



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Council Tax

COVID-19 hardship fund 2020-21 –
Local Authority Guidance



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About this guidance

1. This guidance is intended to support billing authorities in using their allocation from the £500m hardship fund announced at the Budget to deliver relief to council tax payers in their area. The funding is for the 2020-21 financial year. Allocations for each billing authority are set out at Annex A.
2. This guidance applies to England only. It outlines the underpinning principles for use of the fund and expected eligibility criteria for delivery of the support package.
3. Any enquiries on this document or use of the fund should be addressed to:
Council.tax@communities.gov.uk

Introduction

4. As part of its response to COVID-19, the Government announced in the Budget on 11 March that it would provide local authorities in England with £500m of new grant funding to support economically vulnerable people and households in their local area.
5. The expectation is that the majority of the hardship fund will be used to provide council tax relief, alongside existing local council tax support schemes. This funding is distinct from the £5bn COVID-19 response fund to support public services.
6. This document provides guidance to authorities about the operation and delivery of the relief.

Underpinning principles

7. The Government recognises that COVID-19 is likely to cause fluctuations in household incomes and recognises that, as a result, some individuals may struggle to meet council tax payments. Councils will already have established their local council tax support schemes for 2020-21. The Government therefore expects that billing authorities will primarily use their grant allocation to reduce the council tax liability of individuals in their area, using their discretionary powers under s13A(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. Councils may also want to use some funding to deliver increased financial assistance through other local support mechanisms, having considered local circumstances.
8. Councils should expedite provision of support to individuals in their area, using existing policies and schemes to deliver assistance where practical. Where council clearance processes are considered necessary, to avoid delays, they should be kept as light touch as possible within the governance arrangements of each authority.
9. Council tax reductions should be applied as soon as possible from the beginning of the 2020-21 financial year and billing authorities should rebill council taxpayers as quickly as practical. Authorities will want to make the local population aware of how the grant support package will be delivered, e.g. through providing information on their websites.

10. The Government has confirmed that it will fund billing authorities in full for the new burdens cost for delivering the support.
11. Local authorities will wish to maintain a record of grant expenditure under this scheme, both through the council tax system and their own local support mechanisms.
12. It is the Government's intention that any assistance provided from the council tax hardship fund will not affect the eligibility of recipients for other benefits.

Minimum reduction in council tax liability for working age local council tax support claimants

13. The Government's strong expectation is that billing authorities will provide all recipients of working age local council tax support ('LCTS') during the financial year 2020-21 with a further reduction in their annual council tax bill of £150, using their discretionary powers to reduce the liability of council tax payers outside of their formal LCTS scheme design.
14. Where a taxpayer's liability for 2020-21 is, following the application of council tax support, less than £150, then their liability would be reduced to nil. Where a taxpayer's liability for 2020-21 is nil, no reduction to the council tax bill will be available.
15. There should be no need for any recipient of LCTS to make a separate claim for a reduction under this scheme. The billing authority should assess who is eligible for support from the hardship fund and automatically rebill those council taxpayers.
16. Whether or not a taxpayer has been affected by COVID-19, directly or indirectly, should not be taken into account in assessing eligibility for this reduction.
17. The Government is keen to ensure that support is provided as quickly as possible to individuals who are eligible. It therefore considers that there is a strong case for councils to provide the support up front to enable the maximum benefit to be delivered promptly. However, the Government recognises that in some cases, authorities may consider that the most effective assistance could be profiled across the year.

Wider consideration – additional discretionary support

18. The Government recognises that existing support mechanisms vary locally, including LCTS schemes, discretionary council tax discount/hardship schemes and local welfare schemes.
19. Having allocated grant to reduce the council tax bill of working age LCTS recipients by a further £150, billing authorities should establish their own local approach to using any remaining grant to assist those in need. Billing authorities will want to revisit their broader approach at intervals during the financial year, in order to ensure expenditure for 2020-21 remains within their allocation. In determining any broader approach to delivering support, authorities are best placed to reflect on the financial needs of their most vulnerable residents. In doing so, they may wish to consider using their remaining grant allocation as part of wider local support mechanisms. These may include, but are not restricted to:
 - a) Council tax relief using existing discretionary discount/hardship policies (adapted where necessary in order to capture those most likely to be affected by COVID-19); and
 - b) Additional support outside the council tax system through Local Welfare or similar schemes;
 - c) A higher level of council tax reduction for those working age LCTS recipients whose annual liability exceeds £150.

