

South Dorset Revenues & Benefits Partnership

Consultation Report **DRAFT**

Name of research	Council Tax Support Scheme 2017/18 Consultation	No. of responses	144
-------------------------	---	-------------------------	-----

Date started	27/09/16	Date closed	22/11/16
---------------------	----------	--------------------	----------

Purbeck District Council, West Dorset District Council and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council are each reviewing their Council Tax Support scheme for working age applicants in their area. The councils are proposing changes that would bring their schemes in line with the changes made by Central Government in Housing Benefit and Universal Credit.

This consultation exercise was undertaken to obtain feedback on the changes being proposed. This feedback will be considered by the individual councils when determining their 2017/18 scheme.

The consultation provided an opportunity for respondents to give their views on 3 proposals:

- Removing the Family Premium for all new working age applicants
- Reducing backdating to one month
- Reducing the period for which a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive Council Tax Support to four weeks

The consultation questionnaire is included as appendix 1.

The consultation was open for a period of 8 weeks. It was available as an online questionnaire, with paper copies being available at the district and borough council offices in Purbeck, Dorchester, and Weymouth.

During this period the consultation was promoted via press releases, the dorsetforyou.com consultation tracker, social media, and council e-newsletters. A letter was also sent by Revenues and Benefits to all stakeholders informing them of the consultation.



There were 144 consultation responses. 141 of these were received online, and 3 as paper submissions.

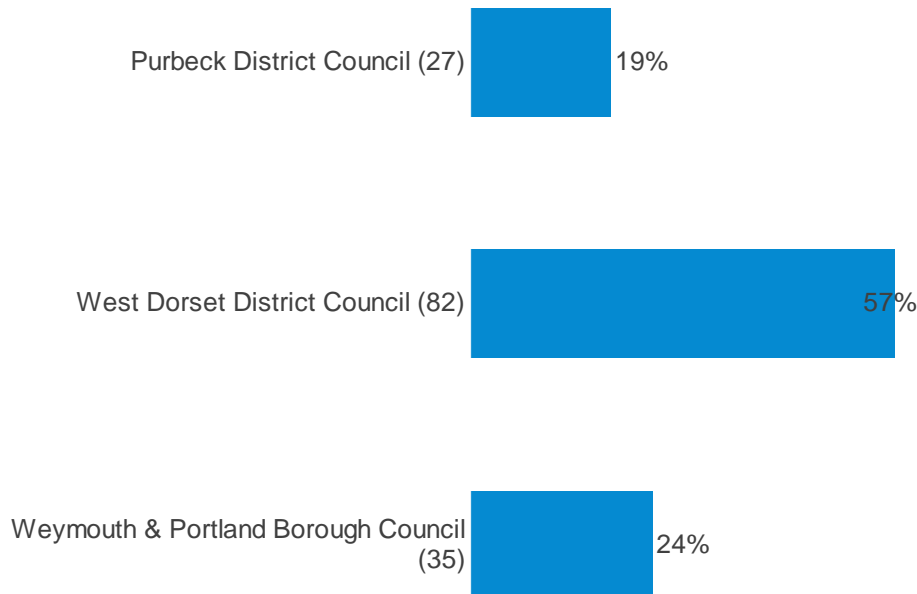
Research Findings

This report provides the results in relation to the three councils. Comments are included in full and unedited.

Please indicate which council's scheme you are commenting on

Over half (56%) of respondents to the consultation were commenting in relation to West Dorset, just under a quarter (24%) in relation to Weymouth & Portland, and just under a fifth (19%) in relation to Purbeck.

(144 responses)



