



**Discretionary Council Tax Rebate
(Energy Grant) Scheme**

April 2022

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Aims of the Policy

The government has announced a package of support known as the Energy Bills Rebate to help households with rising energy bills, worth £9.1b nationally in 2022-23. Schemes to be administered by Local Authorities, include:

- A £150 non-repayable rebate for households in England in Council Tax bands A–D. This is known as the Council Tax Rebate and will be referred to as the Main Scheme
- A Discretionary Scheme fund of £144 million nationally has been provided. Council Tax Billing Authorities will provide support to households who are not eligible under the terms of the Main Scheme.

The government recognises many households will need support to deal with rising energy costs.

- From 1 April, the energy price cap will rise from £1,277 to £1,971 an estimated £700 increase in energy bills for the average household.
- Wholesale gas prices have quadrupled in the last year. Because gas is used for electricity generation this pushes up retail electricity bills as well as retail gas bills.

Wigan Council are responsible for making payments to eligible residents and has been allocated the following levels of funding:

Allocation	Value
Main Scheme	£20,384,250
Discretionary Scheme	£667,200
Total	£21,051,450

The Main Scheme will be administered in accordance with the prescribed government guidelines and this policy will cover the operation of the Discretionary Scheme.

Scope of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to specify how Wigan Council will administer the Discretionary Scheme awards of the Council Tax Rebate (Energy Grant).

The £667,200 funding provided permits 4,448 Discretionary Scheme payments of £150 to be made.

Customers who receive support under the Main Scheme will not be eligible to apply for additional support under the Discretionary Scheme, support from the Discretionary Scheme is restricted to £150 per household.

Due to the finite level of discretionary funding allocated, it will not be possible to support customers who may wish to apply for a Discretionary Scheme award but have already been paid through the Main Scheme.

This policy ensures that the Council will act fairly, reasonably, and consistently throughout the decision-making process.

All customers will be treated equally and fairly and in accordance with the Council's policies.

Statutory basis for the Policy

The Discretionary Council Tax Rebate (Energy Grant) Scheme adheres to the following national rules and guidance:

Support for Energy Bills - The Council Tax Rebate 2022-23: Billing Authority Guidance
Published 23 February 2022.

Eligibility

Councils can determine locally how best to make use of this funding to provide payments to other households who are energy bill payers not covered by the Main Scheme. The government have stipulated:

- Support from the Discretionary Scheme does not have to be provided in relation to the position on 1 April 2022, but councils should take all reasonable steps to ensure they are not providing additional support to an individual from a household that has already received a payment under the Main Scheme
- Support from the Discretionary Scheme should consist of no more than £150 per household
- Discretionary support should not be offered to occupants of property in exemption class O, where the Ministry of Defence will provide cost of living support
- Allocations from the Discretionary Scheme fund should be spent by 30 November 2022. Any remaining funding will be required to be repaid to government
- No payments will be made in respect of unoccupied properties or second homes under the Main or Discretionary Schemes.

Wigan Council will make a payment of £150 Council Tax Rebate (Energy Grant) Discretionary Scheme payment to individuals who do not qualify for a Main Scheme payment, where they are the liable taxpayer, the subject property is in band E-H, and it is their sole or main residence and they:

- are in receipt of Council Tax Reduction on the 1 April 2022 or
- are in receipt of a Disabled Band Reduction on the 1 April 2022 or
- are classed as a Care Leaver in accordance with The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 on the 1 April 2022 or
- are exempt from Council Tax under class U due to a determination of being Severely Mentally Impaired in accordance with The Council Tax (Discount Disregards) Order 1992 (as amended)

Customers who qualify under the criteria and pay their Council Tax by Direct Debit will receive payment directly into their account, all other customers will receive a credit to their Council Tax account.

Under the Discretionary Scheme we will consider applications from residents who are the liable taxpayer, the subject property is in band A-H, and is their sole or main residence where they moved into the property after 1 April 2022, but before 31 October 2022 and:

- have not previously been awarded a Council Tax Rebate (Energy Grant) payment under either the Main or Discretionary Scheme, within or outside the borough and receive one of the following:
 - Council Tax Reduction
 - Disabled Band Reduction
 - a member of the household is in receipt of a disability related benefit such as:

- Disability Living Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment
- Employment and Support Allowance
- Attendance Allowance
- Universal Credit with either limited capability for work or work-related activity elements
- occupy a new property due to fleeing from domestic violence
- are classed as a Care Leaver
- are a Foster Carer
- are exempt from Council Tax under class U due to a determination of being Severely Mentally Impaired in accordance with The Council Tax (Discount Disregards) Order 1992 (as amended)

Equalities

The Council is committed to equality and fairness. Equality is about ensuring people are treated fairly and given fair chances.

