A guide to your council tax bill

The Council Tax charge levied by Durham County Council has been increased by 2.99%, shown as a 3% increase on your bill because Council Tax legislation states we must show the figure to one decimal place. Your bill also includes a separate Adult Social Care precept of 2%, in line with Government guidance to cover the rising costs of Adult Social Care services to vulnerable adults. Further information on the council’s spending plans can be found at www.durham.gov.uk/counclitaxleaflets

Are you paying too much?
You may be entitled to a reduction in the amount you pay depending on your circumstances.

Council Tax Reduction (CTR)
If you are on a low income, whether in work, unemployed or retired, and have less than £16,000 in savings, you may qualify for this discount.

The amount you can get off your bill depends on how much money you have coming in and any savings. It also depends on the number of people living in your home, their ages and their income.

Second Adult Reduction (SAR)
If you have another adult living in your home that has a low income, you may be able to reduce your Council Tax bill by claiming SAR for that person. You can claim this even if your income and capital is too high for you to receive CTR.

How to claim
To apply for a CTR or SAR discount, you can claim online at www.durham.gov.uk/calculator or call 03000 262 000. Someone will help you make a claim over the telephone or arrange a time for you to visit one of our access points.

Reductions for severely mentally impaired people
Your Council Tax can be reduced if someone you live with is severely mentally impaired. This includes illnesses such as Alzheimer’s, Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson’s or other severe learning difficulties. To apply complete a Council Tax Discount Application - Severe Mental Impairment form. Your doctor will need to complete the certificate included in the application form. You can download the form at www.durham.gov.uk/counclitax

Reductions for disabled people
We can also reduce your Council Tax bill if a disabled person lives in your home and the property has at least one of the following:
- A room that is not a bathroom, kitchen or toilet that is mainly used by the disabled person and is essential for their needs
- An extra bathroom or kitchen that is essential for the disabled person’s needs
- Extra space inside the property so that the disabled person can use their wheelchair indoors

Reductions and exemptions for care leavers
Care leavers up to the age of 25 living alone are exempt from paying Council Tax if they live within the Durham County Council area. If you live with someone else the council tax bill could be reduced to 50%.

Exemptions
Some properties may be exempt from Council Tax if they are unoccupied for certain reasons or occupied by certain groups of people. Examples include:
- A property where all the adult occupiers are students
- A property where all the adult occupiers are classified as severely mentally impaired
- A property left unoccupied when the resident has moved to provide or receive care
- A property left unoccupied on the death of the resident council tax payer
**Single Person Discounts and Other Council Tax Exemptions**

You are entitled to a 25% discount if you live on your own. Some people are not counted when we work out how many people live in your home. For example anyone under 18, students, apprentices, youth trainees, carers, people in prison and people who are severely mentally impaired. This means you may still get a discount even if you don’t live alone.

**Hardship relief**

In cases of clear financial hardship, a reduction in your Council Tax may be granted by the council or your payment could be deferred. Each case is considered individually against the council’s Hardship Policy. Contact the council immediately if you have any difficulties in paying your Council Tax.

Further information regarding discounts, reduction, exemptions and hardship relief can be found online at [www.durham.gov.uk/counciltax](http://www.durham.gov.uk/counciltax) or by calling on 03000 264 000.

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**Valuation of your property**

Your property has been placed in one of eight bands to allow the council to calculate your Council Tax bill.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council Tax band</th>
<th>Property values</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Up to £40,000</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>£88,001 to £120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>£40,001 to £52,000</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>£120,001 to £160,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>£52,001 to £68,000</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>£160,001 to £320,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>£68,001 to £88,000</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>more than £320,000</td>
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</tbody>
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The Council Tax band allocated to your property is based upon what it was valued at in April 1991. All properties are assigned a valuation as at that date, even if they were built recently.

It is the Valuation Office Agency and not the council that has decided which Council Tax band your property fits in.

If you think your property band is incorrect you should contact: Council Tax North, Valuation Office Agency, 17th Floor, 53 Portland Street, Manchester M1 3LD; online at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) or call 03000 501 501. Please note, the council cannot influence the banding of your property.

If you submit an appeal against your banding you must still continue to pay the instalments shown on your Council Tax bill until a final decision is made. Failure to do so will result in recovery action and you may be liable for additional costs.

**Council Tax appeals**

As well as appealing against the banding of your property you can also appeal other Council Tax matters. For example, you may not think you are the person who should pay the bill or you believe you should get a discount, reduction or exemption, which you have not received or which has been refused.

Any appeal about a Council Tax matter must be made in writing to the address on the front of your bill. If you submit an appeal you must continue to pay the instalments shown on your Council Tax bill until a final decision is made.

**Further information**

Further information about your bill and the budget plans it supports are available online at:

Durham County Council Council Tax - [www.durham.gov.uk/counciltaxleaflets](http://www.durham.gov.uk/counciltaxleaflets)
Durham County Council Business Rates - [www.durham.gov.uk/businessratesleaflets](http://www.durham.gov.uk/businessratesleaflets)
County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority - [www.ddfire.gov.uk/about-your-council-tax](http://www.ddfire.gov.uk/about-your-council-tax)

If you would like to receive a hard copy of these leaflets, call 03000 260 000 or visit one of our local customer access points

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**SMS text alerts**

Please supply us with your mobile number and register to receive our SMS texting service in case we need to contact you or request further information to update your accounts correctly. It’s the quickest way and could help us avoid taking unnecessary recovery action when we believe a bill has not been paid.