

Council Tax Reduction Scheme - Summary of consultation feedback

PART A - QUANTITATIVE CONSULTATION

- A postal survey of all council tax benefit claimants affected.
- A postal survey of owners of second homes/long term empty properties, who are also affected.
- A postal survey of a random sample of residents, who are not claimants or owners of second homes/long term empty properties, to obtain an impartial perspective.
- An online survey of other people/organisations who wish to provide their views.

Overall results

Options	Percent In favour ¹			Number in favour ²
	Claimants	Owners ³	Residents	Online
Option 1 - general cut of council tax support by 18.5%	41.6%	Not asked	62.2%	5
Option 2 - give more protection to vulnerable groups than is provided under Option 1	36.6%	Not asked	27.2%	10
• People with disabilities	28.4%	Not asked	24.0%	6
• Families with babies (up to 1 year old)	12.2%	Not asked	7.7%	4
• Families with young children (up to 5 years old)	17.7%	Not asked	7.2%	4
• Other people	7.6%	Not asked	2.7%	2
Option 3 - remove council tax discount on second homes and long term empty properties	68.3%	14.7%	78.5%	13
Option 4 - cap the amount of support to the level for a Band 'D' property	34.3%	Not asked	54.4%	8
Option 5 - remove the second adult rebate	24.9%	Not asked	58.2%	9
Based on returned/completed questionnaires:	1,418	150	980	16

Notes:

1. Based on total number of responses (including "Not sure", "Prefer not to say", multiple responses and blanks).
2. In view of the very low number of respondents who completed the online survey, the results are expressed in number rather than percentage of responses.
3. Owners of second homes and long term (more than six months) empty properties.

Claimants

The following two tables show the extent to which each group of claimants supports each option. Where there is majority support, the results are shown in bold black font. These results are based on all responses.

Options	Groups						
	Males	Females	Under 25s	25-34s	35-44s	45-54s	55-64s
Option 1 - general cut of council tax support by 18.5%	37.8%	42.7%	39.3%	42.2%	44.4%	39.7%	37.8%
Option 2 - give more protection to vulnerable groups than is provided under Option 1	42.0%	35.2%	36.1%	36.0%	33.7%	38.6%	42.3%
• People with disabilities	36.3%	27.3%	29.5%	19.0%	26.2%	34.4%	38.5%
• Families with babies (up to 1 year old)	12.7%	10.8%	23.0%	12.8%	10.4%	11.8%	8.7%
• Families with young children (up to 5 years old)	15.5%	17.0%	29.5%	24.2%	14.3%	13.4%	16.1%
• Other people	6.2%	8.2%	3.3%	10.4%	7.8%	7.1%	6.6%
Option 3 - remove council tax discount on second homes and long term empty properties	69.0%	68.8%	57.4%	69.2%	69.7%	69.2%	69.6%
Option 4 - cap the amount of support to the level for a Band 'D' property	40.3%	33.5%	24.6%	29.4%	35.0%	37.9%	40.6%
Option 5 - remove the second adult rebate	25.9%	24.1%	24.6%	29.4%	21.8%	24.3%	25.9%
Number in each group	471	947	61	211	412	448	286

Options	Groups			
	Households with babies (< 1 year)	Households with children (< 5 years)	Health problems/ Disability	Carers
Option 1 - general cut of council tax support by 18.5%	17.1%	41.7%	28.2%	28.2%
Option 2 - give more protection to vulnerable groups than is provided under Option 1	62.9%	37.4%	55.6%	59.0%
• People with disabilities	31.4%	20.9%	54.0%	59.0%
• Families with babies (up to 1 year old)	25.7%	17.4%	16.1%	23.1%
• Families with young children (up to 5 years old)	51.4%	32.3%	16.9%	30.8%
• Other people	11.4%	6.4%	11.3%	10.3%
Option 3 - remove council tax discount on second homes and long term empty properties	62.9%	66.0%	74.2%	61.5%
Option 4 - cap the amount of support to the level for a Band 'D' property	31.4%	29.4%	47.6%	23.1%
Option 5 - remove the second adult rebate	25.7%	28.9%	26.6%	10.3%
Number in each group	35	235	124	39

The table immediately below provides an overall summary of the groups of claimants that favour each Option more than other groups within each classification. For example, within the gender classification there are two groups, males and females. However, this does not necessarily mean majority support.

