

How do discounts work?

The full council tax bill assumes there are two adults living in a dwelling. If only one adult lives in a dwelling (as their main home) a single person's discount will apply and the council tax is reduced by a quarter (25%). The bill does not increase if there are more than two adults in the dwelling.

For furnished second or holiday homes within our District, St Albans District Council will award a discount of 10% off the Council Tax charge for that property.

For properties that are empty and unfurnished no Council charge will be applied for the first 6 months it remains empty and unfurnished. If it remains empty and unfurnished after the 6 month exemption period has finished the full Council Tax charge for that property will apply EVEN IF IT REMAINS EMPTY.

Am I still liable if I am not counted for the bill?

If you are the liable person and you get a discount or are not counted, your bill may be reduced. But you will still be responsible for paying the smaller amount.

Who is not counted?

APPRENTICES

You will not be counted if you are an apprentice employed to learn a job, and, as part of that learning, are undertaking training leading to a qualification recognised by the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA). You must not be earning more than a set amount per week (before tax).

YOUNG PERSONS IN TRAINING

You will not be counted if you are under 25 and are receiving approved training funded by the Learning and Skills Council.

FULL TIME STUDENTS

You will not be counted if you are a student (or an overseas student) on a full-time or qualifying course of education.

You are a full time student if you are:

- attending a university or college course which lasts for at least an academic year, takes at least 24 weeks a year and involves at least 21 hours of study per week during term-time; or
- under the age of 20, and studying for more than three months and at least 12 hours per week for any qualification up to A level or equivalent standard. Correspondence courses, evening classes, or courses taken in connection with a person's job, such as on day-release, are not included. Student nurses studying academic courses at universities are classed as students for council tax purposes. Foreign language assistants registered with the British Council are also treated as students. You will not be counted if you are the spouse, civil partner or dependant of a student, are not a British Citizen, and are prevented by the terms of your permission to be in the UK either from taking paid employment or from claiming benefits.

STUDENT NURSES

You will not be counted if you are a student nurse on a course leading to registration under the nurses' part or midwives' part of the Register. Only student nurses studying for their first inclusion on the Register are not counted. Nurses who are already on the Register but are taking further courses are counted. Student nurses studying academic courses at universities are excluded from this definition as they are considered as students.

RESIDENT HOSPITAL PATIENTS

You will not be counted if you are a patient in a hospital which is your only or main home. If you are in hospital for a short time and you have a home elsewhere, you will carry on paying council tax at your home.

PEOPLE LIVING IN CARE HOMES, INDEPENDENT HOSPITALS AND HOSTELS PROVIDING A HIGH LEVEL OF CARE

You will not be counted if you live, and are receiving care, in one of these places, as your only or main home.

PEOPLE WHO ARE SEVERELY MENTALLY IMPAIRED

People who are severely mentally impaired are not counted. For council tax purposes, a person is regarded as severely mentally impaired if he or she suffers, for whatever reason, from severe impairment of intelligence and social functioning which appears to be permanent. In order not to be counted, a person will need a certificate from his or her doctor to say that he or she is severely mentally impaired. The person must also be entitled to one of a number of benefits including certain incapacity benefits, disability allowances, unemployability allowances or attendance allowances.

PEOPLE STAYING IN CERTAIN HOSTELS OR NIGHT SHELTERS

A person whose main or only residence is in a dwelling such as a short stay hostel or night shelter providing communal accommodation for people who have no fixed abode and no settled way of life is not counted.

MONKS AND NUNS

You will not be counted if you are a member of a religious community, provided that you depend on the community for your material needs and have no personal income or capital. (This will still apply if you receive income from a pension or pensions from a former job.) Only members of religious communities whose main work is prayer, contemplation, the relief of suffering, education or any combination of these are not counted.

18 AND 19 YEAR OLDS

You will not be counted if you are 18 or 19 years old and are in full-time education (other than higher education). This includes people of that age who are at school or college and are on courses up to, and including, A level standard. You will also not be counted if you are at least 18 years old and someone is entitled to child benefit in respect of you, or would be if you were not in local authority care. If you are an 18 or 19 year old who left school after 30 April you will not be counted until 1 November of the same year. (You may continue to get a discount as a student if you go on to further or higher education.)

CARERS

You will not be counted if you live with, and care for, a person with a disability who is receiving one of certain allowances or disablement pensions. You must be providing care for at least 35 hours a week on average. But you will be counted if you are caring for your husband or wife (or partner with whom you live as husband or wife), or your child under 18 years old. Someone who cares for an elderly person or a person with a disability in return for payment of up to £36 a week will not be counted. Such a person will usually belong to an organisation like Community Service Volunteers, but could be employed by a public body or (in certain circumstances) by the person for whom they care.

PEOPLE IN PRISON

Prisoners who are on remand or in prison are not counted. However, people who are imprisoned for not paying a fine or the council tax are counted.

MEMBERS OF VISITING FORCES, INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS AND DEFENCE ORGANISATIONS

You will be not be counted if you are a member of a visiting force, or a member (or dependant of a member) of certain International Headquarters and Defence Organisations or have diplomatic privileges and immunities.

When it sends out its bills, your council will have decided whether it thinks a discount applies to your home. If there is no discount and you think you should get one, you should write to your council explaining why. Your council will tell you what evidence you will need to provide in support of a claim. The council has two months to make a decision. If you still disagree with the council, or if it has not acted within the two month period, you will be able to appeal to a Valuation Tribunal. How to appeal is explained on pages 22–24. You should continue to pay your original bill whilst your appeal is outstanding.

If the council has given you a discount but you are not entitled to one, or are no longer entitled to one, you must write to say so or you may face a penalty.