

Our ideas to change the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2018/19 (for people who are not pensioners)



Please tell us what you think by
the 10th November 2017



www.sefton.gov.uk



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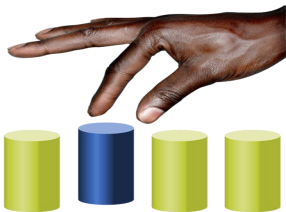
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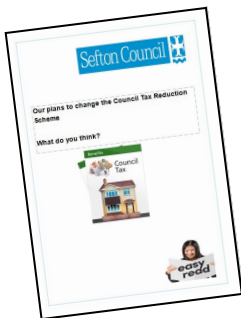
Council Tax Reduction - this means when you pay less for your Council Tax



We are thinking of making changes in the way we help people on low income to pay their Council Tax.



Council Tax Reduction Scheme is how we lower how much Council Tax people on low incomes have to pay.

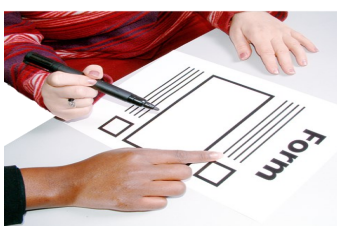


This document explains:

- Why we need to change
- The ideas for change
- What will happen to the information you tell us



There is no change to the national Council Tax Reduction Scheme for people of pension age unless the Government make changes.



We want to know what you think

Please read through this document and answer the questions that start on page 7.

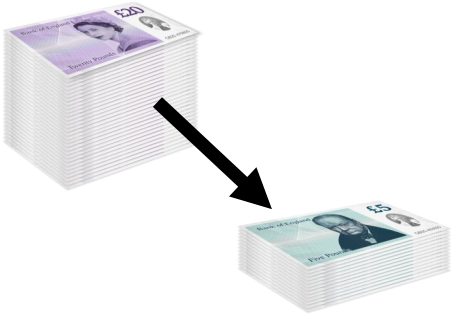


How many people in Sefton pay less Council Tax because they have a low income?

In June 2017

- 26,883 people had to pay less Council Tax.
- 14,436 were working age

Why we need to change



Sefton Council is getting a lot less money from the Government to pay for the important services it provides.



Local Councillors have to find ways to save money.

A Councillor works for the people of Sefton to help the Council work well.

We want to make it easier to manage the Council Tax.



Universal Credit is a new way of paying people their benefits. It has been introduced by the Government. It is being started in stages across the UK and is replacing other benefits.

Universal Credit pays benefits in a monthly payment for people who are on low income or are out of work.

We want to make sure that we can join up Universal Credit with the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. This will make things easier for people to understand.

IDEA 1 - No Change



Universal Credit changes when a person's income goes up or down. This would mean a new Council Tax Bill would need to be issued every time Universal Credit changed.

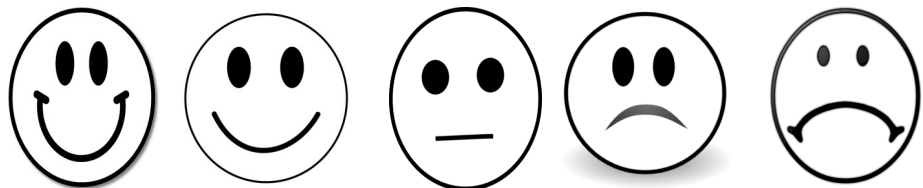
We could keep the Council Tax Reduction Scheme without change for another 12 months.

But this would mean changing the Council Tax Bills when Universal Credit changes.

It would also mean people who receive Council Tax Reduction may be confused getting a new bill every time there is a change.



Do you agree or disagree with keeping the scheme as it is for now?



Agree
Strongly

Agree

Not sure

Disagree

Strongly
disagree

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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IDEA 2 - Having a fixed period for assessments



Universal Credit is replacing other benefits.

The Universal Credit payment changes if a person earns more or less from working.

These changes in payment could change how much Council Tax reduction a person gets.