Options	Groups particularly in favour (statistically significant)					
	Gender	Age	Households with babies (under 1)	Households with children (under 5)	Health problems/ Disability	Carers
Option 1 - general cut of council tax support by 18.5%	Females					
Option 2 - give more protection to vulnerable groups than is provided under Option 1	Males		Yes		Yes	Yes
• People with disabilities	Males	45-64s			Yes	
• Families with babies (up to 1 year old)		Under 25s		Yes		
• Families with young children (up to 5 years old)	Females	Under 34s	Yes	Yes		
• Other people	Females					
Option 3 - remove council tax discount on second homes and long term empty properties						
Option 4 - cap the amount of support to the level for a Band 'D' property						
Option 5 - remove the second adult rebate		25-34s		Yes		

Owners of second homes/long term empty properties

The following two tables show the extent to which each group of owners supports Option 3. There is no group with majority support for Option 3. These results are based on all responses.

Options	Groups where a majority are in favour are shown in bold black text								
	Males	Females	Under 25s	25-34s	35-44s	45-54s	55-64s	65-74	75+
Option 3 - remove council tax discount on second homes and long term empty properties	17.4%	12.7%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	12.1%	18.2%	9.4%	30.0%
Number in each group	86	55	0	5	8	33	33	32	10

Options	Groups where a majority are in favour are shown in bold black text		
	Health problems/ Disability	White British	Not White British
Option 3 - remove council tax discount on second homes and long term empty properties	22.7%	14.5%	16.7%
Number in each group	22	124	6

There are no statistically significant differences between the above groups in terms of support for Option 3.

Residents

The following two tables show the extent to which each group of residents supports each option. Where there is majority support, the results are shown in bold black font. These results are based on all responses.

Options	Groups where a majority are in favour are shown in bold black text								
	Males	Females	Under 25s	25-34s	35-44s	45-54s	55-64s	65-74	75+
Option 1 - general cut of council tax support by 18.5%	62.8%	59.5%	42.9%	59.5%	64.4%	66.2%	62.6%	62.3%	54.7%
Option 2 - give more protection to vulnerable groups than is provided under Option 1	29.0%	27.1%	28.6%	33.3%	27.7%	25.0%	26.5%	30.2%	32.6%
• People with disabilities	25.6%	23.5%	14.3%	28.6%	23.8%	20.6%	23.2%	27.6%	28.2%
• Families with babies (up to 1 year old)	7.1%	6.4%	0.0%	16.7%	12.9%	5.9%	5.8%	6.5%	3.9%
• Families with young children (up to 5 years old)	7.7%	7.3%	28.6%	9.5%	7.9%	4.4%	7.1%	8.5%	8.8%
• Other people	3.0%	4.2%	14.3%	2.4%	2.0%	2.9%	3.2%	3.5%	6.1%
Option 3 - remove council tax discount on second homes and long term empty properties	82.6%	74.4%	85.7%	64.3%	81.2%	77.9%	80.0%	82.9%	79.0%
Option 4 - cap the amount of support to the level for a Band 'D' property	60.4%	45.9%	28.6%	54.8%	61.4%	52.2%	51.0%	60.3%	48.6%
Option 5 - remove the second adult rebate	61.7%	52.2%	28.6%	47.6%	67.3%	61.8%	56.8%	61.8%	50.8%
Number in each group	535	425	7	42	101	136	155	199	181

