

£150 Energy Rebate Discretionary Scheme Policy

Service Area: Customer Services

Date: May 2022



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Version control

Version	Reason for review	Effective Date	Review date
1.0	Draft for Finance & Management Committee	TBC	TBC

Approvals

Approved by (Committee/Leadership Team)	Date
Finance & Management Committee (TBC)	TBC
Final version – delegated to Section 151 Officer	TBC

This policy may be subject to change. Any changes will be published to www.southderbyshire.gov.uk/energyrebate. Changes will be subject to approval by the Council’s Strategic Director (Corporate Services) in their role as the Section 151 Officer.

Introduction

- The government has announced a package of support known as the Energy 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. This will be referred to as the **Discretionary Scheme**.
- South Derbyshire District Council is responsible for making payments/awards, under both the Main Scheme and Discretionary Scheme, to eligible residents. The Council has been allocated the following levels of funding:

Scheme	Value
Main Scheme	£5,734,200
Discretionary Scheme	£152,550
Total	£5,886,750

- The Main Scheme will be administered in direct accordance with the prescribed government guidelines, and as such a separate policy has not been devised at a local council level. The Main 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](#) and full details and frequently asked questions are listed at www.southderbyshire.gov.uk/energyrebate
- The government has provided local councils with some flexibility on how to deliver the Discretionary Scheme in each locality. As such, this policy document covers the operation of the Discretionary Scheme.



Scope of policy

6. The purpose of this policy is to specify how South Derbyshire District Council will administer the Discretionary Scheme awards of the Council Tax Rebate.
7. The Discretionary Scheme funding provided will support up to 1,017 payments of £150.
8. Customers who receive support under the Main Scheme will not be eligible to apply for additional support under the Discretionary Scheme, unless in exceptional circumstances (see 17 - 20).
9. As standard, support from the Discretionary Scheme is restricted to £150 per household but may be less (see page 6). Higher awards may be considered in exceptional circumstances (see 17 - 20).

Eligibility

10. 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.
11. Within its guidelines ([Support for Energy Bills - The Council Tax Rebate 2022-23: Billing Authority Guidance Published 23 February 2022](#)), the Government has 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. In exceptional circumstances, payments to households who have already received a payment under the main scheme may be permitted (see 17 - 20).
 - As standard, support from the Discretionary Scheme should consist of no more than £150 per household, but awards can be lower if applicant level exceeds funding available. In exceptional circumstances awards can be higher (see 17 - 19).
 - 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.



Automatic awards (Bands E - H)

12. South Derbyshire District Council will make an automatic **£150 Discretionary Scheme Award** to individuals who were in occupation of a Band E - H property on the 1 April 2022 within South Derbyshire, where they are the liable taxpayer, and the property is their sole or main residence, and they:
 - Are in receipt of Council Tax Reduction, or
 - Are in receipt of a Disabled Band Reduction, 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), or
 - Are in receipt of a student exemption or student disregard, or
 - Are in receipt of a carers' disregard.
13. Customers who qualify under the criteria and pay their Council Tax by Direct Debit (and have paid an instalment by direct debit) will receive payment directly into their bank account. All other customers will receive a credit to their Council Tax account.

Customers who were in occupation of their property on 1 April 2022 do not need to apply for the award. The award will be automatically paid into bank accounts/credited to council tax accounts between 1 July 2022 and 30 November 2022.

Applications accepted (All bands)

14. The Council will also consider applications from residents in all bands, who are the liable taxpayer and moved in after 1 April 2022 and before 31 October 2022. Such households cannot have been previously eligible for a £150 Council Tax Rebate payment, under either the Main or Discretionary Scheme, within or outside the district (we will request the details of where you have moved from and contact your previous council), and must:
 - Be in receipt of a Council Tax Reduction, or
 - Be in receipt of a Disabled Band Reduction, or
 - Be 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), or
 - Be in receipt of a student exemption or student disregard, or
 - Be in receipt of a carers' disregard, or
 - Have a member of the household who is in receipt of a disability or age-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.
 - Pension Credit, or
- Be occupying a property due to fleeing from domestic violence, or
 - Be a Care Leaver in accordance with The Children (Leaving Care) Act, or
 - Be a registered Foster Carer, or
 - Be in receipt of a Ukrainian £350 thank you payment, or
 - Use medical equipment regularly that requires recharging, such as home dialysis machines, stairlifts, sleep apnoea machines etc. We may carry out a home visit in such circumstances and may require evidence.

