2026

Council Tax Discretionary Discount Policy

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Table of Contents

Introduction - Council Tax Discretionary Discount

1. The Local Government Act 2003 introduced a new power as Section 13A (c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, whereby a billing authority may reduce the liability of a council taxpayer to such extent as it sees fit.

2. The Local Government Act 2003 introduced a new power as Section 13A (c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, whereby a billing authority may reduce the liability of a council taxpayer to such extent as it sees fit.

3. The power can be exercised in relation to particular cases or by determining a class of case in which liability is to be reduced.

Financial Implications

4. Any cost associated with such a reduction is borne by the billing authority in full. The Council will consider any requests for a discretionary discount alongside utilisation of the Crisis Resilience Fund

Classes of case to award discretionary discount

Care leavers leaving local authority care discount

5. Since May 2018 young people leaving the care of Shropshire Council have been identified as a vulnerable group. As a result, we award a council tax discount to care leavers in the following circumstances.

Definition

6. A care leaver, for the purposes of this policy, is a young person aged 18 – 25 who was formerly a child in the care of Shropshire Council and then became a 'care leaver' as defined by The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and is liable for council tax on a dwelling within the Shropshire Council area. This means it will include young people who were in our care by voluntary agreement or because of a court order.

Award criteria

- Care leavers who are solely liable to pay council tax will be awarded 100% relief on the amount of council tax they're liable to pay after all statutory discounts and exemptions have been applied
- Where a care leaver is jointly liable a proportionate award will be made according to their individual circumstances, e.g. if there's one other occupier then 50% discount is applied
- Where a care leaver isn't liable for council tax no discount will be awarded
- Where a property is occupied only by care leavers, 100% discretionary discount will be applied
- No reduction will be made for care leavers of other authorities living within the Shropshire Council boundary
- Where a care leaver is entitled to council tax exemption in accordance with the Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) Order 1992 (as amended) they'll receive that exemption
- A qualifying care leaver will qualify for the discount up until their 25th birthday
- The care leaver discount will be awarded after the award of other statutory council tax discounts other than council tax support

Act of God

7. Award a discount of 100% for up to twelve months where council taxpayer has to vacate property due to an uncontrollable Act of God or any other circumstances beyond their control and would otherwise pay empty property council tax. Applicable only if there is no Government funded support available.

Process to consider applications to the authority to exercise its discretion – individual cases

8. Requests for Section 13A discount may come from a variety of people for a variety of reasons.

9. Where applicants for discretionary discount are applying due to financial hardship consideration will be given to:

    - The applicant's personal circumstances
    - The applicant's income and expenditure and budget management
    - Any savings or assets available to the applicant
    - Any discount, relief, exemption, benefit, or any other financial assistance the applicant may be entitled to
    - Any other factors the authority deems to be relevant

10. In order to properly understand the claimants circumstances the applicant will be asked to provide reasonable evidence in support of their application. This may include:

    - Income and Expenditure statement
    - Documentary evidence to verify information provided on Income and Expenditure statements
    - Evidence that all other benefit eligibility has been explored thoroughly and maximised
    - Evidence of any applications made to other organisations for financial assistance
    - Any special circumstances that the Council is aware of
    - Any other relevant documentation

11. Government guidelines state that an authority may delegate the decision-making process on applications for discretionary relief either to individual officers or committees.

12. The authority should have a mechanism that allows applicants to appeal against a decision by an authority to revoke, reject or restrict the award of discretionary relief. The same officials that made the original decision should not consider appeals. Guidelines suggest that it may be appropriate to refer any appeal to a panel of council members, especially where an officer of the council made the original decision under delegated powers.

13. The timescales for appealing against a decision of a billing authority in relation to council tax liability are set out in Section 16 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. This allows a person to appeal directly to the Valuation Tribunal if they have received no notification from the billing authority within two months of appealing against a decision.

14. The recommendation is to delegate the determination of council tax discretionary discount awards to the Council's Revenues and Benefits Service Manager with any appeals reviewed by the Councils Section 151 Officer.

15. The council taxpayer may appeal directly to the Valuation Tribunal if they remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the appeal, or if they have received no notification from the billing authority within two months of appealing against a decision of Section 151 Officer.

16. The flowchart at Appendix A details the process for considering requests for Section 13A discount.

Appendix A – Flowchart for consideration of Section 13A council tax discretionary discounts

Council Tax Payer requests Section 13A discount in writing. Request acknowledged by Revenues Team

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Liaison between applicant and Revenues staff to understand and verify application

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Report prepared for Revenues and Benefits Service manager detailing the claimants reasons for the request and circumstances

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Revenues and Benefits Service Manager reviews application and makes a **decision**

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Discount awarded – claimant notified in writing

Discount refused- claimant notified in writing

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Appeal received from council tax payer against decision

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Appeal presented to Section 151 Officer for a decision

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Appeal successful and discount awarded – claimant notified in writing

Appeal unsuccessful - claimant is notified in writing. Claimant can appeal to Valuation Tribunal