

Council Tax Support Personal Support Package

APPENDIX A

From April 2017 our Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme has been revised to provide more help to CTS claimants through the offer of a personal support package.

The personal support package is available to all CTS claimants and includes advice and support to help you reduce dependency on CTS and other state benefits.

Your CTS is initially calculated based on an assumption that you will work with the Council when support is offered. However, if you do not take up the personal support package CTS may be withdrawn and you will receive a new bill and have more Council Tax to pay.

This guide provides essential information to help you understand the changes to the CTS scheme and what the personal Support Package means, this includes:

- What is the personal support package?
- Who is affected?
- What to do if you disagree with a decision about your CTS

What is the personal support package?

Melton Borough Council provides a co-ordinated approach to delivering the support people need to become less dependent on state benefits. This approach focuses on employment being a key enabler in achieving and supporting independent living.

If you are receiving CTS you will, at some point, be invited to meet with a skilled Melton Borough Council Advisor. At this meeting the Advisor will carry out an initial assessment of your needs and provide information about the different types of support and services available to you, including getting back into employment or increasing your hours. By the end of the meeting an individual support package will be agreed between you and the Advisor.

The meeting helps identify the barriers you as an individual may face, ways to help overcome those barriers and the service providers who will help you to do this. Advisors will work with you on a 1:1 basis helping you to work through your agreed support package. This may include but not be limited to addressing issues such as substance misuse or support with mental health. Employment related support may include ensuring that you have a suitable up to date CV, an email account, digital skills and that you are registered with Universal Job Match.

Working with you we aim to :

- Improve your life skills and address any long-term barriers to independent living you may have
- Equip you with the skills required to have the best chance possible of finding work.
- Work with you, if you are already on a low income to help you find better paid work

Who is affected?

Are all CTS claimants affected?

The personal support package will be available to all CTS claimants. The new scheme will be phased in from April 2017. It will not be possible to contact everyone straightway. However if you would like to receive support before we have made contact with you, please get in touch at any time.

If you are not contacted, do not worry as your CTS will not be affected.

Does everyone have to take part?

Yes - there are no exemptions from the scheme, however the circumstances of every individual is taken into account when agreeing if a support package is appropriate for you especially if you fall into one of the protected groups (See page3).

I have already made a work plan with my work coach at Jobcentre Plus, why do I need a personal support package?

The work plan you made with Jobcentre Plus will be the main focus of the meetings with your Council Advisor. They will talk through the actions in your plan with you and look at how the Council can support you, to ensure that you continue to meet your claimant commitment. Through discussion, you and your Advisor will identify any barriers to work that have not already been identified in your work plan and we will look at how these can be overcome as part of your personal support package. They will never suggest any activities that duplicate or conflict with actions in your Jobcentre Plus work plan.

If I take up the personal support package does that mean I don't need to join the Jobcentre Plus work programme?

No, the personal support package that we provide will be focussed on providing you with the support that you need to help you to find work sooner. However you will still need to join the Jobcentre Plus work programme if you have not moved into work by that time.

If my Jobseekers Allowance is sanctioned will I lose CTS?

No, you will continue to receive CTS while you work with us on your personal support package. You should speak to your Advisor if your Jobseekers Allowance is at risk of being sanctioned so that they can try to help you to avoid a sanction.

I don't think that I need extra help from the Council can I still get CTS?

No one will be asked to do anything that will not improve their chance of finding work or overall circumstances. As long as you agree a plan with your Advisor and carry out the agreed actions you will continue to receive CTS.

What will happen if I don't take up the personal support package?

If you do not take up the support package you may lose all your CTS, which will mean you will receive a new Council Tax bill and have more to pay.

What will happen if I don't complete agreed actions and activities?

If you take up the personal support package, but do not agree a personal support plan or do not carry out activities and actions that you agreed you may lose CTS, which means you will receive a new Council Tax bill and have more to pay.

What should I do if I lose CTS and cannot afford to pay the full Council Tax bill?

