

Council Tax Multipliers: Consultation



Respondent Information Form

Please Note this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy:
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Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual
 Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

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The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name
 Publish response only (without name)
 Do not publish response

Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

- Yes
 No



National Carer Organisations response to the Scottish Government's consultation on a Fairer Council Tax

The National Carer Organisations welcome this opportunity to respond to the above consultation. The National Carer Organisations are Carers Scotland, Carers Trust Scotland, the Coalition of Carers in Scotland, MECOPP, Shared Care Scotland and the Scottish Young Carers Services Alliance.

We operate locally and nationally across Scotland and together we have a shared vision that all Scotland's unpaid carers will feel valued, included and supported as equal partners in the provision of care.

Consultation Questions

1. Do you think that Council Tax in Scotland should be changed to apply increases to the tax on properties in Bands E, F, G, and H?

Yes

Please give reasons for your answer?

The National Carer Organisations support the proposals providing additional funding towards services in local communities. Many local carers centres and services that support unpaid carers and those they care for have been under severe pressure, exacerbated by the pandemic and economic challenges. Too often this leaves unpaid carers with little or no choice but to provide higher levels of care, with fewer breaks from caring and with greater impact on their financial wellbeing.

2. The proposal is to increase the Council Tax on properties in Bands E, F, G and H by 7.5%, 12.5%, 17.5% and 22.5% respectively. Do you agree with the levels of increase set out in this proposal?

Yes

3. If you have answered no to Question 2, what do you think the increases to the Council Tax on properties in Bands E, F, G and H should be?

- The increases should be smaller
- The increases should be greater
- Don't know

4. When should any increases be introduced if the tax on higher band properties is increased as proposed?

The National Carer Organisations have no particular view on whether a phased or full effect approach would be most effective. However, given that there are less than six months until the new financial year, it would seem fairer to give those affected a more extended timeframe.

5. Should the Council Tax Reduction scheme be expanded to protect those on lower incomes from any increases to higher band properties?

Yes

This must be a critical area of focus. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme must seek to protect people whose incomes are reduced and earnings potential limited by unpaid caring and disability.

Every year nearly 1,000 people become unpaid carers. This could be following a sudden illness, a terminal diagnosis or deterioration in an existing condition or as a consequence of increased frailty in older age. For these households, financial security can be significantly affected.

[State of Caring 2022](#) found that more than one in four (26%) unpaid carers were struggling to make ends meet, employment did not give protection from poverty with one in five (20%) unpaid carers in paid employment also struggling to make ends meet, with a third (32%) cutting back on food and heating just to stay afloat. Two thirds (64%) said that they worried whether they could manage financially in the future.

Given what we know from unpaid carers in the past year, we expect State of Caring 2023 to report even greater financial hardship.

Alongside the effect on earnings, unpaid carer and disabled households face higher costs, many of which continue to rise. These costs are a direct consequence of disability and ill health and include:

- Higher energy costs so that their home is warm enough to ensure that the person they care for stays well
- Essential equipment that requires power including medical devices, hoists, electric beds and wheelchairs
- Additional laundry costs as a consequence of managing incontinence
- Extra transport costs to support a person to and from health appointments, social and community services
- Special diets to support the nutritional needs of the person they care for.

When State of Caring was published in October 2022, over a third (35%) of unpaid carers were spending 20% or more of their income on heating with 16%

more than 30%. The majority (89%) were spending more on food and three quarters (73%) on transport.

In addition, the costs of care itself had also increased. More than one in seven (14%) were spending more on social care services, 29% were spending more on supplies related to incontinence and 59% were spending more on cleaning products, with 29% spending more on items such as PPE, all essential for infection control.

Given the unpredictability of unpaid caring, disability and ill-health and the effect of rising costs and of interest rates affecting housing costs, the Scottish Government must ensure that the current support for those in higher bands on lower incomes is sufficient to avoid financial hardship. We recommend therefore that COSLA and the Scottish Government consider their response to those facing hardship which could include options such a new “disability costs reduction scheme” within council tax (for all bands) or developing a discretionary council tax support fund for disabled individuals and their unpaid carers.

- 6. The proportion of properties in each valuation bands E - H varies across the country. This means that some councils would benefit more than others from any increases in council tax in these property bands. Should steps be taken to ensure that all councils benefit proportionately from this policy?**

Yes

- 7. Please tell us how changes to Council Tax rates for properties in Bands E, F, G and H might impact you, or the people your organisation represents?**

Please see Q5. The National Carer Organisations recommend that the Scottish Government with COSLA ensure that adequately consider (and respond to) the financial impact of unpaid caring, disability and ill health in developing support through council tax reduction.

- 8. Please tell us how you think changes to Council Tax rates for properties in Bands E, F, G and H would affect your local area, or Scotland as a whole (please consider social, economic, environment, community, cultural, enterprise impacts that you think are relevant)?**

Please see Q5. There are potential financial negative impacts on some individuals who provide unpaid care and those they care for which much be fully considered. However, the availability of additional funds for local councils is welcomed, particularly given the challenges in the delivery of and access to social care and community support.

Sustaining and increasing investment for social care services, including the development of a new National Care Service, is critical to disabled and older people and their unpaid carers. Recent research by Carers Trust Scotland¹ found that almost a quarter (23%) of unpaid carers in Scotland say they are the sole providers of care and they didn't receive help to care from anyone else and State of Caring 2022 found that less than a quarter (23%) of carers said that care and support services meet their needs, with a further 14% saying they had been told there were no care and support services available in their area. For those in rural and island communities nearly one in five (18%) had no services to support them or the person they cared for.

9. Please tell us how you think changes to Council Tax rates for properties in Bands E, F, G and H might affect Island Communities

See Q8

10. Do you think there would be any equality, human rights, or wellbeing impacts as a result of the proposed increases in Council Tax rates for properties in Bands E, F, G and H ? Please tell us what you think these impacts would be.

Answer:

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

See Q5 and Q8 – Disabled and older people and their unpaid carers must be adequately considered in ensuring that the proposals do not negatively impact. However, increased funding used in a way that supports the delivery of social and community support could have positive impacts on wellbeing.

Contacts

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¹ Unpaid carers are not unsung heroes: we're forgotten, neglected and burnt out, Carers Trust, September 2023