

Council Tax 2013 / 2014

Wigan 
Council

Adult social care	£230.79
Roads and waste collection	£194.74
Education	£197.09
Bus and rail services	£71.10
Police	£99.55
Support services	£39.58
Fire service	£38.42
CCTV and Anti social behaviour	£4.08
Financing	£59.36



Foreword by the Leader of the Council, Lord Peter Smith

The money you pay in Council Tax helps us to deliver a full range of essential council services, and also contributes towards the police, fire and rescue service and public transport.

This year's increase, for Wigan Council's charge, of 2 per cent is below the Government cap and at a reasonable level given the challenging financial issues that we face. The rise is made up of a 1.1 per cent transport levy and 0.9 per cent Council Tax increase.

We have kept the Council Tax rise to a minimum, but the council has to save £18.8m over the next year and despite the government cutbacks we must continue to protect front line services to support residents, particularly the most vulnerable, during these difficult economic times. Other challenges ahead include a £5m reduction in our social care budget and huge changes to the welfare system (see page 4).

Over the last two years we have saved £43m and have reduced our 'back office' support services by 40 per cent. We continue to find ways to be more efficient and innovative in how we work.

Whilst facing uncertain times, there have also been some highlights:

- A package of funding to support job opportunities for young people and give them a decent start via apprenticeship schemes in 2013/14.
- Residents have been thanked for their strong support for the new recycling service which has helped to save money and the local environment. The new system will save Council Tax payers £14m over the next six years.
- Looking forward we will see the introduction of 20mph speed limits across the borough to improve road safety and save lives. We will also be looking at ways to improve public health and wellbeing for all residents in the borough.
- Significant investment in the borough's road network including Southgate, the new Saddle Junction relief road.

**For advice and information
on all council services visit:
www.wigan.gov.uk**

About Council Tax

Council Tax is a tax on buildings, not people. It only applies to properties used by people as their homes.

Each year we send a Council Tax bill to every domestic property in the borough, whether it's a house, bungalow, flat, maisonette, mobile home or houseboat. Each property is put into one of the eight bands below, based on what it would have cost to buy on the open market on 1 April 1991.

Every year we set the Council Tax for each band. The amounts for 2013/2014 are below.

The band given to your property is on the front of your bill.

The Valuation Office Agency decides the band not us. You can appeal against your property's band if you have moved into the property in the last six months or there has been a change in the building or physical state of the local area.

You can contact them at Valuation Office Agency, Manchester Valuation Office, Portland Tower, Portland Street, Manchester, M1 3LD.
Phone 03000 501 501.
www.voa.gov.uk

For information about the council's income and spending visit:

**[www.wigan.gov.uk/
incomeandspending](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/incomeandspending)**

Band	Band Value	Council Tax for 2013/14
A	Up to £40,000	£934.71
B	£40,001 - £52,000	£1,090.51
C	£52,001 - £68,000	£1,246.29
D	£68,001 - £88,000	£1,402.08
E	£88,001 - £120,000	£1,713.64
F	£120,001 - £160,000	£2,025.22
G	£160,001 - £320,000	£2,336.79
H	£320,001 and above	£2,804.16

Changes to the Welfare System and Benefits

The Welfare Reform Act comes into force from April 2013 and is the biggest change to the Welfare System for over 60 years. It introduces a wide range of Government reforms designed to make the benefits and tax credits systems fairer and simpler by:

- creating incentives to get more people into work
- protecting the most vulnerable in our society
- delivering fairness to claimants and taxpayers.

There are a number of changes happening in Wigan Borough from April 2013:

Council Tax Reduction

This replaces Council Tax Benefit from 1 April 2013.

Under Occupancy Social Housing

Also known as the Bedroom Tax, will mean that, from 1 April 2013, some people who rent from a local authority, housing association or registered social landlord, and are considered to have more bedrooms than the household needs, will get less Housing Benefit.

Changes to Local Housing Allowance

Changes are already in place and affect all new and existing claims for Housing Benefit for privately rented accommodation.

