

Leaflet MCL9

Council Tax Discounts

(including Disabled Relief)



Leaflets and where to get them

All of these leaflets are available free of charge. You can get them from the One Stop Shops, Citizen Advice Bureaux and libraries. You can also download copies on www.knowsley.gov.uk.

For your ease, all of the leaflets have a reference to identify them:

- MCL1** Starting Work
- MCL2** Help with Rent
- MCL3** Help with Council Tax (a guide to Council Tax Benefit)
- MCL4** How to claim Housing Benefit & Council Tax Benefit
- MCL5** Help with Disputing a Benefit Decision
- MCL6** Housing Benefit information for Private Landlords
- MCL7** Discretionary Housing Payments - Housing & Council Tax Benefit
- MCL8** Housing & Council Tax Benefit for Young People
- MCL9** Council Tax Discounts (including Disabled Relief)
- MCL10** A guide to Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit & Council Tax for Students



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The discounts detailed in this leaflet are not means tested. They are available to anyone who meets the qualifying conditions, regardless of their income or capital.

If you want to know about reductions for people on a low income, please see our leaflet called "Help with Council Tax - a guide to Council Tax Benefit".

Introduction

Council Tax is charged on the basis that there are two adults aged 18 or over living in a property. If there are less than two adults, a discount can be claimed.

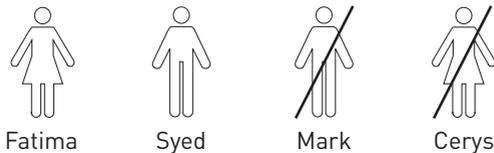
1. Sole Occupier Discount

If there is only one adult living in a property, a 25% discount can be claimed.

2. Are all the adults living in a property counted?

No, some adults may not be counted (see section 3 "Who is not counted?"). This means that even if there are two or more adults living in a property, you may still receive a discount of 25% or even 50%. See examples below.

Example 1:



There are four adults living here. Cerys is not counted as she is a student. Mark is not counted as he is an apprentice. There are still two adults counted so no discount applies.

Example 2:



There are three adults living here. John is not counted, as he's a Youth Training trainee. Sarah is not counted as she is a Student Nurse. One adult is counted, so a 25% discount will apply.

Example 3:



Liz



Debbie

There are two adults living here, Liz is not counted as she is severely mentally impaired. Debbie is not counted as she is her carer. None of the adults living at the property are counted, so a 50% discount will apply.

3. Who is not counted?

Carers

You will not be counted if you live with and care for a person who is receiving one of certain allowances or disablement pensions. You must be providing care for at least 35 hours a week on average. You will be counted if you are caring for your husband, wife or civil partner (or partner you live with as husband, wife or civil partner), or your child under 18 years old.

People who are severely mentally impaired

People who are severely mentally impaired are not counted. For Council Tax purposes, a person is regarded as severely mentally impaired if he or she has a severe impairment of intelligence and social functioning, however caused, which appears to be permanent. This may include people with Alzheimer's, Dementia or similar illnesses.

In order not to be counted, a person will need a certificate from his or her doctor to say that he or she is severely mentally impaired. The person must also be entitled to one of a number of benefits including certain disability benefits, unemployment allowances or attendance allowances.

Child Benefit

You will also not be counted if you are at least 18 years old and someone is receiving child benefit for you.

If you are under 20 and left school after 30 April, you will not be counted until 1 November of the same year. (You may continue to get a discount as a student if you go on to further education).

Apprentices

You will not be counted if you are an apprentice employed to learn a job, and, as part of that learning, are undertaking training leading to a qualification recognised by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications. You must be paid no more than £195 per week (before tax).

Youth Training trainees

You will not be counted if you are under 25 and are receiving training which is funded by The Learning and Skills Council for England, in line with an individual training plan under the Youth Training Scheme, such as “programme led apprenticeships” or E2E (entry to employment).

Students

You will not be counted if you are a student (or an overseas student) on a full-time or qualifying course of education.

