

London Borough of Hackney

Discretionary Rate Relief Guidance on completing the Application Form

Discretionary Rate Relief (DRR) is granted by local authorities to charities and non-profit making organisations, in order to reduce the business rate liabilities for the buildings which they occupy. Discretionary Rate Relief is an annual award and applications are required on an annual basis. Please note that Discretionary Rate Relief is at the Council's discretion and there is no right or entitlement to an award now or in future years.

Organisations must make provision for rates within their annual budgets, until they receive written confirmation on whether DRR has been awarded.

Your application for Discretionary Rate Relief must be submitted as a webform, which you can save partway through and return to whenever you wish. You can access this through the following link:

www.hackney.gov.uk/community-partnerships.htm

Guidance Notes

Before completing the application form, please read through this document which includes Hackney Council's Policy on Discretionary Rate Relief and the guidance information that you need to complete the application form.

Please note that it is important that you answer all of the questions and include all of the information requested – otherwise your application for Discretionary Rate Relief may not be considered.

Hackney Council Policy on Discretionary Rate Relief

1. What is Discretionary Rate Relief?

Discretionary Rate Relief (DRR) is granted by local authorities to charities and non-profit making organisations, in order to reduce the business rate liabilities for the buildings which they occupy.

2. Who does the policy apply to?

Registered charities already in receipt of 80% mandatory rate relief. Local authorities then have the discretion to provide further rate relief on all or some of the remaining 20% and this is called Discretionary Rate Relief.

Not-for-profit organisations who are not registered as charities can also apply for Discretionary Rate Relief. However if the organisation is eligible for Small Business Rates Relief this should be applied for before an application is made for Discretionary Rate Relief.

This relief is not open to individuals or where the property for which the relief is sought is empty.

3. How is the Relief Funded?

Discretionary Relief is part funded by Central Government/Greater London Authority (CLG/GLA) and part funded by the Council, below is a table showing the respective costs to CLG/GLA and to the Council:

Table 1 – Respective Costs for Funding Discretionary Rate Relief			
Type Of Discretionary Rate Relief	Amount of Discretionary Rate Relief	Cost to Council	Cost to the CLG/GLA
Top Up - Charities already in receipt of 80% Mandatory Rate Relief	Up to 20%	30%	70%
Not for Profit Organisations	Up to 100%	30%	70%

4. Basis for Discretionary Rate Relief Awards

The Council recognises the contribution of the Voluntary and Community Sector as partners in the delivery of Hackney's Sustainable Community Strategy. Discretionary Rate Relief is one of the ways that the Council demonstrates its support to the VCS, and organisations applying for Discretionary Rate Relief are required to demonstrate how their activities contribute to achieving the aspirations for the borough as set out in Hackney's Sustainable Community Strategy.

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Discretionary Rate Relief is an annual award and applications are required on an annual basis. However, it should be noted that as the title suggests the award of Discretionary Rate Relief is at the Council's **discretion** and there is no right or entitlement to an award now or in future years.

Organisations must make provision for rates within their annual budgets, until they receive written confirmation on whether DRR has been awarded.

5. Eligibility Criteria for the award of Discretionary Rate Relief

Hackney Council will assess each application for Discretionary Rate Relief against the criteria outlined below and organisations will need to provide supporting evidence where required. The organisation must also make available a copy of its most up to date annual accounts which have been independently examined or audited.