Proposal 1 – Removing the Family Premium for all new working age applicants

Purbeck

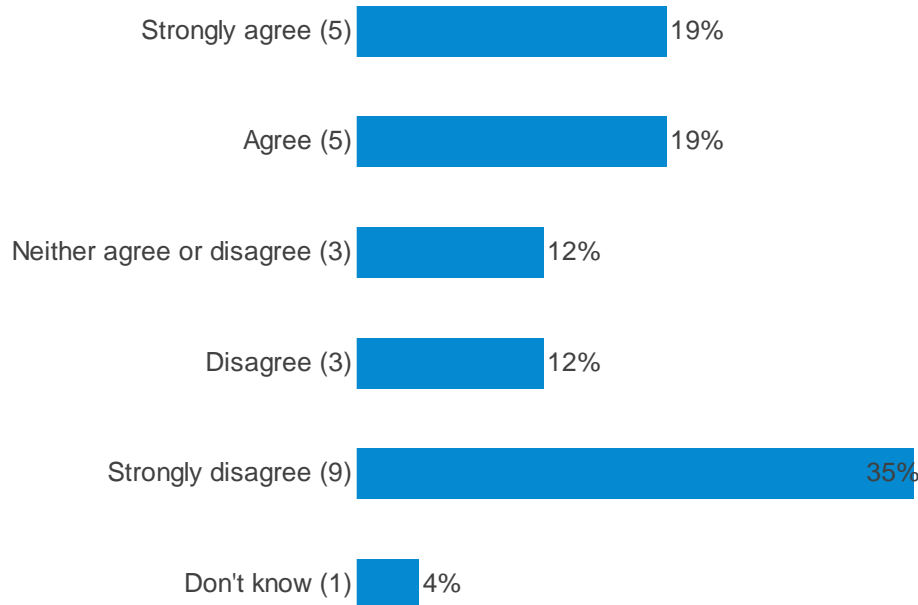
To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposed change to the scheme?



Of the 26 respondents who answered this question in relation to the Purbeck scheme, just over a third (35%) strongly disagreed with the proposal to remove the family premium for all new working age applicants, and a further 12% disagreed (meaning 47% disagreed to some extent). 38% of respondents agreed with the proposal to some extent (19% agree, 19% strongly agree).

Net Support = minus 9%

(26 responses)



If you disagree or disagree strongly, what alternative would you propose?

Respondents made the following comments in relation to the Purbeck scheme.

- Reduce the amount of financial support you give to those able to work that do not work and help the families who do actually work and give something back to the local community rather than consistently hammering them for more money whilst those not working are laughing their way to new luxuries!
- take back to the days when any one on benefits do not have to pay council tax or rent , saves all the fluffing around in trying to tell us you are saving us money and you still getting the same
- Anyone who recieves support at present needs it . I am against any system that would leave anyone worse off than they are at present . An alternative would be that the super rich pay their taxes and then there is more money available to



support the poor.
pay cuts for the top flight management ,less "twinning" with other countries, its only an excuse for a party for you guys.
There needs to be a gradual reduction of support in relevance to income received.when of working age expenses incurred can't be estimated hence could male working too costly and it reverse poverty.
Stop council tax benefit benefit for the rich with second homes make them pay full council tax
To take into account those lone parents on low incomes not receiving Housing Benefit or Universal Credit (ie receiving child/working tax credit)
Means test the pensioners' benefits, make wealthy pensioners pay more council tax. Double tax second/holiday homes.

Please provide any additional comments about this proposal

Respondents made the following comments in relation to the Purbeck scheme.

People who has no jobs , and on benefits , you say this is what we got to live on , yet from that 74.00 a week you are taking more out to pay for rent and council tax , then you take money from our kids who are working , it should be just the person who applies for benefits , that why the applicants wont make any different, it will go up every year , if you are not working , then help them not squeeze more money out of them and their children who are or might be helping with money problems .
Focus should be on what a person can do encourage return to work and possibly assist with budgeting. I operated a project in Birmingham twenty years ago where we employed job coaches who supported people new into employment for a period to give them advice and confidence to maintain their employment. aim for the long term as it is more cost effective.
Just because someone is living in their own home (I'd not receiving housing benefit) doesn't mean they are not in a position to need support.
It is NOT FAIR that working age people with or without families have to subsidise the rich folk who have retired to this area and then get endless unmeans-tested benefits (both financial and in kind). It does not encourage work when there IS NO WORK FOR HALF OF THE YEAR. You are just punishing the ones you should be encouraging, otherwise young people will leave the area and there will be no-one to wipe the backsides of all these wealthy, selfish BREXIT voting crumblied. And there will be no plucky hardworking foreigners to come and do it for us.



