

# Council Tax guidance

on uninhabitable property

Customer Service

Hackney Service Centre, 1 Hillman Street, Hackney E8 4RU

You must pay the full amount of Council Tax if at least two adults live in your property. We will not count some people, even if they live at the property, when we work out the amount of Council Tax to pay. For a full list of people we do not count, visit our website at [www.hackney.gov.uk/counciltax](http://www.hackney.gov.uk/counciltax)

A property is eligible for a 25% discount off the Council Tax if it is unoccupied and needs, or is undergoing major repairs. Major repairs can include structural alterations to the property.

### **What do we mean by uninhabitable?**

To be eligible for a 25% discount off the Council Tax the property must be vacant (unoccupied and substantially unfurnished) and need or be undergoing major repairs to make it habitable for people to live in.

We will consider:

- The cost and extent of the works needed to make the property fit to live in
- The time that the work would take; and
- Any other obvious features of the work.

You will not have to pay the full Council Tax if you cannot live in a property because it has fallen into severe disrepair.

Before we grant the discount one of our Inspectors must see the repairs that are needed before they are started, or whilst they are in progress. If this is not possible, we will need supporting evidence such as a qualified surveyor's report or/and a schedule of the works carried out as well as photographs of the condition of the property before the repair works commenced. It is unlikely that we will agree a backdated claim for a discount unless you provide this evidence.

We will grant the discount if we consider that repairs are needed rather than just refurbishment. This must be confirmed by one of our Inspectors.

### **The difference between repair and improvement**

Repair is simply replacing an element already there but which is worn out or dilapidated. Improvement, however, introduces a new feature which was not part of the structure before.

Refurbishment or modernisation would not qualify for the uninhabitable discount because they are not classed as 'repairing' the property. Minor repairs will also not qualify for the discount. It is common for minor repairs or refurbishment to be carried out while people still live in the property.

In the majority of cases where a property is vacant and in disrepair, proposed works will not stop at repair, but will include elements of improvement. Where it is relevant to consider such a list of works it will be necessary to distinguish between works of repair and improvement.

### **What are structural alterations?**

We can also consider granting the uninhabitable discount if nobody lives in the property, it is substantially unfurnished and it is undergoing structural alteration which has not been completed yet. Structural alterations include removing supporting or external walls, roofs and joists.

### **How long does the discount last?**

The discount period can last up to 12 months from when the property became uninhabitable and in need of major repair or when the structural alterations began.

When the discount period comes to an end you must pay the full Council Tax if the property continues to be uninhabitable. If the property remains vacant for two years or more you will be charged the empty homes premium, which is an additional charge of 50%.

### **Questions**

If you have any questions please contact us

By phone, 020 8356 3154, opening times 9.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday

By e-mail, [council.tax@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:council.tax@hackney.gov.uk)

Visit our website, [www.hackney.gov.uk](http://www.hackney.gov.uk)