Applicant organisations must be able to demonstrate:

- a) why an application for Discretionary Rate Relief is being made;
- b) how services delivered by the organisation, contribute to achieving at least one of the priorities set out within Hackney's Sustainable Community Strategy (available in full at www.hackney.gov.uk):
 - Objective 1: Reduce poverty by supporting residents into sustainable employment, and promoting employment opportunities.
 - Objective 2: Help residents to become better qualified and raise educational aspirations.
 - Objective 3: Promote health and wellbeing for all, and support independent living.
 - Objective 4: Make the borough safer, and help people to feel safe in Hackney.
 - Objective 5: Promote mixed communities in well-designed neighbourhoods, where people can access high quality, affordable housing.
 - Objective 6: Be a sustainable community, where all citizens take pride in and take care of Hackney and its environment, for future generations.
- c) how the services delivered benefit service users, 80% of whom live, work or study in Hackney;
- d) how their services involve users who broadly represent the diversity of people living in Hackney;
- e) sound governance and management of the organisation, with a good track record of delivering projects and/or services.

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When assessing applications for rate relief, the Council will need to consider the overall benefit to the community and what effect the award of rate relief will have upon the organisation. It should be noted that the Council's ability to grant rate relief is discretionary and can therefore be impacted upon by other factors, such as the local amenity and the funds available for this purpose.

Organisations must make provision for rates not covered by mandatory relief within their annual budgets, until they receive written confirmation on whether DRR has been awarded.

Please note that failure to supply the requested evidence or information may lead to your application being rejected.

6. The Application Process

- a) Discretionary Rate Relief is an annual award and applications are required on an annual basis. Applications for Discretionary Rate Relief will be considered by the Council's Revenues and Benefits; and Community Investment and Partnership teams.
- b) Applications for Discretionary Rate Relief can be submitted throughout the year, and organisations are required to submit an application demonstrating how they meet the criteria, even if they have previously received Discretionary Rate Relief; as this does not mean that your organisation will automatically receive it in future years.
- c) The application period will open each December for the following financial year, and the Council will review applications on a quarterly basis.
- d) Applications for previous years must be made within 6 months of the end of the financial year concerned. Any applications outside of this time limit will not be considered within the remit of this policy, and an application under hardship will need to be made.

Please see the Council's website for further information on how to apply.

7. Submitting an appeal

If an organisation does not agree with the decision relating to their Discretionary Rate Relief application, it can submit an appeal. Organisations will need to provide a one page (A4) written submission outlining the reason for the appeal, and any supporting evidence will also need to be supplied.

The Council aims to notify organisations of the outcome of the appeal within four weeks of receiving it. Whilst the appeal is being considered, organisations should continue to make provision to pay their rates as normal. Failure to do so may result in recovery action.

Hackney Council Policy on Discretionary Rate Relief

A1 Guidance on completing your application form – getting started

- Applications should be submitted using the online webform, which you can save partway through and return to whenever you wish, only submitting it when you are satisfied that you have completed your application and have nothing further to add.
- PDF Version of the application form and the accompanying guidance notes are available through the Hackney Council website www.hackney.gov.uk.
- Please call the Community Investment & Partnerships team on 020 8356 4066 or e-mail communitypartnerships@hackney.gov.uk if you have a question about the application form.
- If your question is about Discretionary Rate Relief, please contact the Business Rates Team on 020 8356 3466 or by e-mail to business.rates@hackney.gov.uk

A2 Using the webform system

A2.1 Accessing the application webform

The application webform can be reached through the Hackney Council website at <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/community-partnerships.htm>

Registering

If you are using the on-line application system for the first time, you will need to register for an account. Please click the 'New Applicant?' button on the screen that appears when you first follow the link from the Hackney Council website.

You will then be prompted to enter your e-mail address and a password, and to confirm both by entering them a second time. **Note:** where possible please use a generic e-mail address for your organisation, rather than a personal e-mail address. This will mean that if a different person in your organisation becomes responsible for filling in future applications, your organisation can continue to use the same account log-in.

When you have created your account, an e-mail will be automatically sent to the address that you have registered with. **You should save this e-mail** as it provides you with a link to 'Your account'. You may wish to save this link in your Web browser.

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A2.2 Filling in your form

You will then proceed to the eligibility checklist. You will only be able to proceed to the application form itself once you have successfully confirmed your eligibility to apply for rate relief by answering all the questions appropriately.

