

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cost of Living Payment – Discretionary Scheme

Overview:

During 2022, the Welsh Government has provided funding to all local authorities to provide a £150 one-off cost of living payment to all those eligible households in council tax bands A to D and those qualifying under the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Main Scheme).

Additional funding has also been provided to each Council to enable them to provide support under a discretionary scheme, to help households considered to be in need of assistance with their living costs.

Discretionary Scheme Eligibility:

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has received £746,000 and the discretionary scheme will be used to support households that meet the following criteria:-

A payment of **£150** will be made to eligible households in Council Tax Band E to H, where on the 15 February 2022, the person liable to pay council tax lives in the property as their sole or main residence and were not in receipt of support through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

A payment of **£150** will be made to households where on the 15 February 2022, the person liable for council tax lives in the property as their sole or main residence, is not eligible for a payment under the main scheme AND is in receipt of one of the following exemptions or reliefs:

- **Exemption Class N** – All residents are students
- **Exemption Class S** – All residents are under the age of 18 years
- **Exemption Class U** – All residents are severely mentally impaired
- **Exemption Class W** – Annexe or self-contained part of a property occupied by an elderly or disabled relative of the residents living in the rest of it
- **Exemption Class X** – All residents are care leavers who are 18 or over but have not yet reached the age of 25, or where every resident is either a care leaver or falls under the definition of a student or a severely mentally impaired person

- **Exemption Class E** – Unoccupied because the only usual occupier left to receive personal care as a resident of a hospital, nursing or residential care home
- **Exemption Class I** – Unoccupied because the only usual occupier has left the property to receive care elsewhere (other than a place mentioned in Class E)
- **Exemption Class J** – Unoccupied because, the only usual occupier lives elsewhere, for the purpose of providing care to another person
- **Exemption Class K** – The liable person last occupied the dwelling as their main residence and is a student studying elsewhere

A payment of **£150** will be made to households who would have been eligible under the main scheme but did not register for or receive payment before the 30 September 2022.

Where it is deemed reasonable, a payment of up to **£150** will be made to households who were not eligible under the main scheme and do not fall into any of the above categories of eligibility. The award of this payment will be at the discretion of the Council (Leader / Leader of the Opposition / S151 Officer).

Any decision is final and there are no grounds for appeal.

A payment of **£100** will be made to households who have their sole or main residence in Blaenau Gwent and were in receipt of a Free School Meal payment in August 2022. The payment will be made directly into the bank account in which you received the Free School Meal payment.

As part of this scheme, the Council will also make a contribution of £100,000 to the Blaenau Gwent Foodbank for the support of residents of Blaenau Gwent and a further £50,000 to Citizens Advice Bureau to enable additional resources to be deployed to support individuals across Blaenau Gwent with financial / debt advice.

The scheme will be open to applications until 31 March 2023.

How will payments be made:

Eligible households in Council Tax Bands E to H (& those who were eligible under the main scheme) - where we hold current direct debit details on council tax accounts we will look to make payment directly into bank accounts. Where we do not hold current direct debit details we will send a letter inviting you to apply for the above payment.

If you do not receive a letter of invitation you cannot register for this payment.

Households in receipt of any of the eligible exemptions - we will send a letter inviting you to apply for the above payment.

Eligible Households in HMO's / temporary accommodation – you can make an application for this payment and will be required to provide evidence that you are responsible for energy bills directly or pay a service charge for energy costs

Households eligible for free school meals – payment will be made directly into the bank account that your August free school meal payments have been made to.

In all other instances households will need to register for their eligibility to be assessed.