If you do not keep up with your payments the Council may take recovery action against you. You can take up a personal support package at any time and you will be able to have your CTS re-instated. However, this may not be possible to be backdated to when it stopped.

Why is the Council doing this?

The Council wants to help people into work and out of hardship. In particular we are keen to help our residents move away from relying on CTS to being financially independent. The Council has already adopted a successful approach which provides co-ordinated support to help people tackle whatever barriers they may face to social, financial and digital independence. We also need to try and reduce the cost of providing CTS due to reductions in the Council's budgets.

I am almost pension age will I have to have a support package?

Yes, however we recognise that your support needs as you start approaching retirement may be different. Your circumstances will be taken into account when looking at what activities should be included in your personal support package including any financial preparations you have made for your retirement.

Are all adults in the household required to take up a personal support package?

Not necessarily. Your household circumstances will be taken into account when discussing with your Advisor who the personal support package will benefit the most.

Protected groups:

Pensioners

This means people who are eligible to claim Pension Credit. From 6 March 2016 anyone who was born before 5 April 1953 is eligible to claim Pension Credit. If this applies to you, you are not affected unless you have chosen to continue to claim Jobseekers Allowance.

People entitled to a Severe Disability Premium

To qualify you must meet all of the following

- receiving the high or middle rate care component of Disability Living Allowance, any rate of the daily living component of Personal Independence Payments, armed forces independence payment or attendance allowance **and**
- not be looked after by someone who receives Carer's Allowance for looking after you **and**
- have no one living with you aged over 18 years old unless that person is registered blind or in receipt of high or middle rate care component of Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance or any rate of the daily living component of Personal Independence Payments or armed forces independence payment.

People entitled to an Enhanced Disability Premium

To qualify:

- You, or your partner if you have one, or a child or young person in the family, must receive the highest rate of the care component of Disability Living Allowance, or the enhanced rate of the daily living component of Personal Independence Payments, armed forces independence payment or the Limited Capability for Work Related Activity element of Universal Credit
- You must receive the support component of Employment Support Allowance.

Carers

To qualify as a carer you, or your partner if you have one, must

- be entitled to Carer's Allowance or

- have made a claim for Carer's Allowance and would be entitled, but have chosen not to claim it because the person you care for would lose some of their benefits, or
- be being paid Income Support or Universal Credit as a carer.

The person receiving care must also receive one of these benefits: Attendance Allowance, the middle or highest rate of the care component of Disability Living Allowance or any rate of the daily living component of Personal Independence Payments. Constant Attendance Allowance at or above the normal maximum rate with an Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit, or basic (full day) rate with a War Disablement Pension or an armed Forces Independence Payment (AFIP)

War Widows/War Pensioners

To qualify you must be in receipt of a War Widows Pension, War Disablement Pension or Armed Forces Compensation Payment.

Lone parents with a dependent child under five years old

To qualify you must be a lone parent and have a dependent child under 5 living with you.

If you disagree with a decision about your CTS

If you are unhappy with the decision we have made regarding your CTS you can ask to have the decision looked at again. You need to write to us stating why you do not agree with the decision that has been made. Your reasons for disagreeing with the decision could be that we have used incorrect information, or that we have not applied the rules correctly in your case. We cannot change the decision if you just disagree with the rules.

You can ask us to look again at the decision any time. We will check the claim again based on the figures provided and either confirms that it is correct or reach a new decision if it turns out to be wrong.

If you still disagree with a decision about your CTS you can appeal to the Valuation Tribunal. The Valuation Tribunal will not accept your appeal unless you have asked us to look at the decision first. You must make your appeal within two months of our letter to you confirming the first decision.

If you have asked the Council to look at the decision again and have not received a reply after two months you can appeal directly to the Valuation Tribunal. You must do this within four months of your letter to us asking us to look at the decision again.

The Valuation Tribunal can be contacted at:

Valuation Tribunal CTR Team
Hepworth House
2 Trafford Court
Doncaster DN1 1PN

Email: appeals@vts.gsi.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 123 1033