It is also about ensuring that people receive fair outcomes in the standard of service they receive from the Council and equality of access to services.

This incorporates everyone, regardless of their race, gender, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status or disability in line with the principles set out in the Equalities Act 2010.

Backdating

Eligibility for the Council Tax Rebate (Energy Grant) Discretionary Scheme is for people who do not meet the criteria under the Main Scheme but meet the relevant eligibility criteria.

Individuals will be able to claim retrospectively during the application period, but all Main Scheme payments must have been administered by 30 September 2022 and all Discretionary Scheme payments must have been made by 30 November 2022. No further applications will be accepted beyond these dates.

Applicants who qualify for a Main Scheme payment but fail to claim the payment before 30 September 2022 will not be considered for a Discretionary Scheme payment.

Applications from members of the same household

Only one application can be accepted per household, payments will be made in respect of the liable party for Council Tax if eligibility criteria is met.

It is for occupants of the same household to determine how to disburse any funding received between themselves.

Third-party applications

Due to the breadth of the scheme and the potential support requirements of some customers, assistance can be provided by third parties to residents with an eligibility to claim, to ensure funding is provided to the intended recipients.

Any claims made under the Main or Discretionary Scheme must be made in the name of the liable taxpayer and any subsequent payment awarded will only be paid into a bank account in the name of the person for whom the application is being made unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Any information supplied may be crossed matched with credit reference agencies for validation before payments are awarded.

Applicants with other support needs

Applicants and their representatives will be signposted to the Council's website for further information on what additional support is available.

Application process

Outside of any automatic awards processed, to apply individuals will need to complete the Council Tax Rebate (Energy Grant) Discretionary Scheme online form. Digitally excluded customers can be supported by:

- friends and family
- partner organisations
- professionals that provide other support to the customer
- library staff
- Claim Days at Wigan and Leigh Life Centres
- In exceptional circumstance a tele-claim

Applicants will be required to self-certify that they are, or would be in the case of exempt property, a liable taxpayer, that they meet the eligibility criteria, and that they are claiming on behalf of the household.

We will not request information if we are able to use currently held data to support an applicant's claim.

Applicants will be required to provide:

- evidence to support their claim
- provide supplementary information to support their application

Once the evidence is verified, and we are satisfied the eligibility criteria has been met to receive a Discretionary Scheme payment, we will pay the award of £150.

How applicants can provide evidence

Evidence can be uploaded as part of the application process.

Where evidence is not in a digitised format or customers don't have an option for scanning, we will accept photographs of documents. This evidence can be uploaded as part of the application process.

Supporting evidence can also be emailed to energygrant@wigan.gov.uk, with full application details.

Customers can take their evidence to Wigan and Leigh Life Centre along with their full application details to help link the evidence to the application. This evidence will be scanned and if required returned to the customer.

Evidence can also be sent by post to:

Wigan Council
Council Tax Rebate – Energy Grant
PO Box 100
Wigan
WN1 3DS

Postal evidence should be clearly marked with the customers full application details, to help link the evidence to the application.

Payments

Payments will be made by BACS, in the first instance, to the bank accounts held in respect of Direct Debit details used to pay Council Tax.

Where Direct Debit details are not held, payments will be made to the bank account provided on the application form once they are verified as matching the liable party and property address.

In the absence of a bank account being provided, payment will be made to the customers corresponding Council Tax account, to offset future payments to the value of £150.

If bank details cannot be verified a payment to the corresponding Council Tax account will be made.

Only in exceptional circumstances, will any alternative payment method be considered.

Successful applicants will receive confirmation that an award has been made and a notification outlining the terms under which the payment has been issued.

Further information will also be provided regarding a customer's responsibilities if they receive a payment in error or later discover they were in fact not eligible to claim.

Appeals

There is no right of appeal against any decision not to award a Discretionary Council Tax Rebate (Energy Grant) payment, applicants who are turned down will not be eligible because they do not meet the criteria under the terms of this scheme.

We will work with applicants to make sure they provide the necessary evidence to support a successful application.

Fraud

Both Wigan Council and the government will not tolerate any Council Taxpayer falsifying records or providing false evidence to gain access to payment under the Council Tax Rebate Main or Discretionary Schemes.

A ratepayer who provides false information or makes false representation to benefit from a payment may be guilty of fraud under the Fraud Act 2006.

Any payments found to be made in error or on the account of fraud will be subject to clawback.

Further information/Supporting Guidance

Further information surrounding the governments package of support assist households with rising energy costs can be found online:

[Support for energy bills - the council tax rebate 2022-23: billing authority guidance](#)