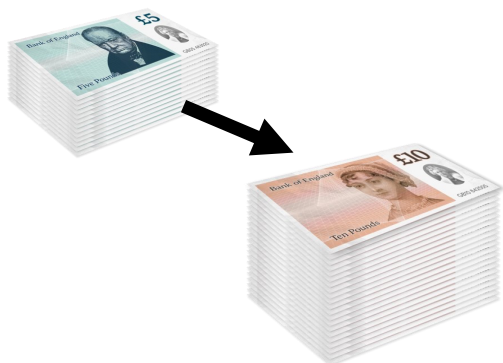
This could mean more work for the Council. It costs money to make the changes.



This change would only be for people who earn money from working **and** who get Universal Credit.

If there is a change to

- Who lives in the house - someone moves in or moves out
- If they get more savings or investments



Then the claim for Council Tax Reduction would be looked at again.



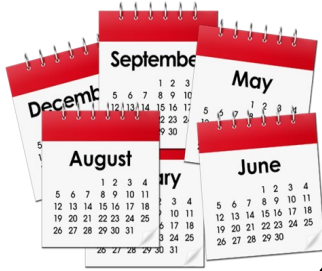
IDEA: We would like to have a fixed assessment period of 6 months.

This will mean that we will not make any changes to the Council Tax Reduction for 6 months.

Even if a person has been getting more or less money.

This may be good for some people.

If a person has a change in money that means they have to pay more Council Tax this will not be looked at until they are asked again (at the end of 6 months).



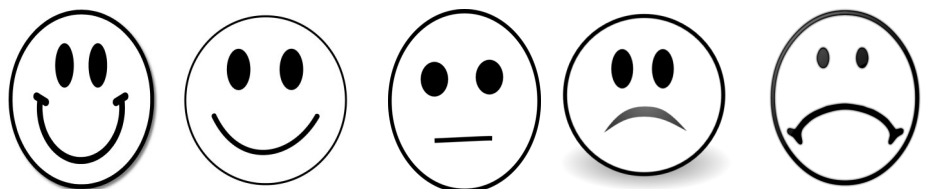
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BUT, this may be bad for some people.

If a person has a change in money that have to pay less Council Tax this will not be looked at until they are asked again (at the end of 6 months).



Do you agree or disagree with checking for changes every six months?



Agree Strongly

Agree

Not sure

Disagree

Strongly disagree

IDEA 3 - Having a minimum income level for people who are self employed (people who work for themselves).



£XXX



Lots of people run their own businesses or work for themselves. Some businesses earn lots of money and others not as much money.

We would like to use a set income for people who are self-employed after the person has been in business for 12 months.

The set income used will be the same as the National Living Wage which is £7.50 per hour (over 25 years old) or National Minimum Wage (under 25 years old) and full time of 35 hours worked per week



EXAMPLE - the set income used for person aged over 25 would be
 $35\text{hrs} \times £7.50 = £262.50$ per week.



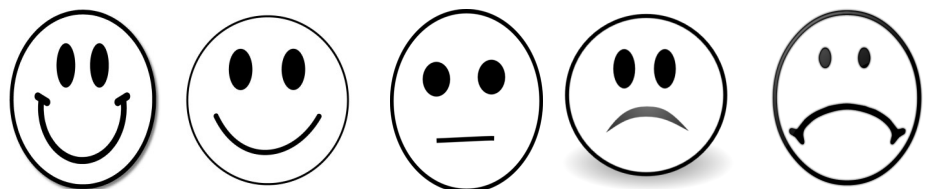
If a person runs their business and they earn below the minimum level the Council will work out their reduction as if they earn the minimum level of 35 hours at minimum living wage, no matter how many hours they work.



This will not apply where:

- There are caring responsibilities
- People are disabled
- Where the business owner also works for someone else.

Do you agree or disagree with having a minimum wage level for people who are self employed (after 12 months)?



Agree
Strongly

Agree

Not sure

Disagree

Strongly
disagree

IDEA 4 - Changing the Rules about claiming Council Tax Reduction if the person is away from Great Britain but coming back.