You are a student if you are:

- Attending a university or college course which lasts for at least an academic year, takes at least 24 weeks a year and involves at least 21 hours of study per week during term-time; or
- Under the age of 20 years and remain in further education. The course must last for at least 3 months during which the student is required to study for more than 12 hours per week. Correspondence courses, evening classes, or courses taken in connection with a person's job, such as on day-release are not included
- Student nurses studying academic courses at university or higher education colleges, are classed as students for Council Tax purposes
- Foreign language assistants registered with the Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges are also treated as students. You will not be counted if you are the spouse or dependant of a student, are not a British Citizen, and are prevented by the terms of your permission to be in the UK either from taking paid employment or from claiming benefits.

Student nurses

You will not be counted if you are a student nurse on a course leading to registration on any of Parts 1 to 6, or 8 of the nursing register. Only student nurses studying for their first inclusion on the register are not counted.

Nurses who are already on the register or are taking further courses are counted. Student nurses studying academic courses at university or higher education colleges are excluded from the definition as they are considered students.

Resident hospital patients

You will not be counted if you are a patient in a hospital, which is your only or main home. If you are in hospital for a short time and you have a home elsewhere, you will carry on paying Council Tax at your home.

People living in Residential Care Homes, Nursing Homes, Mental Nursing Homes and Hostels providing a high level care

You will not be counted if you live, and are receiving care, in one of these homes or hostels, as long as it's your only or main home.

People staying in certain hostels or night shelters

A person whose main or only residence is in a property such as a short stay hostel or night shelter providing communal accommodation for people who have 'no fixed abode' and 'no settled way of life' is not counted. These may include hostels run by the Salvation Army or Church Army.

People in Prison

Prisoners who are on remand or in prison are not counted. However, people who are imprisoned for not paying a fine or their Council Tax are counted.

Members of religious communities

You will not be counted if you are a member of a religious community, provided that you depend on the community for your material needs and have no personal income or capital, for example monks and nuns etc.

Only members of religious communities whose main work is prayer, contemplation, the relief of suffering, education or any combinations of these are not counted.

Foreign Diplomats

This applies to any person who has diplomatic privileges and immunities.

Members (and Dependants) Of Visiting Forces and Members (and Dependants) of International Headquarters and Defence Organisations

If you think this relates to you, please contact us for further information.

4. How do I apply for a discount?

The person responsible for paying the Council Tax must apply in writing. Forms are available at all of the One Stop Shops, from our website or you can telephone our Contact Centre and ask for a form.

5. How long will the discount last?

If a discount is granted, it will last as long as the qualifying conditions are met. However, the council may contact you from time to time to ensure that you should still be receiving a discount. If your circumstances change you must contact us straight away.

6. What is Disabled Relief?

Disabled relief is a reduction in your Council Tax if there is a disabled person, whether adult or child, in your household and you can answer yes to one of the following:

- Do you have a second bathroom used for 'personal washing' (not just a toilet/washbasin), which is needed and predominantly used by the disabled person?
- Do you have a second kitchen, which is needed and predominantly used by the disabled person?
- Is a wheelchair used indoors?
- Is there a room that is predominantly used by the disabled person and required to meet their needs as a disabled person? This could include a room that is used to house dialysis equipment, or a room for physiotherapy.

Please note that no account is taken of your income, so even if you are receiving a high income you could still qualify for this reduction.

7. What is the reduction?

If you qualify, you will be charged as though your property was in the Valuation Band below the one it has been valued at.

E.g. if your home is in Valuation Band B, you'll get a bill for a home in Valuation Band A. However, the valuation list itself will not be altered. Disabled Relief is not Council Tax Benefit.

Band A properties

People in band A properties will still receive a reduction of one sixth of their Council Tax.

If you need any help or information please contact us. Details are on the back of this leaflet.

