you work out whether you are entitled to help with Council Tax. See their website at **[www.checkmycounciltax.scot](http://www.checkmycounciltax.scot)**.

For free, confidential and independent advice on a wide range of topics including housing, money, benefits, employment and consumer issues, you can contact **Citizens Advice Scotland** on **0800 028 1456**, or visit their website **[www.cas.org.uk](http://www.cas.org.uk)**.



This information guide has been prepared by Age Scotland and contains general advice only. It should not be relied upon as a basis for any decision or action, nor used as a substitute for professional advice. Neither Age Scotland nor any of its subsidiary companies or charities accepts any liability arising from its use and it is the reader's sole responsibility to ensure any information is up to date and accurate.

Please note that the inclusion of named agencies, websites, companies, products, services or publications in this information guide does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by Age Scotland or any of its subsidiary companies or charities.

# How you can help

## Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

All the information we provide is free and impartial. It helps older people access their rights and entitlements and can be life changing.

We are also a lifeline for older people who are feeling lonely and isolated. You can help us to support older people who need us most.

Together, we can make a difference.



### Make a donation

No matter how small or large, donations make a massive difference and help us continue our important work.

- ▶ Call **03330 15 14 60**
- ▶ Visit **age.scot/donate**
- ▶ Text **AGESCOTGIVE** to **70085** to donate £5\*
- ▶ Complete the **donation form** and return by Freepost



### Fundraise

Whether it's having a bake sale or running a marathon, there are so many ways to raise vital funds to support our work. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/fundraise**.



### Leave us a gift in your Will

By choosing to leave us a gift in your Will, you can help us to continue being there for older people in the years to come. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/legacy**.

\*Texts cost £5 plus one standard rate message

# Please donate today



Complete the form and return to RSBS-KEHC-GBBC, Age Scotland, Edinburgh, EH9 1PR

## Your details

Title:	Forename:	Surname:
Address:		
	City:	
Postcode:	Date of birth:	

By providing us with your telephone number and email address you are consenting to us contacting you via phone, text and email.

Email:	
Home tel:	Mobile tel:

## I WOULD LIKE TO DONATE

£75  £50  £25  Other (£)

I wish to pay by (please tick):

MasterCard  Visa  CAF

CharityCard  Cheque  (payable to Age Scotland)

Signature

Name on Card

Card No.

Expiry date  Security code

Date

I prefer not to receive a thank you acknowledgement for this donation

I would like information about leaving a gift in my Will

## I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE MY DONATION WORTH 25% MORE

*giftaid it*

I want Age Scotland\*\* and its partner charities to treat all donations I have made for the four years prior to this year, and all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise, as Gift Aid donations.

I am a UK tax payer and understand that if I pay less income tax and/or capital gains tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Yes, I want Age Scotland\*\* to claim Gift Aid on my donations

I do not wish you to claim Gift Aid on my donations

Date

## Keeping in touch

We will stay in contact by post unless you ask us not to. We will never sell your data and we promise to keep your details safe and secure. You can change your mind at any time by emailing us on [contact@agescotland.org.uk](mailto:contact@agescotland.org.uk) or calling us on 0333 323 2400.

You can read Age Scotland's privacy policy at [age.scot/privacypolicy](https://www.agescotland.org.uk/age.scot/privacypolicy).

\*\*Age Scotland, part of the Age Network, is an independent charity dedicated to improving the later lives of everyone on the ageing journey, within a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in Scotland.  
Registration Number: 153343. Charity Number: SC010100. Registered Office: Causewayside House, 160 Causewayside, Edinburgh EH9 1PR.

**Age Scotland is the national charity for older people. We work to improve the lives of everyone over the age of 50 so that they can love later life.**

**Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.**

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## Let's keep in touch

### Contact us:

#### Head office

0333 323 2400

#### Age Scotland helpline

0800 12 44 222

#### Email

info@agescotland.org.uk

#### Visit our website

www.agescotland.org.uk



### Sign up to our newsletter

Our regular newsletters by email contain details of our campaigns, services and how you can support our work.

Sign up today at [agescot/roundup](https://www.agescotland.org.uk/agescot/roundup)



### Follow us on social media

Our social media channels are a great way to keep up to date with our work and issues that affect older people.



We are grateful to the Scottish Government for part-funding this publication

