

Wales leads the way in helping people access crucial council tax discount

The Welsh Government has been working to tackle low rates of awareness and take-up of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and the various council tax discounts and exemptions which are available to support households.

It has been working jointly with MoneySavingExpert.com – the UK's biggest consumer website – over the last 6 months – to develop simple and consistent advice to ensure all households in Wales have access to information about their council tax entitlements.

MoneySavingExpert.com has an ongoing campaign to make sure people diagnosed as 'severely mentally impaired' and who are eligible for certain benefits receive the correct discounts on their council tax.

The Welsh Government has dedicated web pages and a simple guide that summarises the key information about the council tax support households can receive. It has also worked with MoneySavingExpert.com to improve communication, particularly about entitlements available to those diagnosed as 'severely mentally impaired'.

MoneySavingExpert.com is now calling on the rest of the UK to follow Wales' lead following an investigation it conducted across England, Scotland and Wales last year, which raised concerns about the inconsistent messages households receive on council tax discounts.

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

"Ensuring every household in Wales receives what they are entitled to in terms of council tax support is an important part of the Welsh Government's commitment to making council tax fairer.

"Our guide brings together all the relevant information and puts it in one place. I am grateful to MoneySavingExpert.com – and local councils – for helping us to develop this important and useful guide.

"We will continue to work with councils to encourage and ensure consistency in approaches to administering discounts and exemptions, not just for those with a severe mental impairment, but for everyone who is eligible."

Martin Lewis, founder of MoneySavingExpert.com, said:

"What should happen is those diagnosed as 'severely mentally impaired' and their carers should be informed of and offered the

'SMI' discount. Yet disgracefully, our investigation showed the majority of councils gave out the wrong information. Some staff in our cold-calling exercise even told people the discount doesn't exist, meaning there are huge differences in take-up across the country. That simply isn't right. We should be looking to help some of society's most vulnerable, not hinder.

"Plaudits to the Welsh Government for listening to our call and taking on the cause of those with a 'severe mental impairment'. Proper communication and education of staff is a great start.

"The hope is now that we can point to Wales as an example, the rest of the UK will follow suit. We'll continue to make sure the changes made by the Welsh Government have actually worked for those trying to start a claim and suggest improvements if we come up with any."

A full list of eligibility criteria is available on the [Welsh Government website](#) or [this leaflet](#).