The Benefits Cap

The Benefits Cap will be introduced before October 2013.

Local Welfare Provision

From 1 April 2013, this new discretionary scheme will help residents with one off emergency costs such as food and other essential items.

Universal Credit

A new payment system for people who are looking for work or on a low income. The aim of Universal Credit is to:

- simplify the current benefits system;
- build self-reliance;
- make work pay.

In Wigan Borough, Universal Credit is being introduced 6 months early at the end of April 2013.

Personal Independence Payments

This replaces Disability Living Allowance from 1 April 2013.



Confident People

Pupils of all ages right across the borough have been getting record exam results.

When you may not have to pay Council Tax

You won't have to pay if only the following people occupy your property:

- Students,
- People under the age of 18, or
- People who have a severe mental impairment and would otherwise be liable to pay Council Tax.

You may not have to pay for a limited time if your property is not occupied because it is:

- Newly built and not yet occupied (no charge for 1 month); or
- Substantially unfurnished (no charge for 1 month); or
- Owned by a charity (exempt for 6 months); or

You may not have to pay for any of the following types of properties even if they are occupied:

- Armed Forces' accommodation.
- Visiting Forces' accommodation.
- An annexe such as a 'granny flat'.
- Occupied by someone who has diplomatic, commonwealth or consular privilege or immunity.

You may not have to pay for your property whilst it is:

- Left empty by the owner or tenant, who was the last occupier, and who has moved to receive or provide personal care in either a hospital or home elsewhere;
- Repossessed by a mortgage company;
- Empty because occupation is forbidden by law;
- Waiting to be occupied by a minister of religion;
- The responsibility of a bankrupt's trustee;
- Left empty by a student owner who lived in it immediately before leaving to study elsewhere;
- An empty caravan pitch or houseboat mooring;
- Unoccupied because the last occupier, who was also the owner, had died and probate or letters of administration have not yet been granted (and for 6 months after).

Please ring us and let us know if you think you qualify for an exemption. Certain conditions may apply.

Ways to pay less Council Tax

The full Council Tax bill assumes that there are 2 or more adults living in a property. If you are the only adult living in your property your bill can be reduced by 25%. We can also consider local discounts for other reasons as well. When we work out if you are entitled to a discount we don't count these people:

- Children under 18.
- People over 18 that still qualify for child benefit.
- 18 or 19 year olds who leave school after 30 April are not counted until 1 November of the same year.
- People with a severe mental impairment.
- Apprentices.
- Youth Training Trainees.
- Care Workers.
- Carers.
- People in residential care homes, nursing homes and hostels that provide a high level of care.
- Resident hospital patients.
- Student nurses.
- Prisoners in detention (unless for non payment of fines or Council Tax).
- Students in full time education.
- Diplomats and members of international organisations with headquarters in the UK (and their non British spouses).
- Members of religious communities such as monks or nuns.

Certain qualifying conditions apply.

People with disabilities

If you, or a person that lives with you, has a disability you may qualify for a reduction. Your home will need to have an extra bathroom, kitchen or other room that is used mainly to help with the person's disability. You can also qualify if the disabled person uses a wheelchair in the home. If you qualify we will work out your Council Tax charge again using the valuation band below the one your property is in. Please ring us if you think you qualify.

Changes to Council Tax for Empty Properties and Second Homes

From the 1 April 2013 the Government is encouraging councils to raise more income from Council Tax by allowing discretion over the level of discounts and exemptions given for empty and unoccupied residential dwellings. From 1 April 2013 Wigan Council will be making the following changes:

Properties that have been empty for up to 6 months

The existing Class 'C' 6 month exemption for a dwelling that has been unfurnished and empty for up to 6 months will cease on 31 March 2013. From 1 April 2013 it will be changed to a maximum 1 month full exemption followed by a 25% discount for a maximum of 5 months. Any properties entitled to the exemption on 31 March 2013 will be charged at the new rate from 1 April 2013 for the remainder of the qualifying time that the property continues to meet the criteria.