8. How do I apply for Disabled Relief?

The person responsible for paying the Council Tax must apply in writing. Forms are available from our website; One Stop Shops or you can telephone our Contact Centre and ask for a form. If you are unable to complete this form yourself you can:

- Ask someone to complete it on your behalf (e.g. a friend, social worker) or;
- Visit one of our One Stop Shops

9. How long does the relief last for?

A renewal form will be sent to you each year asking you to confirm that the circumstances remain the same. It is important that you inform us straight away if the disabled person is no longer at the property.

10. What happens next?

The information you have provided on your form will be looked at.

We may later request a note from a doctor, or any qualified professional such as an occupational therapist or social worker confirming the nature of the disability. We may also need to visit the property to confirm the details on the form.

11. Could I be entitled to any other discounts or reductions in by bill?

This will depend on the number of residents, however if there is a disabled person living at the property you may also qualify for other discounts.

Examples of this would be if there is a carer, or a person suffering from a severe mental impairment.

For information about other discounts, for example, second home, holiday Homes, or job related homes, please contact us or visit our website.

Additionally, receiving a discount or disabled relief, does not exclude you from also receiving Council Tax Benefit (a means-tested reduction in Council Tax) which is available to many people on a low income.

To find out more about Council Tax Benefit, please read our leaflet called "Help with Council Tax - A guide to Council Tax Benefit".

12. What if I have a query?

You can telephone us or you can call in person at any of the One Stop Shops. You can write a letter to us or e-mail us. Details are at the back of this leaflet.

13. If I am unhappy with your decision, can I appeal?

If your discount application is refused you can appeal against our decision. Your appeal must be made in writing direct to us. You must give the reasons for your appeal and provide any supporting evidence. We will look at our decision again and let you know if we are going to allow your appeal.

If we decide not to allow your appeal, you have a right of further appeal to an independent tribunal.

For further information visit **www.valuation-tribunals.gov.uk**

Merseyside authorities working together

This leaflet is one of a series produced by a number of Merseyside authorities to help you understand Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. It is a general guide. People have different circumstances, so please contact us if you need more detailed advice. Addresses are on the back of this leaflet.



Knowsl@y Council

www.knowsley.gov.uk

Sefton Council 

www.sefton.gov.uk

 **WIRRAL**

www.wirral.gov.uk

FIGHT FRAUD – PLAY YOUR PART

Benefit Thieves take money from your pocket. Don't turn a blind eye and let them get away with it. If you know or suspect a Benefit Thief, report it in confidence. You do not have to give your details.

Call FREE on **0800 0730532** or use the simple Online Form at **www.knowsley.gov.uk**

You can also get this information in other formats and languages. Please phone **0151 443 4031** or email **customerservices@knowsley.gov.uk**

How to contact us

Information relating to the services which the Council provides and how to contact the various departments can be obtained from any Branch Library or One Stop Shop.

In person: Please call at:

Huyton One Stop Shop
Municipal Buildings
Archway Road
Huyton
Merseyside
L36 9XJ

Kirkby One Stop Shop
Municipal Buildings
Cherryfield Drive
Kirkby
Merseyside
L32 1TX

Prescot One Stop Shop
Prescot Shopping Centre
Aspinall Street
Merseyside
L34 5GA

Halewood One Stop Shop
Roseheath Drive
Off Leathers Lane
Merseyside
L26 0UP

One Stop Shop opening times: Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm

By post: Please write to:

Housing Benefit Section
Knowsley Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Cherryfield Drive
Kirkby
Merseyside
L32 1TX

By telephone:

Please ring contact centre on
0151 443 4042

By e-mail:

benefits@knowsley.gov.uk

By fax:

0151 443 4142

Disabled access is available at all of the One Stop Shops. The following facilities are available:

- Wheelchair/pram access and lowered desks
- Minicom telephone system for hearing impaired people. Please dial: 0151 443 4248
- Advisors trained in British Sign Language (up to Level 2)
- Access to BT's language line through which we can contact an interpreter in minutes
- Private interview rooms
- Friendly staff who are happy to assist