

Council Tax - The Disability Reduction Scheme

Introduction

This scheme was introduced to ensure that, where people with disabilities require extra space because of their special needs, they are not penalised by having increased Council Tax bills for their home. If the extra space in the home is approved as a “disabled facility”, their bill can be decreased. The property will usually be dropped by ONE valuation band lower but if it is already in the lowest band, the bill will be reduced by one-sixth.

People with cystic fibrosis can take advantage of this scheme if they have a spare room (an extra bedroom or second reception room) which could be used as a treatment room.

To qualify

You may be entitled to a reduction if there is a “disabled person” in your household. This means someone who is substantially and permanently disabled because of illness, injury, congenital deformity or otherwise. He/she must be resident in the property and require certain facilities to meet their needs.

The disabled person can be either an adult or a child and does not have to be the person responsible for paying the Council Tax bill. Financial circumstances are NOT taken into account as the reduction is NOT means-tested

Eligible facilities

The property must have at least one of the following special facilities, required to meet the needs of the disabled person.

- Sufficient floor space for someone who uses a wheelchair within the home
- A room (not a bathroom, kitchen or toilet) which is used mainly by the disabled person and is needed to meet his/her special needs
- An additional bathroom or kitchen required to meet the needs of the disabled person

The facility must be essential or of major importance to the person’s well being, due to the nature and extent of the disability. Your home doesn’t need to have had an extra room specially built on but it won’t qualify for a reduction unless it meets the “essential or of major importance” test. Simply rearranging rooms (e.g. having a bedroom on the ground floor), is unlikely to make your home eligible for a reduction (i.e. if there’s no “special” facilities, it’s still just a bedroom).

To apply

Ring your local Council Tax Office and ask them to send you an application form. Make it clear that you wish to apply for a Disabled Facilities Reduction and not for ordinary Council Tax Benefit (which depends on income, not disability). Alternatively, check your Council’s website - you may be able to download a form or ask for it to be sent to you, or submit an online claim.

Procedures vary in different areas - someone may visit to inspect the room or you may receive a form, to be signed by your doctor, confirming you need the facility. Exactly what is accepted as a “disabled facility” can vary - the Council will assess whether, without the facility, the person would find it physically impossible or extremely difficult to live there and whether his/her health would suffer or the disability would be likely to become more severe. (***Explain that CF treatment is vital for your health so you need a private, sterile space, with secure storage for medication.***)

You may be asked to re-affirm your situation each year, to ensure that you still need the facility.

Appeals

You can appeal to your Local Authority - there is no time limit for this. If you are refused again, then you have a time-limited right to make a further appeal to the Valuation Tribunal. You must notify the Local Council Tax Office if your circumstances change and you have reason to believe that you are no longer entitled to the reduction.

Backdating

If you should have been getting a disability reduction in the past but did not, it should be backdated. There is no time limit for applying for backdating.