

# Your guide to Council Tax

2023/24



South Tyneside Council

Spread the word!

**THIS IS  
SOUTH  
TYNESIDE**

# How do we spend our budget?



Your council tax goes towards providing public services right across South Tyneside.

Day in, day out, you interact with the services we provide. The roads you travel on, the paths you walk on, the lamps that light up our streets, the parks, beaches, or open spaces you might visit, and many more. From the minute you step outside your home council services and the people who provide them are doing all they can to help you live a happy, healthy, and fulfilled life.

Your council provides a wide range of services for around 150,000 people in South Tyneside whilst tackling some of the biggest and most fundamental issues in society and providing a safety net for those who need it most. We are here to support through hardship and crisis whilst still providing the vital services that you rely on like bin collections, customer services, leisure services, children's and adult social care and much more. Providing high quality services for people across the borough is something that we pride ourselves on.

We know that the current cost of living crisis is creating intense pressures, and we will continue to support you wherever we can. We have enhanced our welfare support provision and we

currently support 17,900 households through our council tax support scheme. You can find out if you are eligible for this support on page 9. In addition, we have agreed an additional £100 Council Tax rebate for households on low income.

The money we spend comes from council tax, business rates and paid services as well as the government grant we receive each year. Government funding has not kept pace with levels of inflation, putting huge pressures on our finances. Just like everyone else, the council is experiencing increasing costs and demand. The council cannot run a deficit like other organisations. If we do not increase the amount of money coming into the Council, we would simply have to stop providing the services which our communities rely on.

This year, the budget includes an increase in Council Tax of 4.95%. 2% of this increase relates to the Government's adult social care levy, which is ringfenced for those services supporting our communities who need it most. Adult and children's social care continue to be our biggest areas of spend and account for over 70% of our discretionary budget.

**The value you see on your bill isn't just for the council but also includes a levy from both the police and fire services.**





## Where the money goes

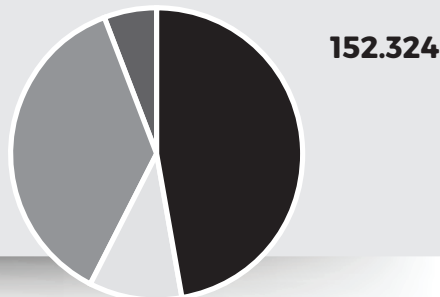
Band A Council Tax Per week

 Adult Social Care <b>£10.35</b>	 Public Health & Other Services <b>-£0.18</b>
 Cultural and Leisure Services (including libraries) <b>£1.18</b>	 Refuse Collection, Disposal & Street Cleaning <b>£2.75</b>
 Education <b>£3.19</b>	 Children's Social Care <b>£5.07</b>
 Highways, Roads, Transport & Street lighting <b>£1.10</b>	<b>£23.46</b>

## Where does our funding come from

£m

 Council Tax	72.275
 Net Retained Business Rates	15.359
 Government Funding	55.981
 Use of Reserves	8.709



We also seek external funding streams to support the funding of the capital investment programme. We've already been successful in securing millions for the borough from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, a replacement for European Funding.

The way we allocate and spend the Council's budget is guided by our residents and businesses and the priorities you have shaped in the Borough's 20-year vision and new strategic plan.

Our five ambitions are to see you financially secure, healthy and well throughout your lives, connected to jobs, skills and learning and being part of strong communities. Underpinning all this we will target support to make things fairer and direct help to those who need it most.

With limited funding available to us we work relentlessly to bring in additional money to the borough so that we can progress innovative projects and schemes to improve South Tyneside in the longer term. Our capital assets like buildings, leisure centres, community

facilities, coastline, parks, and open spaces are there for you to enjoy now and safeguarded for future generations to come due to our continued investment.

As a Council, setting a balanced budget is one of the most difficult but important responsibilities we have. Each year, we weigh up pressures including increased demand for services, reduced central government funding, and competing commitments, priorities, and ambitions. This year, our Vision and ambitions, a result of intensive engagement with thousands of residents, businesses, partners, Council employees and elected members, provides us with renewed purpose and focus to deliver for the people of South Tyneside.



*Tracey Dixon*

**Councillor Tracey Dixon**  
Leader of the Council

# How your Council Tax band is calculated

The level of Council Tax for your property is based on a valuation set by the Valuation Office Agency which is part of HM Revenue and Customs. The banding is based on the value of your home at 1 April 1991.

The property is then placed into one of eight bands. The Council uses the valuation banding to work out your Council Tax bill. Your bill shows which band applies to your home.