Options	Groups where a majority are in favour are shown in bold black text					
	Households with babies (< 1 year)	Households with children (< 5 years)	Health problems/ Disability	Carers	White British	Not White British
Option 1 - general cut of council tax support by 18.5%	57.1%	59.3%	52.1%	54.5%	62.3%	51.9%
Option 2 - give more protection to vulnerable groups than is provided under Option 1	28.6%	32.2%	33.5%	38.2%	27.1%	37.0%
• People with disabilities	28.6%	28.8%	29.3%	30.9%	23.9%	33.3%
• Families with babies (up to 1 year old)	14.3%	18.6%	6.4%	11.8%	6.1%	18.5%
• Families with young children (up to 5 years old)	7.1%	15.3%	8.0%	9.1%	6.9%	11.1%
• Other people	0.0%	3.4%	5.9%	4.5%	3.6%	0.0%
Option 3 - remove council tax discount on second homes and long term empty properties	71.4%	72.9%	76.1%	80.0%	79.2%	66.7%
Option 4 - cap the amount of support to the level for a Band 'D' property	57.1%	61.0%	50.0%	53.6%	53.7%	55.6%
Option 5 - remove the second adult rebate	42.9%	69.5%	49.5%	53.6%	56.5%	55.6%
Number in each group	14	59	188	110	918	27

The table immediately below provides an overall summary of the groups of residents that favour each Option more than other groups within each classification. For example, within the gender classification there are two groups, males and females. However, this does not necessarily mean majority support.

Options	Groups more in favour than other groups within each classification (statistically significant)						
	Gender	Age	Households with babies (< 1 year)	Households with children (< 5 years)	Health problems/ Disability	Carers	Ethnicity
Option 1 - general cut of council tax support by 18.5%							
Option 2 - give more protection to vulnerable groups than is provided under Option 1					Yes	Yes	
• People with disabilities							
• Families with babies (up to 1 year old)							
• Families with young children (up to 5 years old)				Yes			
• Other people							
Option 3 - remove council tax discount on second homes and long term empty properties	Males						
Option 4 - cap the amount of support to the level for a Band 'D' property	Males						
Option 5 - remove the second adult rebate							

PART B - QUALITATIVE CONSULTATION

Apart from the postal and online surveys, we were also anxious to garner the views of advocacy groups and organisations (such as social landlords). The information finally captured from the exercise comes from a good range of stakeholders, including all those with the highest levels of interest and day to day contact with the current service, such as the Tonbridge CAB, West Kent Debt Advice Service, Russet Homes and Porchlight.

Summary of Responses

- 1) Q1. Do you prefer Option 1 (a general cut of council tax support by 18.5%) or Option 2 (give more protection to vulnerable groups than is provided under Option 1)?

There is support for Option 1 from internal stakeholders and the National Landlord Association but it is not the favoured option of other external stakeholders.

- 2) Q2. Which vulnerable groups do you think should receive more protection than is provided under Option 1? Please remember that the groups not selected will have their award cut by more than 18.5% to make up the difference.

Suggestions made for protected vulnerable groups being people

- with severe disabilities
- unable to work
- leaving care, prison or hostel accommodation
- with 'floating support'

There is also opinion that vulnerability should not be classified in this way but assessed on an individual basis. Financial assistance, where necessary, should then be applied through the use of a discretionary fund.

- 3) Q3. Do you agree with Option 3 – removing council tax discount on second homes and long term empty properties?

There is complete support to reduce or remove the Council Tax 10% discount for second homes and long term empty properties (The National Landlord Association goes as far to say it supports the levy of additional charges for long term empty homes).

- 4) Q4. Do you agree with Option 4 – cap the amount of support to the level for a Band D property ?

The response was mixed but comments raised were that there should be provision of a discretionary fund for those families facing genuine financial

hardship and the suggestion that the cap could be applied after six months or a year of support at the full level.

5) Q5. Do you agree with Option 5 – removing the second adult rebate ?

All agreed

6) Q6. Other Comments

- Families with children have a greater potential to manage their budgets due to combinations of child benefit, child tax credits and child maintenance payments.
- Often, people with disabilities have reasonable incomes from benefits compared to those who do not have disabilities.
- Many vulnerable people single, under 25 year olds.