Allocation of funding

20. Money will be allocated to billing authorities on the basis of their share of the national caseload of working age LCTS recipients using the most recent published data (2019-20, Q3). Annex A sets out allocations for each billing authority for the financial year 2020-21.
21. The money will be paid out as soon as possible to billing authorities through a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.

Annex A

Local Authority	Working Age Caseload (2019/20 Q3)	Allocation (£)
Adur	2,098	453,179
Allerdale	4,215	910,462
Amber Valley	4,785	1,033,585
Arun	4,376	945,239
Ashfield	6,405	1,383,514
Ashford	4,484	968,568
Babergh	2,164	467,436
Barking & Dagenham	10,251	2,214,270
Barnet	19,133	4,132,829
Barnsley	12,252	2,646,497
Barrow-in-Furness	3,695	798,140
Basildon	7,633	1,648,768
Basingstoke & Deane	4,721	1,019,761
Bassetlaw	4,198	906,790
Bath & North East Somerset	5,963	1,288,040
Bedford	6,660	1,438,595
Bexley	8,568	1,850,733
Birmingham	80,474	17,382,811
Blaby	1,923	415,378
Blackburn with Darwen	10,158	2,194,182
Blackpool	12,977	2,803,101
Bolsover	3,610	779,779
Bolton	15,994	3,454,789
Boston	2,491	538,069
Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole	14,367	3,103,348
Bracknell Forest	2,822	609,567
Bradford	27,093	5,852,232
Braintree	4,128	891,670
Breckland	4,259	919,967
Brent	18,280	3,948,577
Brentwood	1,600	345,609
Brighton and Hove	10,786	2,329,833
Bristol	23,175	5,005,923
Broadland	2,950	637,216
Bromley	8,524	1,841,229
Bromsgrove	2,134	460,955
Broxbourne	3,407	735,930
Broxtowe	3,781	816,716
Buckinghamshire	13,027	2,813,901
Burnley	6,830	1,475,316
Bury	8,741	1,888,102
Calderdale	10,046	2,169,989
Cambridge	4,263	920,831

Camden	14,443	3,119,765
Cannock Chase	3,288	710,225
Canterbury	5,012	1,082,619
Carlisle	4,582	989,736
Castle Point	2,036	439,787
Central Bedfordshire	7,436	1,606,215
Charnwood	4,532	978,936
Chelmsford	4,013	866,829
Cheltenham	3,943	851,709
Cherwell	3,787	818,012
Cheshire East	9,549	2,062,635
Cheshire West and Chester	11,220	2,423,580
Chesterfield	5,515	1,191,269
Chichester	3,237	699,209
Chorley	3,960	855,381
City of London	154	33,265
Colchester	5,331	1,151,524
Copeland	3,562	769,411
Corby	2,476	534,829
Cornwall	22,022	4,756,869
Cotswold	1,803	389,458
Coventry	17,277	3,731,924
Craven	1,237	267,199
Crawley	4,577	988,656
Croydon	20,314	4,387,932
Dacorum	4,917	1,062,098
Darlington	6,046	1,305,968
Dartford	4,154	897,286
Daventry	1,825	394,210
Derby	10,128	2,187,702
Derbyshire Dales	1,566	338,264
Doncaster	13,855	2,992,753
Dorset	12,258	2,647,793
Dover	4,878	1,053,674
Dudley	13,841	2,989,729
Durham	32,242	6,964,443
Ealing	14,173	3,061,443
East Cambridgeshire	1,990	429,851
East Devon	3,301	713,034
East Hampshire	2,393	516,901
East Hertfordshire	3,083	665,944
East Lindsey	6,382	1,378,546
East Northamptonshire	2,036	439,787
East Riding of Yorkshire	8,992	1,942,320
East Staffordshire	3,763	812,828
East Suffolk	8,873	1,916,615
Eastbourne	4,252	918,455
Eastleigh	2,516	543,469