Valuation Band	Range of Values £
A	Up to £40,000
B	£40,001 to £52,000
C	£52,001 to £68,000
D	£68,001 to £88,000
E	£88,001 to £120,000
F	£120,001 to £160,000
G	£160,001 to £320,000
H	Over £320,000

## Querying your Council Tax band

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) values domestic properties for council tax. This valuation is used to set your council tax band. You might need to contact the VOA if you think your council tax band is wrong.

You can find out more about when you can challenge your band and what you need to do at [gov.uk/challenge-council-tax-band](http://gov.uk/challenge-council-tax-band). If you challenge your band, you must continue to pay council tax at your current band until your appeal is decided.

You can contact the VOA at [gov.uk/contact-voa](http://gov.uk/contact-voa). If you are unable to use the online service you can also contact the VOA on 03000 501 501

## Making a formal appeal

Generally, you can only appeal within SIX MONTHS of:

- becoming a new Council Tax payer for a property
- the Valuation Office Agency notifying you that your banding has changed

You can also appeal at any time if:

- your property has been partly or wholly demolished
- physical changes have occurred in the proximity of the property, which have an effect on the April 1, 1991 market value

For a full list of circumstances when a valid appeal is permitted, visit [www.voa.gov.uk](http://www.voa.gov.uk)

You may also appeal direct to the Council if you feel that you are not liable to pay Council Tax. This may be because you are not the owner or do not live in the property, you believe the property should be exempt or that the Council has made a mistake when calculating your bill.

If you wish to appeal you must write to the Council so that it has the opportunity to reconsider your case. Appeals should be addressed to the Council Tax Team, Hawthorne Building, Rolling Mill Road, Viking Industrial Estate, Jarrow, NE32 3DP, or alternatively email [council.tax@southtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:council.tax@southtyneside.gov.uk)

Making an appeal does not allow you to withhold payment. If your appeal is successful any overpaid Council Tax will be returned to you.

# Guide to Council Tax

## How can I pay less Council Tax?

It can be reduced through discounts, disability reductions, Council Tax Support (known as Council Tax Benefit until April 2013) and Exemptions. Information on how to claim Council Tax Support is shown on page 9.

## Disabilities

If you or someone who lives with you has a disability and your home has been adapted to meet their needs you may qualify for a reduction.

## Single Person Discount

If you live on your own you may be entitled to a 25% reduction.

## Leaving care discount

Young adults leaving the care of South Tyneside Council, are entitled to 100% Discount, while they reside within South Tyneside, until the age of 25.

## Other Discounts

You may be eligible for a discount if you or someone who lives with you is:

- a full time student, student nurse or apprentice
- severely mentally impaired
- over 18 and still entitled to child benefit
- a resident in hospital, nursing or care home

A full list is available at  
[www.southtyneside.gov.uk/counciltax](http://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/counciltax)

## Exempt Properties

Some properties are exempt from Council Tax. These include both occupied and unoccupied properties and include:

- properties occupied solely by students
- properties which are vacant following the death of the occupier, where relatives are waiting for probate or letters of administration to be granted (these properties continue to be exempt for a further six months)
- unoccupied properties owned by a charity
- properties left unoccupied because the liable person is receiving care elsewhere

A full list is available at  
[www.southtyneside.gov.uk/counciltax](http://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/counciltax)

## Reductions agreed by the Billing Authority

The Council has the powers, subject to affordability, to reduce the amount of Council Tax payable in relation to individual cases, where an exceptional situation arises outside the control of the taxpayer and national discounts or exemptions cannot be applied.

## Empty Homes Premium

Properties that have been empty and unfurnished for over two years will attract an additional Council Tax Charge. Owners of these dwellings will be liable to pay 200% Council Tax. For properties that have been empty and unfurnished for five years or more, this will increase to 300% and for those that have been empty and unfurnished for 10 years or more, this will increase to 400%

There are some circumstances where an empty homes premium cannot be applied;

- Properties that are currently classed as Exempt from Council Tax
- An empty dwelling which is the sole or main residence of a member of the armed forces who is absent from the property as a result of such service
- An unoccupied annexe in a property which is being used as part of the main dwelling in a property

## Empty Property Council Tax

If you own an empty property or second home, the amount of Council Tax you pay will depend on the following classes.