At the moment people who get Housing Benefit and pensioners who get a reduction in Council Tax are not able to claim for the benefit if they are away from Great Britain for more than 4 weeks.



We would like to also make it the same for people who are working age who claim a Council Tax Reduction

This does not apply for some people.



For example people can be away for up to 8 weeks if a close relative has died.

It can be as long as 26 weeks for example if they are



- member of armed forces and people who work at sea
- Someone in hospital
- Someone who has left home through fear of violence.



4 weeks



If a person is not in Great Britain for more than 4 weeks, their Council Tax Reduction will stop from the date they leave the country. They will need to apply again when they get back.



Do you agree or disagree that Council Tax Reduction stops if a person is away from the country for more than 4 weeks?



Agree
Strongly

Agree

Not sure

Disagree

Strongly
disagree

IDEA 5 - To change the Council Tax Reduction so that it doesn't include any Bereavement Support payments (Bereavement Support Payment is money that people get if their husband or wife or civil partner dies).



In April 2017, the Government made changes to the bereavement benefits that people can get if they are getting Housing Benefit.



This made claiming the benefits easier to do and people aged less than 45 years can now get help.

Nothing will change for people who get bereavement benefits now.



The new Bereavement Support Payment can only be claimed for 18 months from the date the husband or wife or civil partner died.



We would like to change the Council Tax Reduction Scheme so that it is the same as the Housing Benefit rules.



This would mean that the money from the Bereavement Support payment would not be counted and not affect the Council Tax Reduction that a person receives.



Do you agree that getting the new Bereavement Support Payment should not affect how much Council Tax Reduction a person gets?



Agree
Strongly

Agree

Not sure

Disagree

Strongly
disagree

IDEA 6 - To remove the element of the Work Related Activity Component in the calculation of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Component - is an allowance used to work out how much Council Tax Reduction a person gets.



Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) is a benefit for people who find it hard to get a job because:

- They have a disability
- They have a problem with their health and expect to have this problem for a long time.



If someone who gets ESA has been placed in the Work Related Activity Group. This means that they have been assessed as unable to work but can attend activities to help them get ready for work in the future. People in this group were given extra money.



From April 2017, the Department for Work and Pensions stopped giving extra money to people in the Work Related Activity Group.

From April 2017, the Government said - All new applicants of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) who are in the “Work Related Activity Group” will no longer get the work related activity component in either their ESA or in their calculation of Housing Benefit.



The idea is that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme is changed from 1 April 2018 to be the same.



People who only get the basic ESA payment will not see any change to the amount of Council Tax Reduction they receive.



Some people who get a Council Tax Reduction will get a smaller reduction if they have additional income as well as ESA.

We think that the amount of Council Tax Reduction they lose will be less than £6.00 per week. The Council will look at what other help is available.



Do you agree or disagree to remove the element of the Work Related Activity Component in the calculation of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.



Agree
Strongly

Agree

Not sure

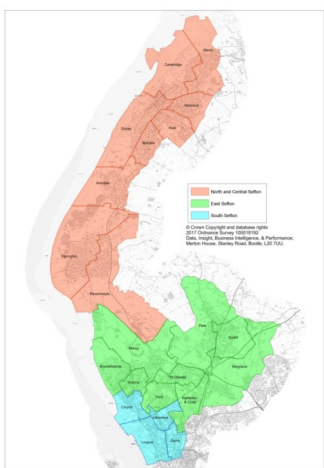
Disagree

Strongly
disagree

IDEA 7 - Payments from the We Love Manchester Emergency Fund and London Emergencies Trust (These are funds that have been set up to support victims and families who were involved in the attacks that took place in Manchester on 22 May and London on 22 March and 3 June)

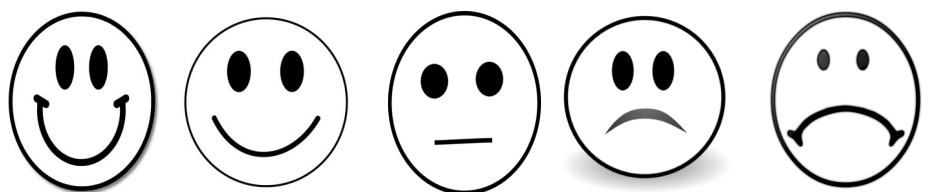


On the 20th June, the Government advised Local Council's (including Sefton Council) how payments from the charitable funds should be looked at if people get a Council Tax Reduction.



