



**FORWARD TOGETHER**

# **Council Tax Support scheme consultation feedback summary**

## Number of responses



- 280 responses were submitted on-line
- 90% or 252 respondents were in receipt of Council Tax Support
- 10% or 28 respondents were not in receipt of council Tax Support
- 98.93% of respondents were residents and 1.07% were resident and business
- 48.57% of respondents had children
- 86.43% of respondents did so after receipt of a letter from the council
- 42.86% of respondents indicated claimant/partner were working
- 45% of respondents indicated they were carers of some form



## Equalities



- 59.6% of respondents were Female and 32.1% Male
- The biggest ethnic group to complete the consultation was 33.9% White British
- 53.9% have indicated that they or a member of the family are receiving one of the Disabled Benefits listed
- 51.8% have indicated that they have one of the Disabilities listed
- 77.9% of respondents listed their sexuality as Straight or Heterosexual
- The majority of the consultation was completed by age groups 25 to 59
- The largest Religious Faith Group was Christian at 33.9%
- 91.8% identify their Gender being the same sex they were registered as at birth

# Summary of individual responses



Question	Responses				
The Council should reduce the rate of Council Tax Support for households based on the table	Definitely agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Definitely disagree
	9.3%	3.6%	8.9%	8.9%	69.3%

## Common themes in responses

Cost of living crisis and increasing costs, especially food, gas, and electricity bills

Concern about the financial and health & wellbeing impact on residents with disabilities and physical or mental health issues

Concern about the impact on single parents, those that live alone, carers, and those with dependent children

Fear of falling into debt if support is reduced

Already struggling to afford essentials such as food or concern about not being able to afford them if support is reduced

# Summary of individual responses



## Quotes from responses: The Council should reduce the rate of Council Tax Support for households based on the table

I believe the proposed plan is overly simplistic and fails to account for marginalized groups. The categories need further subcategorization. For instance, not all individuals of working age who are unemployed are in the same circumstances. Some, like single parents, or parents who are also carers are unable to work due to childcare challenges or difficulty finding employment. These individuals not only have themselves to support but also their children.

These changes will hit those in poverty and those who are most vulnerable the hardest. I do not have enough income to cover bills and food as it is. If the proposed changes were carried out, I would not be able to afford to eat. I and many others depend on vital council tax support and reducing it will push so many, many people deeper into deprivation and poverty.

There is a National crisis, everything is going up in price and there are some months I worry that I cannot survive, this will be added pressure and can see a lot of people going into further debt which will result in higher mental health needs which will have an impact on the nhs.

House holds that don't have anyone working due to disability don't need the added burden of council tax aswell the money is given to help support there disability not to pay things like council tax it would take money away from them that could be better off used on medical support they need for all different things



# Summary of individual responses



Question	Responses				
What do you think the impact may be on your household if we did this?	Very positive	Fairly positive	No effect	Fairly negative	Very negative
	5.7%	3.2%	5.0%	12.9%	73.2%

## Common themes in responses

Won't be able to afford food or pay bills (especially electricity and heating)

Cost of living and increasing costs

Concern about it affecting mental and physical health, and a reduction in quality of life

Fear of falling into debt or becoming homeless

Concern about vulnerable groups such as those with long-term illnesses and disabilities, and those with dependent children

Many had written their thoughts on this as their answer to the previous question, so referred to that

# Summary of individual responses



## Quotes from responses: What do you think the impact may be on your household if we did this?

I'm struggling already having to find money which I don't have will put me to debt and could cost me losing my home.

The proposed reduction would force my mom to use money meant for essentials like heating, food, and transportation to pay for Council Tax.

Any increase in Council Tax contributions would force us to cut back on essential items such as food, utilities, and medical costs, which are already stretched thin due to the rising cost of living.

The cost of living crisis is making it very difficult for low income families to afford the basic essentials. We already only rarely heat our home due to very high energy bills. If the CT bill goes up we will simply have to live in extremely cold temperatures not being able to afford heating our home at all. How can a family with children cope with such circumstances?

The household includes individuals with health conditions requiring regular care and medication, funded through PIP and ESA. A reduction in support would jeopardize our ability to afford these essentials, potentially worsening health outcomes and increasing stress levels for everyone involved.