Long Term Empty Properties

The 50% 'long term empty property' discount will continue to apply until 31 March 2013 for dwellings that have been empty for 6 months or more. From 1 April 2013 dwellings left empty and unfurnished for longer than 6 months, or that have already

been empty for between 6 months and 2 years, will be charged 100% Council Tax.

Empty Homes Premium

From 1 April 2013 'Long term empty properties' that remain empty and unfurnished for longer than 2 years, or have already been empty for longer than 2 years, will attract an Empty Homes Premium. The premium will be an extra 50% charge in addition to the new 100% charge for a 'long term empty property'.

Second Homes

The 10% Second Homes discount will continue to apply until 31 March 2013 for dwellings that are unoccupied and furnished. From 1 April 2013 the 10% discount will be removed completely and the Council Tax charge for a Second Home will be 100%.

If your property becomes empty, contact us straight away and we can tell you if you qualify for any reduction.



Confident Place

Did you know? Over 70% of Wigan Borough is green open space.

Our new Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme

The national Council Tax Benefit scheme will end on 31 March 2013. On 1 April 2013 it will be replaced with a new local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

The Government wants us to continue to support households on low incomes to pay their Council Tax. But they have given us less money to fund this support.

We have had to make tough decisions on how to use the limited funding we have been given. Most households of working age will be entitled to less support under the new scheme and be expected to contribute towards their Council Tax.

For some households this will mean paying some Council Tax when under the previous scheme they did not pay any.

With less funding we cannot offer the same level of support that many households are used to. But our new scheme does offer support to households on low incomes, provides some protection for vulnerable groups and encourages people to take up work.

Who will not be affected by Wigan Council's new Council Tax Reduction Scheme?

- Pensioner households
- Households with children under five

These households will have their reduction assessed using the Government's new national Council Tax Reduction Scheme and so should not see any loss of support from 1 April 2013.

Who will be affected by Wigan Council's new Council Tax Reduction Scheme?

- All working aged households currently claiming benefit, except those with children under five.

Our new Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme

Our new scheme will only apply to households of working age who do not have children under five. Most of these households will receive 20% less support through the new scheme than they qualify for through the existing Council Tax Benefit scheme. Some of these households will lose all support.

Who will lose all support under Wigan Council's new Council Tax Reduction Scheme?

- Households that have capital over £12,000
- Households that currently get Second Adult Rebate

Our new scheme will not offer backdated support. For new applications, entitlement to our new Council Tax Reduction will only begin from the day we actually receive a valid claim.

For more information go to www.wigan.gov.uk/counciltaxreduction

Apply for Council Tax Reduction at www.wigan.gov.uk/benefits/applyforit

Who can apply for Council Tax Reduction?

To apply for Council Tax Reduction you must be the person whose name is on the Council Tax bill.

You may qualify if you are:

- On Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance, Employment Support Allowance or Universal Credit;
- On Pension Credit, Guaranteed Credit and in some cases Savings Credit;

- Working and on low pay (including people who are self employed); or
- On a low income. For example, you might only get a retirement pension or be getting social security benefits, like Incapacity Benefit.

How to apply

You must apply directly to Wigan Council. You can only get Council Tax Reduction from the date Wigan Council receives your application.

The quickest and easiest way to make a claim is online. Go to www.wigan.gov.uk/benefits/applyforit

You cannot make a claim for Council Tax Reduction through Job Centre Plus or the Pensions Service.

For more information about Council Tax Reduction visit www.wigan.gov.uk/counciltaxreduction

If you rent your home you might also be entitled to Housing Benefit. For more information about Housing Benefit visit www.wigan.gov.uk/housingbenefit

Need help to make an application?

- See the back of your bill for details of how to contact us.
- You can get help at our Wigan and Leigh Housing offices as long as you fill in a consent form.
- You can get help and use our online facilities at our Life Centres in Wigan, Marsh Green, Atherton, Leigh Town Hall, Ince and Platt Bridge.
- If you are a tenant of Arena Housing, Adactus Housing, or Riverside Housing, your landlord can help you fill in and check your benefit claim online.
- If you do not have access to a computer or are unable to visit us at any of the above places, you can apply over the phone by ringing 01942 828644.

