

LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL TAX ENERGY REBATE SCHEME

Council Tax Rebate (the Statutory Scheme)

The Council will provide a £150 one-off non-repayable rebate to households (chargeable dwellings) in England that are someone's sole or main residence and are valued in council tax bands A to D, known as Council Tax Rebate.

This part of the scheme is statutory and fully funded up to the value of £8.4m.

The statutory scheme includes property that is valued in band E but has an alternative band of D as a result of the disabled band reduction scheme and also includes those households (other than Houses in Multiple Occupation) not paying council tax due to their exemption under:

- CLASS N Dwellings occupied only by Students
- CLASS S Dwellings occupied only by under 18's.
- CLASS U Dwellings occupied only by Severely mentally impaired
- CLASS W "Granny Flats" occupied by a dependant relative

Unoccupied properties and those considered someone's second homes will not be eligible for support.

Eligibility for Council Tax Rebate under the statutory scheme will be determined on the position at the end of the day on 1 April 2022 and all payments need to have been made by 30 September 2022 to be considered in scope for reconciliation and funding purposes.

The Discretionary Energy Rebate Scheme

Lancaster has been allocated £299,700 from the Discretionary Fund to administer their discretionary scheme. Guidance confirms that the discretionary scheme can:

- support other energy bill payers who may not be eligible under the terms of the statutory scheme (i.e. bands E to H): or
- provide additional targeted "top-up" support to the most vulnerable households in band A to D that have received a Council Tax Energy Rebate.

Councils can determine locally how best to make use of the funding and given limited funds the Council has designed a targeted scheme to best serve those vulnerable groups likely to suffer most financial hardship as a result of the rising energy costs.

- **Council Tax Support Recipients (including pensioners)**

The discretionary scheme targets those energy bill payers in receipt of Council Tax Support but residing in bands E to H that don't qualify for rebate under the statutory scheme. They will receive a discretionary energy rebate of £150.

At the same time, the scheme provides a top-up of £30 (in addition to the statutory £150 they receive) to households in receipt of full Council Tax Support and residing in bands A to D.

Families residing in property band A to D, with children under 5, who qualify for some but not full Council Tax Support will also receive a top up of £30 in addition to the £150 Council Tax Rebate they receive.

Pensioners 80 or over on 1 April 2022 residing in property band A to D, who qualify for some but not full Council Tax Support will receive a top up of £30 in addition to the £150 Council Tax Rebate they receive.

- **Disabled Residents**

Those properties occupied by a resident (or residents) considered to be “severely mentally impaired” in band A to D will receive a “top up” of £30 in addition to the £150 Council Tax Rebate. For those similar households in band E to H a discretionary energy rebate of £150 will be paid.

Those households in receipt of Disabled Persons Allowance with specific disabled facilities to accommodate a disabled resident will receive similar benefit: a top up of £30 will be paid to those disabled households in band A to E (higher band due to the band reduction). For those qualifying households in band F to H (approx. 50 households) will receive a discretionary energy rebate of £150.

There will be duplication in some of the defined groups listed above with households qualifying in a number of groups. A discretionary energy rebate payment will therefore be restricted to one payment per household.

Residential homes and similar establishments will not be eligible for this discretionary rebate.

Eligibility for Discretionary Energy Rebate under the discretionary scheme will be determined on the position at the end of the day on 1 April 2022 and all payments need to have been made by 30 November 2022 to be considered in scope for reconciliation and funding purposes. There are no plans for the Government to provide any additional funding at this stage, and any remaining funds at that time must be repaid to them.

Consideration may be given to applications from people in HMO accommodation who can prove they are liable for the heating bills. Also, additional rebate up to a maximum £150 per household may be provided to those households experiencing exceptional circumstances in relation to rising energy costs. In these examples, consideration will be subject to available funds.

Administration Arrangements

Customer Services will administer the scheme and the Community Hub Support Officer will take the project lead with Resident Support Officers processing the scheme.

Payments under either scheme are restricted to one payment per household.

Where the Council holds live direct debit instructions for a liable council taxpayer of an eligible household, we will make an automatic payment as early as possible in the 2022-23 financial year, provided we are assured that the household meets the eligible criteria and the bank details have been verified.

The Council has established a range of payment options to enable support to be provided to eligible households in different circumstances. Where the Council doesn't hold live direct debit details we will write/email individuals to offer a selection of payment methods. The selection takes the form of an application form whereby the eligible household can choose to:

- supply bank details to allow a BACS transfer to be made (subject to verification); or
- receive a single use voucher, to be redeemed through the Post Office; or
- receive the rebate posted as a credit to the relevant council tax account.

If the household does not respond by a specified date, having been given a choice of payment methods, it will be assumed that the household wishes the support payment to be credited to the household council tax account and the transfer will be administered.

There is no specific appeal process in relation to this scheme and any disputes will be administered through the Council's Complaint procedure in the first instance.

Additional steps may be introduced before payment, to prevent fraud, erroneous payment and the need for clawback.