I don't want to be put in the position of going homeless

# Summary of individual responses



Question	Responses				
Do you think that Council Tax Support should be awarded where the DWP has notified us that a customer has made a UC claim, reducing the need for a separate application for CTS?	Definitely agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Definitely disagree
	49.6%	12.5%	25.7%	2.9%	9.3%

## Common themes in responses

Support for the reduction in paperwork/admin/duplication for applicants and council officers

It would make it easier/simpler/faster for applicants and free up council officer time for other work

It would help those who receive UC but do not realise they need to apply for CTS separately

Concern about how this would affect those who need council tax support but do not receive UC

Questions over how efficiently the DWP and SBC would share data

Several respondents stated that they did not know or did not understand the question



# Summary of individual responses



## Quotes from responses: Do you think that Council Tax Support should be awarded where the DWP has notified us...

It means fewer obstacles to navigate and ensures that things are resolved promptly. This approach would save time and resources by guaranteeing that those in need of support receive it in a timely manner.

Linking Universal Credit claims directly to Council Tax Support reduces duplication of work for claimants and council staff. It creates a more efficient system, allowing resources to be allocated elsewhere, such as addressing queries or processing appeals.

The separate application is unnecessary in this situation. Let the council employees to work on more important issues.

Streamlining the paperwork and saving duplication is better, however, not all claimants are on Universal Credit so it is not a complete fix

This support should also continue to be given to people on other benefits such as income support, ESA and Job seekers allowance and other benefits not only those on Universal Credit otherwise you will not be helping all people that require council tax support and need the DWP to be informed able their entitlement to benefits

I found it quite stressful to apply for universal credit. I thought it included everything and wasn't aware council tax benefit wasn't and you needed to apply separately. The council tax form was long and had to then submit evidence all over again. Would definitely be better to have it joint with universal credit as it's all the same information anyway.

Some individuals may not realize they need to apply separately for CTS or may miss the application deadline, leading to unnecessary hardship. Automatic awarding ensures that eligible households do not miss out on crucial financial support.

# Summary of individual responses



Question	Responses				
Do you think that backdating for working age customers should be extended from 1 month to 3 months?	Definitely agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Definitely disagree
	43.2%	13.2%	31.4%	5.0%	7.2%

## Common themes in responses

Generally supportive as long as there was a reason for the applicant's delay or if the process took a long time

Support for backdating due to concern over the length of time CT application takes and that backdating should cover that time

Support for backdating due to concern over people not being aware of the need to apply separately for CT or that they would be eligible for it. Also support for spreading more awareness of what support is available for people.

Support for combing CT with UC

Backdating could reduce risk of arrears, issues with quality of life, and other issues arising from financial difficulties

# Summary of individual responses



## Quotes from responses: Do you think that backdating for working age customers should be extended from 1 month...

...extending the backdating period to 3 months, with proof of continuous good cause, would ensure that individuals who face valid challenges in applying on time are not unfairly penalized. Many people may have legitimate reasons for delayed applications, such as illness or personal issues, and allowing more time for backdating would provide them with the support they need without being disadvantaged. This approach would be more compassionate and equitable.

People have different circumstances and 1 month is not sufficient for everybody e.g. because they cannot get within this short period all necessary documents e.g. from their employers. Additionally, review periods vary between benefits e.g. in most cases review period for Council Tax Support and Universal Credit are different causing additional issues and delays

It can take several weeks for claims to be administered and a buffer zone will prevent more complications later.

If a person has good cause for not applying in a timely fashion then they should be given all the support that they require. This is just fair.

It could be beneficial and allow those entitled to it to have the time to benefit from the support, however, I think the main issue is actually increasing the awareness of potential support as organisations like the council and universal credit do not advise on support available to people until it is too late.



# Summary of individual responses



Question	Responses				
Do you think that in exceptional circumstances the council can treat an application as being made at any time back to the beginning of the financial year in which the application is made?	Definitely agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Definitely disagree
	48.9%	14.7%	28.9%	6.4%	1.1%

## Common themes in responses

Generally supportive when there's evidence of exceptional circumstances outside of the applicant's control

Support for it being decided on a case by case basis

Feeling this would be fair when it wasn't the applicant's fault the application wasn't made earlier

# Summary of individual responses



## Quotes from responses: Do you think that in exceptional circumstances the council can treat an application as being...

