

# **PE2153/A: Reduce council tax by 50% for single persons**

## **Scottish Government written submission, 16 June 2025**

The Scottish Government is grateful for the opportunity to contribute towards the Committee's consideration of this petition, which calls on the Scottish Government to increase the council tax discount for single-person households from the current 25% to 50%.

We acknowledge the financial pressures faced by individuals with rising living costs, from those living alone to those supporting a larger household. The concerns raised by the petitioner reflect real challenges experienced by many people across Scotland. Council Tax system contains mechanisms to support those who may struggle to pay.

Under current legislation, households with only one adult resident may be eligible for a 25% discount, known as the Single Person Discount. In addition to this, some adult residents, such as full-time students, care leavers, and apprentices, are "disregarded" for discount purposes. This means that a single person living with any disregarded adult residents may still receive a 25% Single Person Discount.

It is important to note that Council Tax is a property-based tax designed to support the delivery of vital local services - including education, social care, and waste collection, which benefit the community as a whole - it is not a charge based on the use of these services, but rather a tax which supports the funding of them.

In addition to the Single Person Discount, the Scottish Government's Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme exists to ensure that nobody in Scotland should have to meet a council tax liability they cannot be expected to afford. The scheme reduces the Council Tax liabilities of any household based on an assessment of income, capital, and other circumstances. Currently, more than 450,000 households in Scotland benefit from CTR, with average annual savings of over £850 per household. I would encourage the petitioner to reach out to their local council to see if they might be eligible for CTR.

Looking ahead, the Scottish Government has committed to working with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) on a programme of engagement to consider potential reforms to the Council Tax system, with a view to improving fairness and sustainability. One area under consideration is the possibility of empowering local authorities to apply tailored discretionary discounts to address specific needs within their communities.

This work is being taken forward in the spirit of partnership through the Verity House Agreement and will culminate in a Scottish Parliament debate in early 2026. That debate will inform the next Parliament on the findings and potential directions for Council Tax reform, based on robust evidence and stakeholder engagement.

The Scottish Government is committed to its plans for engagement activity and furthering the discussion on how to strengthen fairness within the system is ongoing. The outcome of the reform engagement work will shape any future decisions.

**Local Government Directorate**