Once this is completed, you will come to the first section of the application form itself. You may flick through the different sections of the application form at any time by clicking on any of the 'chevrons' at the top of the page, or using the buttons at the bottom of the page. You do not need to complete one page before you can see further pages. However please **do not** use your browser's 'Back' button at any time – always click on the form itself to navigate around.

If you already have an account and have previously made submissions through it, your organisation name and contact details will automatically be populated into the application fields. Please check these and update if necessary.

A green dot against a question means that this question is compulsory and must be answered before you will be allowed to submit your application. If you do not complete any of these questions and try to submit your application, a message will appear in red at the top of the page telling you which sections still need to be completed.

Please note that wherever a word count is indicated underneath the answer box, you **will not** be able to submit an answer which exceeds the stated word limit. Please be careful here as you will be able to actually carry on typing past the word limit, but the webform will not allow you to proceed with your application until you remove the excess words. You should therefore keep a careful eye on your word count as you compose each answer with a word limit.

Other facilities on the form include:

- You can bring up the guidance for applicants at any time by clicking the 'Guidance notes' button in the top right-hand corner of the page.
- You can e-mail the Community Investment & Partnerships team by clicking the 'Contact Us' button.
- You can e-mail an application to a colleague in your organisation (e.g. for them to review your work) by clicking the "E-mail draft" link towards the top right-hand corner.
- If you wish to print out your application to review offline, click the "Printer friendly version" link towards the top right-hand corner. Your application will then re-appear in a new Web browser window in a format suitable for printing. You can then select the print option in your browser.
- Where you see a blue box with an 'i' next to a question, you can click on this box to bring up extra information relating to that question.

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- Where you see a red tick to the right of an answer box, you can click on this tick to spell check your answer to that question.

A2.3 Attaching documents

In the **Declaration & Policy Documents** section of your application you will be asked to submit your policy documents:

- To attach documents to your application, click 'Browse' to look through the folders on your computer, and select the files from where it is saved.
- Once the file is selected, click 'Open' in the dialogue box. The file path will then appear in the box.
- Click 'Upload' and your spreadsheet will start to attach.
- Once uploaded, your document should be listed as an attachment at the bottom of the page. You can then proceed to other pages of your application.
- If you need to change the document that you have attached and attach a revised version after you have uploaded it, you will need to remove the document that previously uploaded by clicking 'Remove' and then start the upload again,

A2.4 Saving and returning to your application

You can safely save your application to return to later by clicking the 'Save & Finish Later' button at the bottom.

When you are ready to return to your application, please ensure you use either the link that was provided in your confirmation e-mail to log back into your account, **or** the link **from** www.hackney.gov.uk/community-partnerships.htm

Please do **not** use the link inviting you to start a new application.

A list of your in-progress applications will then appear. Click on the name of an application to return to it. If you wish to delete an application, click on the trash can on the right.

A2.5 Submitting your application

Select the final section, Section 7 'Review My Application', from the top of the page. This will show you the whole application form with your answers, giving you a chance to review all of your answers and check for any accidental omissions. When you are satisfied with your application, you may click 'Submit' to submit your application.

At this point if you have missed out answers to any of the mandatory questions, you will receive an error message in red at the top of the page telling you which question/s you have missed. These will also be marked in

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red as you scroll back through the form. Please complete the missing answers and then click 'Update'.

If you have completed all questions, you should receive a message in red confirming that your application has been submitted. You will also receive an automated e-mail confirming your submission and giving you a temporary reference number for your application.

A2.6 Reviewing submitted applications

You may still see your application after you have submitted it. Log back in to your account at any time, and select from the 'Show' drop-down menu on the right-hand side 'Submitted applications'. Click on the name of a completed application to display it.

A2.7 Problems with the webform?

If you have any questions or need help with using the webform, please phone the Community Investment & Partnerships team on (020) 8356 4066.