We think that if people who live in Sefton receive money from these funds, they should not lose any of their Council Tax Reduction.

Do you agree or disagree that people who get a payment from these funds should not lose any of their Council Tax Reduction?



Agree
Strongly

Agree


Not sure

Disagree

Strongly
disagree

Will these ideas affect you?

Please  in the boxes below

IDEA		Will affect me a lot	Will affect me a little	Will not affect me	Not Sure
1	No change to scheme				
2	Having a fixed period for assessments				
3	A minimum income level for people who run their own business				
4	Stopping Council Tax Reduction if out of Great Britain for more than 4 weeks				
5	Changing the Council Tax Reduction so it does not include Bereavement Support Payments				
6	Remove the element of the Work Related Activity Component in the calculation of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.				
7	People getting payments from the attacks funds not losing any Council Tax Reduction				



Please use this box if you want to tell us more

Some Questions About You

Filling in this form will help us make sure we are reaching everyone in Sefton.



It will help us to make sure we are meeting everyone's needs and not leaving anyone out. All this information is secret. We just add up all the answers.

The first part of my post code is _____

I am



A Man



A Woman



My age group is

18-29

30-39

40-49

50-59

60-69

70 +



Do you think of yourself as disabled?

Yes

No

My disability is



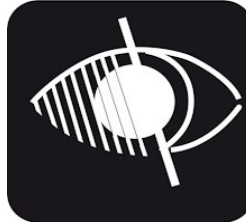
Learning Disability



Mobility Related



Mental Health



Visual Impairment



Hearing Impairment



Limiting Long Term Illness

Other

My ethnicity is

White



British

English

Irish

Scottish

Welsh

Polish

Latvian

Gypsy or Traveller

Other White Background



Asian

- Asian - Bangladeshi
- Asian - Indian
- Asian - Pakistani

Other Asian Background _____



Black

- British
- African
- Caribbean

Other Black Background _____



Chinese

- Chinese

Other Chinese Background _____

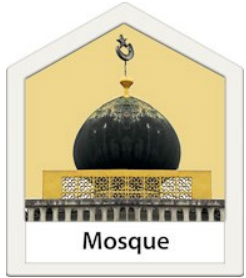


Mixed Ethnic Backgrounds

- Asian and White
- White and Black African
- White and Black Caribbean

Other mixed _____

Any Other Please tell us here



Religion

- Buddhist Christian
- Hindu Jewish
- Muslim Sikh
- No religion
- Other _____

Relationships

- Bisexual Gay
- Heterosexual Lesbian
- Other Wish not to say

Do you live in the gender you were given at birth?

- Yes No

Thank you for filling in this form.
This information will not be able to
tell us who you are.

Thank you



What we will do with what you tell us

We will keep what you tell us a secret and will not pass your name and address to anybody else. We will use what you tell us to help plan the Council Tax Reduction Scheme you will have in the future and we will let you know what we decide to do.

We would like to hear from people who receive benefits and people who do not.

You can do this online

www.sefton.gov.uk/counciltaxconsultation



If you need support to complete this questionnaire please contact the One Stop Shop or your local library.

Please return the questionnaire to:

Sefton Council
Corporate Finance & ICT, Partnership Team
Magdalen House
Trinity Road
Bootle,
L30 3NJ



If you have any questions or need more information, please contact us at:

- counciltax.consultation@sefton.gov.uk
- 0345 140 0845 (calls cost 2p per minute plus your phone company charges)