Eden	1,422	307,160
Elmbridge	3,091	667,672
Enfield	27,299	5,896,729
Epping Forest	3,047	658,168
Epsom and Ewell	1,593	344,096
Erewash	4,395	949,343
Exeter	4,326	934,439
Fareham	1,960	423,370
Fenland	4,200	907,222
Folkestone & Hythe	5,244	1,132,732
Forest of Dean	2,957	638,728
Fylde	2,713	586,022
Gateshead	12,372	2,672,418
Gedling	4,042	873,093
Gloucester	5,303	1,145,476
Gosport	2,617	565,286
Gravesham	4,135	893,182
Great Yarmouth	6,044	1,305,536
Greenwich	14,760	3,188,238
Guildford	2,173	469,380
Hackney	21,353	4,612,361
Halton	7,493	1,618,528
Hambleton	1,774	383,193
Hammersmith & Fulham	9,014	1,947,072
Harborough	1,382	298,519
Haringey	16,961	3,663,666
Harlow	4,323	933,791
Harrogate	3,996	863,157
Harrow	6,442	1,391,506
Hart	1,475	318,608
Hartlepool	8,631	1,864,342
Hastings	5,935	1,281,991
Havant	5,092	1,099,899
Havering	8,368	1,807,532
Herefordshire	4,983	1,076,354
Hertsmere	3,407	735,930
High Peak	3,315	716,058
Hillingdon	9,835	2,124,412
Hinckley & Bosworth	2,459	531,157
Horsham	2,787	602,007
Hounslow	12,087	2,610,856
Huntingdonshire	3,829	827,084
Hyndburn	4,363	942,431
Ipswich	6,984	1,508,581
Isle of Wight	5,258	1,135,756
Isles of Scilly	20	4,320
Islington	17,960	3,879,455
Kensington & Chelsea	7,914	1,709,466

Kettering	2,705	584,294
Kings Lynn & West Norfolk	4,796	1,035,961
Kingston upon Hull	19,681	4,251,200
Kingston upon Thames	5,241	1,132,084
Kirklees	22,948	4,956,890
Knowsley	11,369	2,455,764
Lambeth	14,329	3,095,140
Lancaster	6,597	1,424,987
Leeds	41,304	8,921,883
Leicester	17,307	3,738,404
Lewes	3,780	816,500
Lewisham	15,005	3,241,160
Lichfield	2,606	562,910
Lincoln	5,601	1,209,846
Liverpool	42,324	9,142,208
Luton	9,726	2,100,868
Maidstone	5,453	1,177,877
Maldon	1,564	337,832
Malvern Hills	1,895	409,330
Manchester	34,528	7,458,231
Mansfield	5,650	1,220,430
Medway	9,520	2,056,371
Melton	1,195	258,126
Mendip	3,437	742,410
Merton	6,869	1,483,740
Mid Devon	2,197	474,564
Mid Suffolk	2,017	435,683
Mid Sussex	3,221	695,753
Middlesbrough	13,112	2,832,262
Milton Keynes	10,750	2,322,057
Mole Valley	1,944	419,914
New Forest	4,104	886,486
Newark & Sherwood	3,754	810,884
Newcastle upon Tyne	28,505	6,157,231
Newcastle-under-Lyme	4,794	1,035,529
Newham	19,759	4,268,049
North Devon	3,204	692,081
North East Derbyshire	3,594	776,323
North East Lincolnshire	7,662	1,655,033
North Hertfordshire	4,214	910,246
North Kesteven	2,384	514,957
North Lincolnshire	5,417	1,170,101
North Norfolk	3,351	723,834
North Somerset	6,910	1,492,597
North Tyneside	9,370	2,023,970
North Warwickshire	2,099	453,395
North West Leicestershire	2,524	545,197
Northampton	8,617	1,861,318