*\*Empty and substantially unfurnished properties which have been so for more than two years are charged full council tax plus an additional premium of 100%. For those properties which have been so for more than five years, the additional premium is 200%. For those properties which have been so for more than ten years, the additional premium is 300%*

Class A	Furnished properties/second homes which have a restricted use e.g. holiday chalets	Full council tax
Class B	Furnished properties/second homes	Full council tax
Class A and B exception	Liable person living in defined job related accommodation	50% discount
Class C *	Empty and unfurnished properties	Full council tax
Class D *	Empty and in need of or undergoing structural alteration or major repair	Full council tax
Class E	Empty due to occupant living in job related armed services accommodation	Full council tax
Class F	Empty properties which form part of another property that is in use e.g. an empty annexe in an occupied home	Full council tax

If your bill shows that a discount or exemption has been allowed, you must tell the Council of any change of circumstances which affects your entitlement. If you fail to do so, you may be required to pay a financial penalty.

## Help and Information

Information on how to pay your Council Tax bill is shown on the back of the bill. Your bill also includes your current method of payment and instalment details.

To change your method of payment:

Q | [www.southtyneside.gov.uk/counciltax](http://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/counciltax)

✉ | [council.tax@southtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:council.tax@southtyneside.gov.uk)

☎ | 0191 424 4330

You can also apply to pay your Council Tax in 12 instalments. Your request must be made before **15 April 2023**.

Information on how to claim Council Tax Support is shown on page 9.

## Direct Debit

Direct Debit is the easiest, most convenient way to pay your Council Tax. South Tyneside Council offers a range of monthly payment dates, 1st, 11th, 15th, 21st and 28th. We also offer weekly Direct Debits, collected each Friday. If you wish to change your method of payment to Direct Debit visit our website [www.southtyneside.gov.uk/counciltax](http://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/counciltax)

## Payment Problems

If you have difficulties in maintaining your payments please go to [www.southtyneside.gov.uk/counciltax](http://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/counciltax) to set up a payment plan to pay any outstanding money owed on your Council Tax bill. Alternatively, please contact us. Getting in touch may stop further costs being added to your account. For support and advice you may also want to contact:

☎ | The Welfare Support Team:  
0191 424 6040

☎ | Citizens' Advice:  
0344 499 4715

✉ | [welfaresupport@southtynesidehomes.org.uk](mailto:welfaresupport@southtynesidehomes.org.uk)

## Cost of Living Pressures

For information on the support available to help with the cost of living pressures please visit: [www.southtyneside.gov.uk/costofliving](http://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/costofliving)

## E-Services

The Council is constantly expanding the services that can be accessed online.

For full details of these services please see page 10.

## Data Protection

South Tyneside Council holds both Council Tax and Benefit information about you. We will use this information for administering Council Tax, Benefits and Council Tax Support. We will treat the information you give us as confidential, although it may be used for the prevention and detection of crime including fraud or for statutory or compatible purposes.

To view a breakdown of where your Council Tax goes and the Council's expenditure please visit [www.southtyneside.gov.uk](http://www.southtyneside.gov.uk) or request a hard copy by writing to Council Tax Team, Hawthorne Building, Rolling Mill Road, Viking Industrial Estate, Jarrow, NE32 3DP or call 0191 424 4330.

# Universal Credit

Universal Credit is replacing a selection of benefits and tax credits for a range of people of working age including Housing Benefit.

Most people will now need to claim their Housing costs through Universal Credit instead of Housing Benefit. To find out which benefit you need to claim, go to GOV.UK: Housing Benefit.

## About Universal Credit

Universal Credit is paid differently to other benefits - it is a single, monthly payment that includes help with your rent.

### What is Universal Credit replacing?

Universal Credit brings together six benefits and tax credits and replaces them with a single monthly payment.

It replaces the following:

- Income-based Job Seekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit

Any benefits you receive which are not included in the above list, such as Child Benefit, Carers Allowance, Personal Independence Payment and Council Tax Support, will continue to be paid as usual.

It is important to remember that Universal Credit does not replace Council Tax Support. If you wish to claim Council Tax Support go online at

Q | [www.southtyneside.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport](http://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport)

## Welfare Support Service

The Welfare Support Service can help you with:

- Welfare benefit advice and support
- Debt (including helping with Council Tax arrears)

☎ | Welfare Support Service:  
0191 424 6040

☎ | Customer Service Centre:  
0300 123 6633

✉ | [welfaresupport@southtynesidehomes.org.uk](mailto:welfaresupport@southtynesidehomes.org.uk)



# Do you need to claim Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support?

If you are entitled to claim Housing Benefit and you wish to make a claim for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support or you just want to claim Council Tax Support go to [www.southtyneside.gov.uk/housingbenefit](http://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/housingbenefit)

You must make your claim immediately. If you delay you will lose out on some benefit.

