

Discounts

Your bill assumes that two adults are living in your home. If you are the only adult living there (as your main home), we will reduce your bill by 25%.

When we look at the number of adults living in the property there are some we do not count:

- Full-time students, student nurses, apprentices and youth trainees
- People who live in hospital
- People who are being looked after in care homes
- People who are severely mentally impaired
- People staying in hostels for the homeless or night shelters
- 18 and 19 year olds who have just left school
- Resident care workers working for low pay
- People caring for someone who is not their partner or their child
- Members of visiting forces and foreign institutions
- Diplomats and their husbands or wives (who are not British)
- Monks and nuns
- People in prison (except those in prison for non payment of Council Tax or fines)

Annexes

- A 50% discount may be available where an annexe is in use as part of the main home or the occupier of the annexe is related to the person liable to pay Council Tax at the main property.

Long Term Empty Premium

- If a property has been empty and unfurnished for two years or more, it will be subject to a 100% premium. If it has been empty for 5 years or more, it will be subject to a 200% premium. Premiums are charged in addition to the 100% Council Tax charge.

Disabled reduction for people with disabilities

You may be entitled to pay less Council Tax if you, or someone who lives with you, has a room or an extra bathroom or kitchen, or uses a wheelchair in your property to meet special needs relating to a disability.

Exemptions

You don't have to pay Council Tax for some properties. These are known as 'exempt properties'.

If no-one lives in a property, it is exempt if the property:

- is owned by a charity (exempt for up to six months)
- is left empty and the owner or tenant who was living there is in prison
- is left empty by someone who has moved to receive personal care in a hospital, a care home, or somewhere else
- is waiting for probate or letters of administration to be granted (after someone has died) and for up to six months after the probate or letters are granted
- is empty because it is against the law for anyone to live in it
- is waiting to be lived in by a minister of religion
- is empty because the owner or tenant who was living there has moved away to care for someone
- is owned by a student and they were the last person to live there
- has been repossessed and is still empty
- is the responsibility of a trustee for someone who has been made bankrupt
- is an empty pitch for a caravan or mobile home, or an empty mooring for a houseboat
- is part of a property that also includes another home and cannot be let separately

Homes are also exempt if the following people live there:

- Only students
- Only people under 18 years old
- Only people who have a severe mental impairment
- A diplomat or member of international organisations
- An elderly or disabled person living in part of a home (an annexe) and their relative lives in the other part of the home

Valuation appeals

Each property is put into one of eight bands, A-H, depending on how much it was worth on 1 April 1991.

If you think your home should be in a different valuation band please contact:

The Valuation Office Agency, Ground Floor, Ferrers House, Castle Meadow Road, Nottingham NG2 1AB. You can also phone them on 03000 501 501 or visit their website at www.voa.gov.uk. They will tell you your rights and how to appeal, if you are entitled to do so.

Council Tax appeals

You can appeal to us (in writing) if:

- You think you should not have to pay Council Tax at all because you do not live in or own the property
- You feel the property should be exempt from Council Tax
- You believe we have made a mistake in working out your bill
- We have not given you a discount or you believe it to be incorrectly calculated
- We have not reduced your bill because a member of the household has a disability

If you disagree with our decision you have two months to appeal to a Valuation Tribunal.

If you appeal, you must continue to pay your Council Tax until your appeal is decided.

If your appeal is successful, we will refund any overpayment.

Local Council Tax Support

Local Council Tax Support is a scheme run by Rochford District Council. People with low incomes, including those with low earnings or in receipt of Income Support, Pension Credit, Job Seekers Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit, can get help paying their Council Tax.

The amount you will get will depend on

- your income and capital
- the size of your family
- the band your property is in
- your age

To make a claim you will need to complete a claim form and provide proof of things like your identity, income and savings. If you rent your home we may also be able to pay you housing benefit.

For more information, including a calculator to help you find out how much you could qualify for, visit our website at www.rochford.gov.uk/benefits

For information about other benefits please phone

- The Job Centre Plus on 0345 604 3719 if you are Working Age
- The Pension Credit claim line on 0800 991234 if you are a Pensioner

Changes in Circumstances

If you have a change in your circumstances you must tell us immediately so we can make sure you continue to get the correct amount of Council Tax support or housing benefit. Examples of the sort of changes you must report include:

- address
- income
- savings
- people living in your home

Preceptors

For precepting information about Essex County Council, Essex PFCC* – Fire and Rescue Authority and PFCC* for Essex – Policing and Community Safety, please visit www.rochford.gov.uk/counciltax and click on 'Council Tax Billing Information.'

*Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

Money Management and Debt advice

If you are experiencing financial difficulty, the Citizens Advice website offers a free debt counselling service visit www.adviceguide.org.uk

The Council is no longer required to produce Council Tax booklets containing information on how the Council Tax is calculated. However this information is available on the Council's website at www.rochford.gov.uk/counciltax

If you would like a copy sent to you, please contact us.

Rochford District Council

Council Offices, South Street, Rochford, Essex SS4 1BW

Website: www.rochford.gov.uk/counciltax Email: revenues&benefits@rochford.gov.uk
Phone: 01702 318197/318198