Northumberland	15,655	3,381,563
Norwich	9,430	2,036,930
Nottingham	18,624	4,022,883
Nuneaton & Bedworth	5,356	1,156,924
Oadby & Wigston	1,270	274,327
Oldham	13,960	3,015,434
Oxford	5,354	1,156,492
Pendle	4,767	1,029,697
Peterborough	7,726	1,668,857
Plymouth	11,921	2,574,999
Portsmouth	8,641	1,866,502
Preston	8,312	1,795,436
Reading	4,411	952,799
Redbridge	9,366	2,023,106
Redcar & Cleveland	8,555	1,847,925
Redditch	3,110	671,777
Reigate & Banstead	3,493	754,507
Ribble Valley	1,028	222,053
Richmond upon Thames	5,179	1,118,691
Richmondshire	1,137	245,598
Rochdale	14,186	3,064,251
Rochford	1,560	336,968
Rossendale	3,401	734,634
Rother	3,013	650,824
Rotherham	13,261	2,864,446
Rugby	3,018	651,904
Runnymede	1,564	337,832
Rushcliffe	2,386	515,389
Rushmoor	2,507	541,525
Rutland	563	121,611
Ryedale	1,544	333,512
Salford	16,582	3,581,800
Sandwell	21,050	4,546,912
Scarborough	5,757	1,243,543
Sedgemoor	3,934	849,765
Sefton	14,058	3,036,603
Selby	2,425	523,813
Sevenoaks	3,228	697,265
Sheffield	28,048	6,058,517
Shropshire	7,130	1,540,118
Slough	6,168	1,332,321
Solihull	7,277	1,571,871
Somerset West & Taunton	6,398	1,382,002
South Cambridgeshire	3,061	661,192
South Derbyshire	2,806	606,111
South Gloucestershire	5,166	1,115,883
South Hams	2,351	507,828
South Holland	2,136	461,387

South Kesteven	4,281	924,719
South Lakeland	2,255	487,092
South Norfolk	3,501	756,235
South Northamptonshire	1,314	283,831
South Oxfordshire	2,672	577,166
South Ribble	3,274	707,201
South Somerset	5,350	1,155,628
South Staffordshire	2,384	514,957
South Tyneside	11,563	2,497,669
Southampton	11,963	2,584,071
Southend-on-Sea	7,694	1,661,945
Southwark	16,094	3,476,389
Spelthorne	2,725	588,614
St Albans	3,608	779,347
St Helens	8,823	1,905,815
Stafford	3,014	651,040
Staffordshire Moorlands	2,393	516,901
Stevenage	3,608	779,347
Stockport	11,400	2,462,460
Stockton-on-Tees	11,297	2,440,212
Stoke-on-Trent	14,617	3,157,350
Stratford-on-Avon	3,059	660,760
Stroud	2,910	628,575
Sunderland	19,424	4,195,687
Surrey Heath	1,359	293,551
Sutton	7,624	1,646,824
Swale	5,432	1,173,341
Swindon	6,045	1,305,752
Tameside	9,991	2,158,109
Tamworth	2,619	565,718
Tandridge	2,160	466,571
Teignbridge	4,352	940,055
Telford & Wrekin	8,426	1,820,061
Tendring	6,363	1,374,442
Test Valley	2,656	573,710
Tewkesbury	2,464	532,237
Thanet	7,615	1,644,880
Three Rivers	2,304	497,676
Thurrock	5,944	1,283,936
Tonbridge & Malling	4,013	866,829
Torbay	7,456	1,610,536
Torridge	1,941	419,266
Tower Hamlets	20,287	4,382,100
Trafford	7,227	1,561,070
Tunbridge Wells	2,879	621,879
Uttlesford	1,506	325,304
Vale of White Horse	2,864	618,639
Wakefield	15,766	3,405,540

Walsall	17,959	3,879,239
Waltham Forest	9,509	2,053,994
Wandsworth	9,202	1,987,681
Warrington	7,359	1,589,583
Warwick	3,793	819,308
Watford	3,713	802,028
Waverley	2,442	527,485
Wealden	3,193	689,705
Wellingborough	2,548	550,382
Welwyn Hatfield	3,826	826,436
West Berkshire	2,541	548,870
West Devon	1,648	355,977
West Lancashire	4,606	994,920
West Lindsey	3,673	793,388
West Oxfordshire	2,197	474,564
West Suffolk	4,804	1,037,690
Westminster	10,202	2,203,686
Wigan	16,246	3,509,222
Wiltshire	14,917	3,222,151
Winchester	3,054	659,680
Windsor & Maidenhead	2,612	564,206
Wirral	18,106	3,910,992
Woking	2,340	505,452
Wokingham	1,924	415,594
Wolverhampton	15,149	3,272,264
Worcester	4,021	868,557
Worthing	3,285	709,577
Wychavon	3,552	767,251
Wyre	4,832	1,043,738
Wyre Forest	4,409	952,367
York	4,430	956,904