Awards are not guaranteed to all applications, regardless of eligibility. This is because the Discretionary Scheme funding is limited, and awards will be given on a first-come-first-served basis.

All awards where applications are made will be credited to council tax accounts. Payments to bank accounts will not be made.

Landlords, tenants in HMOs and exceptional circumstances

- The District Council will also consider applications, on a case-by-case basis, from the following:
 - Landlords (Band E-H) whose tenants pay their energy bills within their rent and the landlord has not increased the rental charges since January 2022 onwards. Evidence will be requested.
 - Tenants who live in a House in Multiple Occupation (any band) and are directly responsible for their energy bills. In such circumstances one payment per property (not payment per tenant) may be payable.
 - Anyone who does not fit the criteria set out at 12, 13, 14 and 15, but is facing significant financial or medical hardship (see 18 & 19) may approach the district council for their case to be considered.
- All such applicants (as detailed in point 15 above) should not apply using the online form. Instead, they should email energy.rebate@southderbyshire.gov.uk. No payment is guaranteed.



Payment amounts

17. All grants will be £150 as standard.
18. In cases where **exceptional medical hardship** is shown (for example the case of customers who use medical equipment that requires significant energy usage), the authority has the discretion to increase individual payments. In such circumstances the authority will require evidence of energy usage and home visits will take place regarding medical equipment. Higher awards will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and will be individually authorised by the Council's Section 151 officer.
19. In the case of **severe financial hardship**, we will carry out a detailed financial hardship analysis and request evidence to back up any claim. Higher awards will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and will be individually authorised by the Council's Section 151 officer.
20. Should the Council receive a significantly higher number of applications than the fund can support, smaller awards may be considered. Decisions on smaller awards will be delegated to the Council's Section 151 Officer.

Exclusions

21. The following are excluded from receiving Discretionary Scheme Award:
 - Any person who has already claimed under the Main Scheme - unless in exceptional circumstances (see 18 & 19).
 - Any person who does not reside in South Derbyshire.
 - Any individual suspected of fraud or manipulation of data with the express intention to receive a rebate payment.
 - Occupants of property in exemption class O, where the Ministry of Defence will provide cost of living support.
 - Owners of unoccupied properties or second homes.

How to apply

22. Band E - H customers who were in occupation of their property on 1 April 2022 and meet the eligibility criteria stated at point 12 (see page 5) **do not need to apply**. Awards will automatically paid into bank accounts/council tax accounts between 1 July 2022 and 30 November 2022.
23. Customers (all bands) who meet the eligibility criteria as stated at point 14 (see page 5 & 6) will need to apply.



24. Apply online at www.southderbyshire.gov.uk/discenergyrebate. All applications and supporting evidence must have been received by South Derbyshire District Council by 31 October 2022. Any applications received after this date, or any applications that have outstanding evidence that is received after this date, will not be processed.
25. In addition to the application form, you will need to provide the following evidence, unless we already hold adequate information on file:
- Evidence you occupy the property - we will likely have this on file, unless you have not told us you have recently moved in, and one of the following:
 - Evidence you are in receipt of the Ukrainian £350 thank you payment (if applicable).
 - Evidence a member of your household is in receipt of a disability or age-related benefit - for example a letter from the DWP/Pension Service (if applicable).
 - Evidence you are a registered Foster Carer - for example a letter from your foster care agency or council (if applicable).
- Please contact us for advice if you are claiming due to:**
- Relocation due to domestic violence - please call 01283 595795 if you would like to claim a Discretionary Scheme Award as a result of relocation due to domestic violence and we will discuss your claim with you.
 - High energy consumption due to use of medical equipment - please call 01283 595795 if you would like to claim as a result of medical equipment and we will discuss your claim with you.
26. We can accept scanned and/or photographed evidence, provided it is clear and readable. Please upload evidence with your form. If that is not possible, please send applications and evidence, together with your application form number or council tax account number, to: energy.rebate@southderbyshire.gov.uk or send them to: **Energy Rebate Team, South Derbyshire District Council, Civic Way, Swadlincote, Derbyshire, DE11 0AH**. We are sorry but we cannot provide council tax account numbers over the phone - please see your latest council tax bill.
27. If you are sending confidential information, we would recommend you send them via egress (email - visit www.egress.com to find out more) which secures emails end-to-end. If you are sending by post, we recommend you send evidence by recorded delivery. Alternatively, if you do not want to supply originals, please visit South Derbyshire District Council's new customer access point at **South Derbyshire District Council, Civic Way, Swadlincote, Derbyshire, DE11 0AH**. We will then scan and return your evidence to you.
28. If you need any help applying, please contact our customer services team on 01283 595795. Our telephone lines are open Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays between 8.45am and 5pm, Wednesdays between 9.30am and 5pm and Fridays between 8.45am and 4.30pm.
29. Please be aware our phone lines are very busy on Monday mornings (or Tuesday mornings after Bank Holidays). We recommend, if possible, you call later in the day/week as you may experience a longer wait at these times.
30. If you don't have access to a telephone, you can use the free telephone located at the Civic Offices.