The following agencies can give advice about your application:

- Wigan Independent Advice Centre
01942 489984
- Citizens Advice
0844 826 9713
- Age UK (for those over 50)
Wigan 01942 241972

These facilities are available to all customers:

- Access for wheelchair users at our Life Centres in Wigan, Marsh Green, Atherton, Leigh Town Hall, Ince and Platt Bridge.
- Browsealoud is available on our website to download so that you can have the information on our web pages read aloud to you.
- A textphone for people who are hard of hearing - 01942 828725.

Changes you need to tell us about

Tell us straight away if you are getting Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction and have a change in circumstances. If you do not tell us about a change as soon as it happens, you could lose benefits or we could pay you too much and you will probably have to pay it back. It is an offence not to tell us about any change in circumstances that affects your entitlement. We may take court action against you.

Tell us online - don't delay, tell us today. You don't have to send us a letter.

Tell us online by filling in one of our forms. Visit www.wigan.gov.uk/benefits/applyforit and click on our change in circumstance form.

You can get face-to-face help with any enquiry about a council service at our Life Centres in Wigan, Marsh Green, Atherton, Leigh Town Hall, Ince and Platt Bridge.

Under Occupancy of Social Housing

From the 1 April 2013 the way Housing Benefit is worked out for social housing is changing. The amount of Housing Benefit you receive may go down.

If you rent from a local authority, a registered housing association or other registered social landlord, from 1 April 2013 the amount of Housing Benefit you get will be based on the number of bedrooms your household needs.

The rules allow one bedroom for:

- every adult couple (married or unmarried)
- any other adult aged 16 or over
- any two children of the same sex aged under 16
- any two children aged under 10
- any other child
- a non-resident carer

Complaints

Write to us at: Have Your Say, Wigan Council, Citizen Support Services, Wigan, WN1 3DS.

Phone: **01942 827607**.

Email: haveyoursay@wigan.gov.uk

Visit: www.wigan.gov.uk/haveyoursay

If you are classed as having one or more extra bedrooms your Housing Benefit may be reduced. If you are under-occupying there will be a reduction in your Housing Benefit of:

- 14% for under-occupancy by one bedroom (approximately £13 per week)
- 25% for under-occupancy by two bedrooms or more (approximately £23 per week)

For more information go to

www.helpwithrent.org.uk

or telephone 0845 120 2093

8am to 6pm Monday to Friday

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a new single payment for people who are looking for work or on a low income.

Universal Credit replaces 6 existing working age benefits, including Housing Benefit and will affect new claims from October 2013 to April 2014 and existing Housing Benefit claims from 2014 to 2017.

In Wigan, it will affect some people from April 2013, mainly:

- Those that live in postcodes WN1 – WN6
- Those that make a new claim for Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) that are single and have no children.

What are the main benefits affected by Universal Credit?

Universal Credit is a single monthly payment that will replace some of the benefits and tax credits people get now. These are:

- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income Support
- Housing Benefit
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit.

Universal Credit will be adjusted as your earnings go up to make sure your income is always higher when you're working than when you're not.

What's new about Universal Credit

- Universal Credit will be paid as one monthly payment
- If you have a partner you'll get one monthly payment for both of you
- If you get help with your rent, this will be included in your monthly payment – you'll then pay your landlord yourself.
- You'll claim Universal Credit online. Help will be available for people who don't have access to the internet or have difficulty using a computer.

We are helping to support our customers by providing free training:

- Get Online for beginners
- Budgeting Support Courses

To access one of the courses or find out further information contact: gettraining@wigan.gov.uk

You can find out more information by visiting:

www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/welfare-reform/universal-credit/



Confident Council

The new recycling service will save council tax payers £14m over the next six years.

We can make the information in this booklet available in other formats and languages on request. Contact us at:

Citizen Support Services

Wigan Council, PO Box 100, Wigan, WN1 3DS.

Phone: 01942 828696 Textphone: 01942 828725

Email: revenues@wigan.gov.uk

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