



South Hams
District Council

Council tax discounts & exemptions

Revenue & Benefits





This leaflet outlines how your Council Tax bill could be reduced or you could have nothing to pay at all. None of the reductions listed are means tested and in most cases the reduction can be awarded just by completing and returning a simple form.

More details of how bills may be reduced if one of the occupiers suffers from health problems may be found on our leaflet 'Council Tax reductions because of ill health'.

In addition to the reductions shown on this leaflet, there is also a scheme which assesses how much you have to pay based on your income.

If you have a limited income and less than £16,000 capital (or more than £16,000 but you receive Pension Credit Guarantee) you could pay less Council Tax. Complete an application form and we will work out how much you have to pay.

Unfortunately, the law covering these issues is very complicated and the information in this leaflet cannot cover every detail. But if you think you might be paying too much please don't be afraid to ask! We don't want you to pay any more than you have to.

For application forms, or further information about any of these reductions, please contact Steve Henstock on Totnes (01803) 861470 or e-mail him at steve.henstock@southhams.gov.uk. Let Steve help you to pay less!

If you would prefer independent advice why not contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau? Telephone them on Totnes (01803) 862392; they will be only too pleased to help you. Their advice lines are open from 10.00a.m. to 1.00p.m. Monday to Friday, and also from 1.00p.m. to 4.00p.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday.

Discounts

A full Council Tax bill assumes that two adults live in your home. But you can get a discount of 25% if you live alone (or maybe 50% under some circumstances).

Even if you don't live alone you may still be entitled to a discount because we don't count some residents when we calculate the discounts (we 'disregard' them). They include:

- full time students, student nurses, apprentices and Youth Training trainees
- people staying in certain hostels or night shelters

- 18 year olds for whom child benefit is still payable
- careworkers working for low pay (usually for charities)
- members of visiting forces and some international institutions
- members of some religious communities (e.g. monks and nuns)
- people in prison (unless they're there for not paying their Council Tax)
- diplomats
- people who need substantial health care and whose home is now effectively a care home or hospital
- carers who look after someone (other than their spouse, partner or child) for at least 35 hours per week**
- someone with enduring mental health problems**

*** Please see our leaflet 'Council Tax reductions because of ill health' for more details.*

If all the people in a property are disregarded under one or other of these categories the discount will be 50%. (Or you may have to pay nothing at all – see 'exemptions' below)

A discount of 10% will apply where a property is furnished but unoccupied - that is no-one lives there as their main home. BUT

- If your property is unoccupied because you have to live elsewhere as part of your conditions of employment – you may be entitled to a 50% discount.
- If your property is available for short term holiday letting for more than 140 days in any one year it will attract a Business Rate and not Council Tax.

Exemptions

You will not have to pay any Council Tax at all under some circumstances. They include:

1. Where ALL the occupiers:
 - are full time students
 - are under 18 years old
 - are diplomats.

2. On a separately assessed annexe (such as a 'Granny Flat') where the occupier is a dependant relative of the people living in the main part of the property.
3. Where a home is unoccupied and:
 - the occupier(s) has moved to receive personal care elsewhere
 - has been left empty by someone who has moved out in order to provide personal care for another person
 - is substantially unfurnished and requires structural or major repair works (for up to 12 months from the date it became in need of repair. Full Council Tax will be payable after the 12 months)
 - is owned by a charity (exempt for up to 6 months)
 - is unfurnished - for up to 6 months from the date the furniture was removed. (NB If the property is sold the new owner will not be entitled to a further 6 month exemption - full Council Tax will be payable after the initial 6 months period)
 - is left empty by someone who has gone to prison (unless they're there for not paying their Council Tax)
 - probate or letters of administration have yet to be granted following the death of the previous occupier
 - is empty because its occupation is prohibited by law
 - is waiting to be occupied by a minister of religion
 - has been left empty by students (where all of the previous occupiers were students)
 - has been repossessed
 - is the responsibility of a bankrupt's trustees

If you would like any further help or information about anything contained in this leaflet, please contact us at:

Revenue & Benefits Section
Follaton House
Plymouth Road
Totnes TQ9 5NE

Or tel 01803 861234 and ask for the Revenue & Benefits Section.

**All our publications are available in alternative formats,
tel 01803 861123 or e-mail enquiries@southhams.gov.uk**