I agree because it not down to the person who applied that it has been delayed. In those exceptional circumstances, it's down to the council or universal credit so it's not fair to punish the applicant. They did everything they had to do.

I don't think the 'customer' should be penalised for delays in the application system and not being able to apply sooner.

...in exceptional circumstances, such as delays with Universal Credit or failures by the local authority to act on notifications from the DWP, applicants should not be penalized for issues beyond their control. Allowing applications to be backdated to the beginning of the financial year ensures that individuals do not lose out on crucial support due to administrative delays or mistakes. This approach would provide fairness and prevent further financial hardship for vulnerable people who rely on this assistance.

It helps people with exceptional circumstances and reduces the number of struggling people

Yes, this is only fair if it is not the claimant's fault.

# Summary of individual responses



Question	Responses				
Do you think that the period that working age customers can receive Council Tax Support if they are temporary absent from Great Britain should be reduced from 13 weeks to 4 weeks?	Definitely agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Definitely disagree
	30.7%	11.8%	28.2%	9.3%	20.0%

## Common themes in responses

Depends on the reason for their absence, should be on a case by case basis

There should be some exceptions, e.g., for medical treatment or family emergencies, or if they have an emergency while away that delays their return

13 weeks is too long but 4 weeks could be too short – some suggestions of around 6-8 weeks

Assumptions that if someone can afford to leave GB for more than 4 weeks, it must be for a holiday or for work, and they would therefore have the money to afford CT so should not receive support



# Summary of individual responses



## Quotes from responses: Do you think that the period that working age customers can receive Council Tax Support if...

I think the council should consider a list of good reasons of extended absence. If the customers had exceptional circumstances for extended absence beyond their control, this could have an impact on their finances coming back to Britain. Therefore 13 weeks can make a huge difference.

People could be abroad for a variety of reasons, medical emergencies, death etc and hitting them with a financial penalty because of it would be cruel and unfair

people have different circumstances e.g. they might go for a medical treatment abroad or have an accident when abroad and they have to stay there in hospital.

A reduction to 4 weeks is too short, especially for individuals who may travel abroad for family emergencies, medical treatment, or other critical reasons. Limiting the period disproportionately affects those who rely on the support and may result in unnecessary hardship when they return.

If people choose to be out of the country for longer than 4 weeks then they should pay. Unless there is a very good reason for their absence i.e a death.

I agree because if they're out of the country for that long, they should have to reapply. The people who really need the help can't afford to be out of the country for that long.

# Summary of individual responses



Question	Responses				
If the changes are introduced, the council should allocate a hardship fund of £175,000 to help those most affected in the first year?	Definitely agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Definitely disagree
	55.7%	13.9%	18.9%	0.0%	11.4%

# Summary of individual responses



Question	Responses				
If these changes are implemented, the council should provide additional financial advice to help those affected?	Definitely agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Definitely disagree
	66.4%	13.2%	11.4%	2.5%	6.4%



# Summary of individual responses



Question	Responses
Do you have any further comments on the options proposed above?	There were 150 comments to this question. 119 of those were from respondents who disagree with the reduction in the rate of Council Tax Support, 17 from those who agree and 14 who neither agree nor disagree
<b>Common themes in responses</b>	
Do not change Council Tax Support	
If changes to CTS must be made, then there is support for the hardship fund and financial advice	
Concern that £175,000 for the hardship fund isn't enough and one year isn't long enough for residents with long-term circumstances (e.g., disability)	
Concern that it is difficult to apply for a hardship fund	
Advice cannot help residents pay council tax if they don't have the money	

# Summary of individual responses



## Quotes from responses: Do you have any further comments on the options proposed above?

Providing financial advice can reduce the likelihood of council tax arrears, enforcement actions, and legal disputes, which are costly for both residents and the council.

If the changes are implemented, then the additional assistance must be provided to those in need in the simplest, most friction-free way possible.