## Important information we need from you

To process your claim for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support we will need to see:

- Proof of identity for both you and your partner
- Proof of National Insurance number for you and your partner
- Proof of all income for you and your partner
- Proof of capital for both you and your partner
- Proof of rent if you rent from a landlord or Housing Association

When you make your claim online you may receive an email asking you for further evidence to support your claim. This information can be uploaded directly via the link included in the email you receive. If you can't upload the evidence, we will need to see original documents. Copies will not be accepted.


If you need any help with your Housing Benefit/Council Tax Support claim you can call the Benefit Service on 0191 424 4333.

## Council Tax Support scheme

The funding provided by Central Government, to South Tyneside Council, in respect of Council Tax Support has reduced year on year since 2013 when local support schemes were introduced. Nevertheless, the local scheme adopted by South Tyneside Council continues to protect the most vulnerable residents in our Borough.

Residents in receipt of a disability, severe disability or disabled child premium and low income families with children under five are entitled to a reduction of up to 85%. All other groups, except for those of pensionable age, are entitled to a reduction of up to 70%.

For information about how much Council Tax Support you might get, visit [www.southtyneside.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport](http://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/counciltaxsupport)



*It is quick and simple to register and access the online services.*

# Digital Council Tax and Benefits Service

You can now manage your Council Tax and Housing Benefit/Council Tax Support in one place using our online portal. Register today and add your account details to access these services:

- ✓ View your Council Tax account online, including next and previous payments
- ✓ Set up a Direct Debit
- ✓ Sign up to receive your Council Tax bills by email
- ✓ Apply for, or cancel, Single Person Discount for Council Tax
- ✓ Set up a payment arrangement for Council Tax
- ✓ View your Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support details online (if you receive these benefits)
- ✓ Sign up to receive your Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support notifications online (if you receive these benefits)



South Tyneside Council

To sign up visit:  
[www.southtyneside.gov.uk/counciltaxandbenefits](http://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/counciltaxandbenefits)  
and follow the onscreen instructions.

# Discretionary Housing Payments

## What are Discretionary Housing Payments?

Discretionary Housing Payments are payments made in addition to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, if we consider that additional help with housing costs is needed. Discretionary Housing Payments are not payments of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.

## Who can claim?

The person entitled to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit can make a claim or someone acting on behalf of the person concerned (e.g. an appointee) can also make a claim.

## How much can I claim?

The Council will decide the amount of the payments that you are entitled to and the period for which the payments will be made.

Your entitlement to Discretionary Housing Payments will be reconsidered each time you apply in writing.

The Council is given an amount each year to spend.

## Will I be entitled to Discretionary Housing Payments?

Each case is looked at separately. Discretionary Housing Payments provide financial help to people who:

- are entitled to Housing Benefit or Universal Credit Housing Cost element and
- appear to need further financial assistance (in addition to the benefit or benefits to which they are entitled) in order to meet housing costs

## What are “housing costs”?

Housing costs are your eligible rent.

The following are not included and Discretionary Housing Payments will not be paid in respect of them:

Certain elements of rent:

- Ineligible service charges
- Water, sewerage and environmental services
- Increase in rent due to outstanding rent arrears

## How to claim

You can make a Discretionary Housing Payment claim online at [www.southtyneside.gov.uk/dhp](http://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/dhp)

## Independent advice:

### Welfare Support Advice

South Tyneside Council, Town Hall and Civic Offices, Westoe Road, South Shields, Tyne and Wear, NE33 2RL

☎ | 0191 424 6040

✉ | [welfaresupport@southtynesidehomes.org.uk](mailto:welfaresupport@southtynesidehomes.org.uk)

### South Tyneside Citizens Advice

Edinburgh Buildings, 2 Station Approach, South Shields, Tyne and Wear, NE33 1HR

☎ | 0344 499 4715

### Jarrow Citizens Advice

Tarn House, 8 Grange Road West, Jarrow, Tyne and Wear, NE32 3JA

☎ | 0344 499 4715

## contact



**[www.southtyneside.gov.uk](http://www.southtyneside.gov.uk)**



**0191 427 7000** (Mon-Fri 8am to 6.30pm)

We are legally obliged to send you the information contained within this booklet.

If you know someone who needs this information in a different format, for example large print, Braille or a different language, please call Marketing and Communications on 0191 427 1717.