

## **General Information about Council Tax Reduction for People with Disabilities**

### **What is a reduction for a person who has a disability?**

If a person with a disability lives in your property and the property has certain features, which are important to their well-being, your Council Tax may be reduced.

If you get a reduction and your property is in band B or above, you will be charged Council Tax at one band lower. For example, if your property is in band C and you get a reduction, we will charge you the band B rate for your area. If your property is already in band A and you are given a reduction, you will get a reduction which is the equivalent to one ninth of the band D charge for your area. (We can only give the equivalent band A reduction from 1 April 2000.)

### **When will we give a reduction?**

We can only give you a reduction if your property is the main home of someone who is, and always will be, substantially disabled. This person can be an adult or a child. The reduction is given on adaptations to the property so if you move address you need to apply again.

### **The property must have one or more of the following features:**

- A room, which is not a bathroom, kitchen or toilet. The person with the disability must be the main user of this room and it must be essential or of major importance for their needs.
- An extra bathroom or kitchen that is essential for meeting their needs,
- Enough space inside the property so that the disabled person can use a wheelchair inside. The person must need to use the wheelchair indoors.

Reduction will usually be granted from the date of application, however reduction into previous years can be given if the applicant can show that the same conditions applied at that time.

Information can be made available in other formats such as Braille or Audio Tape on request. If you know someone who may need this service, please contact a member of staff for more information or if you need any other help or advice.

## What is essential or of major importance?

It is difficult for Council Tax staff to determine if the room is essential or of major importance so if you can provide any supporting information from the disabled persons doctor, social worker or therapist that explains how the use of the room is essential and related to the disability, then this may speed up your application.

### **Generally a room will be classed as essential if:**

- The disabled person would find it impossible or extremely difficult to live in the property if it were not available.
- The use of the room is as a direct consequence of the disability and has been taken out of normal household use

### **A room may not be classed as essential if:**

- Equipment within a room has a higher importance than the room itself. The equipment could be used in other parts of the property if necessary, in spite of it currently being used in a separate room,
- It is being used as an office in the same way that an able bodied person might use an office in their own home.
- Other residents of the property use the same room for which it was originally intended, for example where the disabled person has a bed in the dining room for use at night because they have difficulty getting upstairs.

## What is an additional bathroom?

It must be extra to the main family bathroom and it must have bathing facilities not simply hand washing facilities. This means that a downstairs toilet with a wash basin would not be classed as an additional bathroom. A shower or bath would be considered bathing facilities.

## Examples of where reduction has been granted

- Where the disabled person must spend all of their time downstairs and an existing room has been converted, or a new room has been built, which would be used to provide treatment during the day as well as sleeping and washing facilities. It would be usual in such cases for the disabled person to spend most or all of their time in that room and would need considerable assistance from others to move.
- Where a former room is now used as a soft play room, therapy room, for a child with severe learning disabilities and who has to have time away from others in a quiet environment for learning
- Where the disabled person requires a clinical setting to carry out home dialysis treatment and a separate room must be set aside to do this. The alternative would be that the person would have to attend hospital, rather than carry out dialysis in an existing room such as a bedroom.
- Where the nature of the persons disability means that an extensive amount of medical supplies are needed at home and the volumes of which are significant enough to warrant a separate storage facility

## Examples of where reduction has been refused

- A bed being used in an existing room downstairs, for example, within the main living room or dining room,
- Where a room is used for leisure activities such as listening to music but is also the disabled persons bedroom,
- Where a disabled person uses exercise or breathing equipment such as an oxygen tank within an existing room such as the living room,
- Where a property is fitted with a hearing loop and that is the only adaptation,
- Where communication equipment such as a computer, audio or a Braille machine is being used in a spare room but could be located elsewhere within the property.

## What if I am not happy with the decision which has been made?

You can appeal to The Council Tax Office in the first instance. A senior member of staff who was not involved in the original decision will deal with your appeal and will reply within two months. If you are still unhappy with the outcome, you can appeal to an Independent Valuation Tribunal. A final right of appeal exists to the High Court. It should be noted that each case is considered on its own merits and whilst tribunal decisions are not binding on other tribunals, cases which set a precedent via the High Court are.

## Will I have to apply each year?

No, once the reduction has been granted it will apply as long as the disabled person's circumstances remain the same and they continue to live in the same property. You must notify the council of any change to these circumstances within 21 days.

The council does have a responsibility to review certain discounts and reductions including disabled persons reduction on a regular basis. This will usually be once a year. A review form will be issued which asks you to confirm that the circumstances are the same as those stated on your original application.

## For more information contact:

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