Things like hardship funds are not easily accessible. It entails more forms more evidences that are time consuming and may well be stressful especially for elderly. And after the first year of support, then what will the households too that are struggling?

It sounds silly to cut people's support down to then offer them extra financial support for a year to then stop it how is that saving money and how is that going to help anyone. If you give people financial support one year what are they supposed to do in the future years there still going to be in the same position

Financial advice is not enough. If your income is too low and you cannot go to work to cover living expenses, no advice will change your income.

# Summary of individual responses



Question	Responses
If the proposals are agreed, and the support options are implemented, are there any groups of people that you think the council should particularly provide support for?	There were 209 comments to this question. 166 of those were from respondents who disagree with the reduction in the rate of Council Tax Support

## Common themes in responses

Disabled people/people with physical or mental health issues

Older people/the elderly/people of pension age

Single occupants

Single parents and low income families with children

Carers

Anyone with low income



# Summary of individual responses



## Quotes from responses: If the proposals are agreed, and the support options are implemented, are there any groups...

Those that have trouble getting into work, those with children or other dependents, OAPs, those out of work for reasons relating to their health (mental and physical) etc.

Yes people who are on pip and disabled as they cannot work and there benefits don't increase so if it was to change they would be worse off as they wouldn't have any extra to give

Single parent families/ family with a low income/ disabled individuals/ carers And working family's depending on your income.

Those on low incomes and benefits and those with disabilities, mental health issues, the elderly and pensioners those Suffering from health conditions/ illnesses or sicknesses. All other people in need who are struggling and require and are entitled to this support.

# Summary of individual responses



Question	Responses
Are there any other things you think the council could do to reduce the impact on affected households of these proposed changes to Council Tax Support?	There were 151 comments to this question. 119 of those were from respondents who disagree with the reduction in the rate of Council Tax Support
<b>Common themes in responses</b>	
Do not change Council Tax Support	
Increase the hardship fund	
Reduce council costs/find savings elsewhere instead	
Increase council tax for those who can afford it instead	

# Summary of individual responses



## Quotes from responses: Are there any other things you think the council could do to reduce the impact on affected...

While the proposed £175,000 hardship fund is a positive step, the council should consider increasing this amount if the demand proves higher than expected. Additionally, the council could introduce a flexible application process for those facing exceptional or unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of the standard criteria

The council could provide priority support to particularly vulnerable groups, including those with disabilities, single parents, pensioners, and carers. This could be through offering targeted exemptions or a higher rate of CTS for these households, as they are often the most financially fragile.

Find other sources of income to use so that Council tax support doesn't need to be reduced in the first place

Raise the peoples council who can afford it

Do not reduce the council tax support. The council instead, should look to reducing its on expenses and budget its finances more closely.

One thing could be to allow the payments to be made over 12 months instead of the usual 10 months, to spread the cost & reduce each monthly payment.



# Summary of individual responses



Question	Responses
Are there any other comments you wish to make about the proposed changes or is there anything else you would like to tell us?	There were 125 comments to this question. 101 of those were from respondents who disagree with the reduction in the rate of Council Tax Support
Common themes in responses	
Do not change Council Tax Support	
Concern for people who will be negatively effected by the changes, especially the most vulnerable	

# Summary of individual responses



## Quotes from responses: Are there any other comments you wish to make about the proposed changes or is there...

It is really important for the council to consider the impact such changes could have on families already impacted by the cost of living which seems to not improving. Council taxes makes our local , public services running and it's important that we contribute into that but when you are desperate to provide basic necessities to run your own household this makes it harder (almost impossible) to afford anything else. So please be gentle with any financial changes you make as it could have a real impact on desperate families.

Reducing Council Tax Support in an already challenging financial climate will increase the strain on vulnerable households. Slough's additional service charges, such as for bin collection, compound this issue. Instead of cutting support, the council should explore alternative revenue sources or efficiencies in other areas to protect residents from further financial hardship.

I would like to express concern that while the proposed changes to the Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme are aimed at improving efficiency, there may be unintended consequences for vulnerable residents who are already struggling financially. In particular, individuals with complex needs, including those with disabilities, low-income families, and pensioners, may face challenges in navigating the changes or securing adequate support.