# Rise in council tax single person discount fraud amid economic pressures



New research has brought to light a concerning rise in dishonesty linked to Council Tax payments across the UK, particularly regarding the Single Person Discount. This discount offers a 25 per cent reduction on Council Tax for households with only one adult occupant. However, findings from a survey conducted by Cifas, the nation’s leading fraud prevention body, reveal that approximately one in six adults (16%) have either falsely claimed this discount themselves or know someone who has done so in the past year.

The survey, which involved 2,000 adults, highlights fraudulent claims for the Single Person Discount as one of the most common examples of ‘first-party fraud’—an offence involving deception by individuals about their personal circumstances. Other prevalent types of dishonesty noted include embellishing qualifications on CVs (18%) and retail non-delivery fraud (19%).

Cifas’s Director of Public Sector, Rachael Tiffen, emphasised the seriousness of such fraud in an interview with the Manchester Evening News. She said, “First-party fraud isn’t a harmless crime—it’s harmful. At a time when many households are feeling the squeeze of rising council tax bills, it’s more important than ever to recognise that council tax fraud, including false claims for Single Person Discount, puts vital local services at risk. It can also result in serious consequences for those individuals who act dishonestly.”

The timing of this research is particularly notable, arriving ahead of National Honesty Day on 30 April. Fraud against the public purse has drawn concern from local councils as well, which have highlighted that such actions divert funds away from communities in need. One council spokesperson expressed, “We understand times are tough, and that’s why it’s so important to support residents during challenging times without resorting to fraud. Ensuring people can report suspected fraud quickly and anonymously remains crucial.”

Council Tax in Manchester has increased by 5 per cent this year, compounding financial pressures on families already faced with rising food and energy costs. This economic context may contribute to the growing levels of deceit. The research also discovered perceptions of fraud vary: nearly half (48%) of respondents viewed first-party fraud as ‘reasonable,’ nearly one in ten (9%) believed falsely claiming the Single Person Discount was acceptable, while 13% mistakenly thought this form of fraud was legal—a slight increase from 2023 figures. Young adults aged 25 to 34 were the most likely age group to have dishonestly claimed the discount, with 28% admitting to such behaviour.

To assist those struggling financially, Citizens Advice offers guidance on managing council tax payments. Their advice includes contacting the relevant local council to discuss payment plans or reductions rather than stopping payments outright. They state: “Ask them if they’ll let you pay your council tax in smaller amounts. You’ll probably be asked to commit to paying a regular amount each month. If you’re not sure how much you can afford, you can use a budgeting tool or talk to a specialist adviser at Citizens Advice. If these payments mean you won’t be able to afford essential costs such as your rent or mortgage, tell the council. If you’re on a low income, you might be able to get a reduction on your council tax bill.”

The Manchester Evening News is reporting these developments as an indication of growing challenges related to Council Tax fraud in the UK amid ongoing economic pressures on households.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.cifas.org.uk/newsroom/singlepersondiscount> - Cifas reports that 1 in 5 individuals have fraudulently claimed the Single Person Discount in the past year, highlighting a significant rise in such fraudulent activities.
2. <https://www.cifas.org.uk/newsroom/fraudbehaviours23> - Cifas reveals that 1 in 8 UK adults admit to committing fraud in the last 12 months, with falsifying CV qualifications, Single Person Discount fraud, and gaming chargeback fraud being the most common types.
3. <https://www.cifas.org.uk/newsroom/fraud-behaviours-2024> - Cifas highlights that nearly half of UK adults feel first-party fraud is acceptable, with 36% not regarding asset conversion fraud as illegal and 22% thinking money muling is legal.
4. <https://www.yourmoney.com/household-bills/news-household-bills/increase-in-council-tax-fraud-claims/> - YourMoney.com reports that 21% of people, or someone they knew, had fraudulently claimed the Single Person Discount in the past 12 months, an increase from 19% in 2022.
5. <https://www.credit-connect.co.uk/news/consumer-lending/financial-services/half-of-adults-feel-first-party-fraud-is-acceptable/> - Credit Connect reports that over a third of individuals (36%) did not regard asset conversion fraud as illegal, and more than 1 in 5 people (22%) thought that money muling was legal.
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-fraud-initiative-reports/national-fraud-initiative-report-2022-2024-html> - The UK government's National Fraud Initiative report identifies £20.4 million in fraudulent or wrongly received council tax single person discounts in England for 2022-2024.
7. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMinAFBVV95cUxNbFNHbXZ4aWdYMVIxay1SRDhfOHZ2ckNRZ2FJS1pRZTdVRkpMc2hyVDByOEdaTWs2bS1qOWMxTUxFOFhvRHowQUdiWXEtUHdNdWVLQmF4VXZacmUyNTRpbU5wV1hVemhNQmFiTDgyd2hTLVVDczZqY01WOUZWb0tacGRvMjF1Q3NBa0otSVlGa0llVXYwSHVxTzVYbkPSAaIBQVVfeXFMT1lyMWtDUC1Fell4N2Z6QU9CT3Q2Y1A1Tlh1NFZIdFFQR3FYa3dQdU41VnFJaURkZU9zRk5TNVREQXgtM19XaW9UQUFiR1AwVk8zV3JtY2tlQlU2Mjd0SFZFU3c0WFZ5UG1SY2pJUVRUdDNtVzg0MEY0YlNUSWdkbEN6TVFJTnFHMEp2ZExMbk5fSTBjU0N4SjhCWU1NSU5qYXJB?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data