

Other ways of reducing your Council Tax bill ...

Status discounts are not the only way of reducing your council tax bill. You may also pay less if you qualify for:

- Council Tax Benefit
- Disabled Person's Reduction

Council Tax Benefit scheme

Council Tax Benefit is aimed at people on welfare benefits (particularly Income Support) or a low income. Because of the complex nature of Council Tax Benefit it is best to contact your **local council** or one of the **Useful Organisations** listed in this leaflet to get further details.

The Disabled Person's Reduction

You may have the banding of your house reduced by one band if someone in your household is substantially and permanently disabled (regardless of age or relationship to other members of the household) and meets at least **one** of the following criteria:

- If the disabled person needs to use a wheelchair indoors
OR
- there is a second bathroom or kitchen in the household needed by that person
OR
- there is a room (other than a bathroom, kitchen or toilet) needed by and predominantly used by that person

Note

- Disabled Person's Reductions are **not** limited to households which have been built or specially adapted for people using wheelchairs.

- The person who is liable for the council tax in the household has to make the application.
- Local councils have a standard application form, and you can get that by contacting your local council directly (telephone numbers are listed in this leaflet).
- If your house is in Band A your property will be reduced by a set amount.

Council Tax offices ...

To get a form for any of the different Status Discounts or for the Disabled Person's Reduction contact your local council. They can also tell you more about Council Tax Benefit:

City of Edinburgh 0131 200 2000	Midlothian 0131 271 3201/2
West Lothian 01506 776 800	East Lothian 01620 827 7690 01620 827 7691 / 7688 / 7694 / 7686

Where to get advice ...

Vocal Carers Centre

(Voice of Carers Across Lothian)
8-13 Johnston Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2PW
Tel: 0131 622 6666 E-mail: centre@vocal.org.uk

The VOCAL Carers Centre provides advice, information, advocacy, counselling and training to carers throughout Edinburgh and the Lothians. Carers can also contact VOCAL for a free Carers Information Pack giving details of local support and services.

Citizens Advice Bureaux

You can also get help from your local Citizens Advice Bureau which you will find listed in your telephone book.

Carers and the Council Tax

- Do you look after someone with an illness or disability?
- If so, your Council Tax bill may be reduced
- Read this leaflet and find out more



- There are a number of ways in which your Council Tax bill may be reduced
- Carers may get a **CARER'S DISCOUNT** which could mean 25% off your Council Tax bill
- The Carer Discount is not means tested in any way

Calculating your Council Tax bill

The amount of Council Tax you pay is linked to the estimated value of your home. Your property is assessed and put into one of eight valuation bands from A to H.

The full bill is made up of two parts:

1. a 50% property charge
2. a 50% personal tax

Discounts are deductions made from the personal tax. They depend on how many adults are counted as living in the property.

The personal tax is based on the assumption that there are at least 2 people living in the property. The amount does not increase if there are more than 2, but should be reduced by **25%** if there is one person and by **50%** if nobody is living there.

Some adults are ignored or "disregarded" and therefore aren't counted as living in the property.

Discounts

Who is disregarded?

- **Carers** – but only if they are living with and caring for a disabled person who is not their spouse, partner (opposite sex) or child under 18 years. The disabled person must be entitled to one of the following; either Attendance Allowance (at the higher rate) or Disability Living Allowance (highest rate care component). The carer must provide at least 35 hours of care on average per week. The carer does not have to be receiving Invalid Care Allowance.
- **Live-in care workers** provided by a charity (eg. Community Service Volunteers) or a Local Authority working for at least 24 hours a week in return for a payment of up to £36 per week.

Other discounts

The following people would also be disregarded:

- People who are **Severely Mentally Impaired** (eg. people with dementia or a learning disability) and getting a qualifying benefit such as Severe Disablement Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance (high or middle care component), or equivalent benefits, or Income Support which includes a disability premium on grounds of incapacity for work.
- **Patients in hospital**, where it is the sole or main residence.
- **People resident in nursing homes/care homes and hostels** where care is provided.

Other status discounts not directly relating to carers include: Students, youth trainees, people in prison or detention, visiting members of armed forces, members of religious communities and others.

There are specific regulations for each of these groups. If you think you or someone you know may fall into one of these

groups get in touch with one of the useful organisations at the back of this leaflet.

Do I qualify?

Three easy steps to calculate if you qualify for a Discount ...

1. Write a list of all the people aged 18 or over who live in your house.
2. Go through the names and cross out the name of anyone who falls into one of the groups listed on the previous page.
3. If you still have 2 names after doing this you will not qualify for a status discount. If there is one name left on your list you may get a 25% discount. If there are no names left you may get a 50% discount.

How do I apply for a "status discount"?

Your local council has standard forms for the different status discounts. You will find their telephone numbers listed in this leaflet – simply phone them and request the Status Discount form you would like.

It may be possible to get a Status Discount backdated. Contact one of the **Useful Organisations** listed in this leaflet for further information.

Empty property

Some empty properties are exempt from council tax. This means the property will only be liable for 50% of the full bill. If the property was last occupied by someone who had to leave in order to provide care the empty property may get a 50% discount. This also applies if someone had to leave a property empty in order to receive care (e.g. to go into hospital or a residential or nursing home).