31. Any exceptional circumstance applicants (see 15) should email energy.rebate@southderbyshire.gov.uk stating why they feel they should be considered for a payment/further payment.

Payment method

32. Where a customer is eligible for an automatic award, customers who pay their Council Tax by Direct Debit (and have made a payment since 1 April 2022) will receive a £150 payment directly into their bank account. All other customers will receive a £150 credit to their Council Tax account.
33. Where customers are required to apply for the award, payment will be made to the customer's corresponding Council Tax account to offset future Council Tax payments to the value of up to £150.

Third party applications

34. The Council recognises that some residents may need support from a third-party to apply.
35. Where a third-party applies for the rebate on behalf of an eligible resident, payment will only be made to the bank account details held on file (where a Direct Debit is in place) or to the Council Tax account (see 'payments' above).
36. Payment to third-party bank accounts will not be permitted.

Equalities

37. The Council is committed to equality and fairness. Equality is about ensuring people are treated fairly and given fair chances.
38. 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.
39. 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.

Appeals

40. There is no right of appeal against any decision not to award a Discretionary Scheme Award. Applicants who are turned down will not be eligible because they do not meet the criteria under the terms of this scheme or adequate funds are not available. We will work with applicants to make sure they provide the necessary evidence to support a successful application, however if this evidence is not provided by **31 October 2022**, applications will not be processed, regardless of eligibility.



41. Equally, as the funding is limited, applications will be processed on a first-come first-served basis. Incomplete applications or applications that have not been provided with the required evidence (see 19), will not be considered received until all required information is received. If the funding has been fully spent before an applicant's complete application and evidence has been received, they will not be eligible for a Discretionary Scheme award and will have no right to appeal.

Fraud

42. South Derbyshire District Council and the government will not tolerate any Council Taxpayer falsifying records or providing false evidence to gain access to payment under the Main or Discretionary Schemes.
43. 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.
44. Any payments found to be made in error, or on the account of fraud, will be subject to clawback.

Sharing information

45. In order to fulfil our obligations and award payments to eligible claimants it may be necessary to verify whether a claimant's bank accounts are open and belong to the person proposed.
46. The Council may also share claimant bank details with external partners such as the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) to help prevent fraud, which is allowed by law.
47. The Council may also share data with other councils, including Derbyshire County Council, and government departments, such as, but not limited to, the Department for Work and Pensions for the purposes of validating claims/evidence provided.
48. The Council may also share data internally for the purpose of fulfilling our obligations as a Local Authority, an example of which would be for the Revenues team to share the data with the Customer Services team.
49. For further information about how your personal information will be processed and stored, please visit www.southderbyshire.gov.uk/privacy where you can see a full copy of our Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits and Housing Services privacy notices.
50. All data relating to all grant claims will be stored securely by the District Council for no more than six years.

Amendments to the policy

51. This policy may be subject to change. Any changes will be published to www.southderbyshire.gov.uk/discenergyrebate. Changes will be subject to approval by the Council's Section 151 Officer.



Queries

52. If you have any queries in relation to this policy, please email energy.rebate@southderbyshire.gov.uk

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