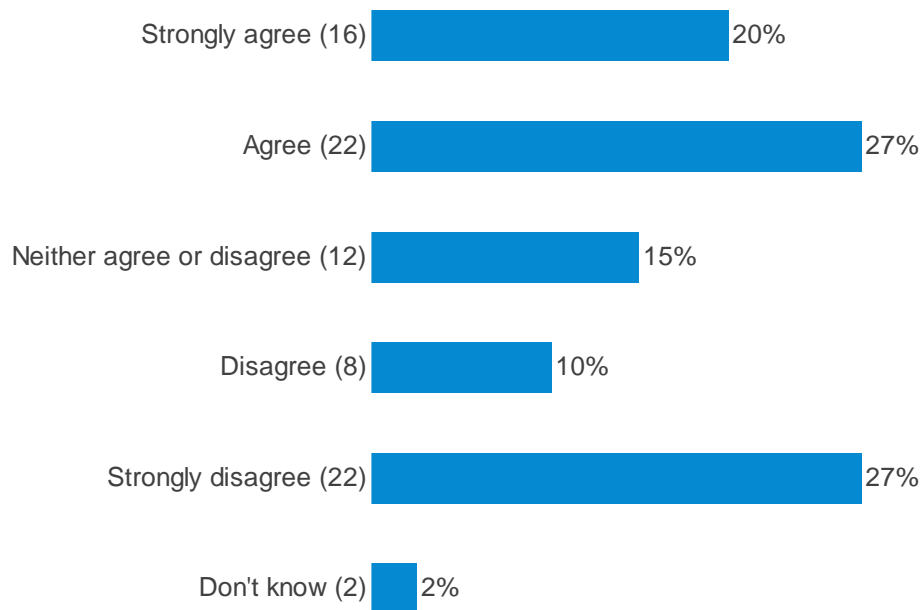
West Dorset

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposed change to the scheme?

Of the 82 respondents who answered this question in relation to the West Dorset scheme, just under half (47%) agreed with the proposal to some extent (20% strongly agree, 27% agree). Whilst 37% disagreed to some extent (10% disagree, 27% strongly disagree).

Net Support = plus 10%

(82 responses)



If you disagree or disagree strongly, what alternative would you propose?

Respondents made the following comments in relation to the West Dorset scheme.

That the council reduce costs elsewhere such as the type of expenses their staff claim, and a reduction in the wages for top level of management.

withdraw councillor allowances

keep family premium when assessing applicable amount

Off set the cost by reducing the amount of support that goes to pensioners by making this means tested.

keep as at present. The vulnerable should not have to pay for the councils' administrative complexities



Find cuts elsewhere, not from the most vulnerable in society or raise Council Tax
Raising council tax above the current threshold for high band properties so more income is generated.
I think you should give children free transport in Weymouth instead.
KEEP THE FAMILY PREMIUM
I would advocate you eliminate Dog Wardens and also reduce staff at recycling centres. I believe this would help to fund the £17.45 allowance. Maybe also library vans.
Make savings elsewhere
ALL households with children should b protected from any reductions in CTS.
Lobbying Government to stop cutting critical finances to local Government by making sure that the 'super rich' are investigated for tax evasion as vigorously as benefits claimants.
That Council Tax should be used to support, as now, all those who qualify for such payments.
Protest more strongly to government about the reduction in central government grant, which has led to this situation. This Conservative government might (just) listen to protests from Conservative local councillors. It needs to make a reality check on what is happening on the ground.
Any money regularly received money should be included as an income.
Remove full support from those on pension credit to reverse the higher support for pensioners.
the status quo
no change
Keep it as it is.
Keep as now-no change
No changes, keep as present

Please provide any additional comments about this proposal

Respondents made the following comments in relation to the West Dorset scheme.

Many families claim help with costs because they have insufficient money to live on, even when outgoings have been reduced to a minimum. To reduce the amount of help that is offered will have a significant impact on many families which will affect their health and potentially the ability to keep their home.
Seems crazy that people with children are having their benefits cut and their council tax support cut. Seems like a lose, lose situation!!
I don't understand your explanation



It is in line with the Tory government's approach to savings ie taking money from those who can least afford it
It would be useful to understand what lobbying (if any) WDDC councillors have done to central government about the change in both the 2013 and the general changes in benefits.
Raising a child is expensive procedure, do not need to be made harder for parents.
Everybody irrespective of any personal issue should contribute towards the overall council tax bill,even people with D.L.A. or receiving L.H.A.or any benefit should contribute a proportionate amount into the pot as all the services that the Dorset county council and local council provide are available to everybody and alot of people on low incomes or disability use them but don,t pay
Families cannot afford the extra expenses. If they are entitled to benefits they are already struggling. Child poverty in this country is already an issue that needs addressing.
Families in receipt of CTS r amongst the poorest in our community & should not b subjected to further cut in income.
Once cannot imagine that anyone who's had to go through the gruelling task of applying for Housing benefits hasn't already had their means tested and retested so where £17.45 per week may sound like a paltry sum to many, it actually means the difference between keeping a roof over the heads of others. Eviction costs society more than £17.45 a week.
Whatever the purported arguments in favour of changing the present system - to make it more in line with the government's support schemes - the true reason for the proposed changes is the lessen the charge upon the district council's funds. As these funds are principally generated through the widest method of sharing the burden - the Council Tax (or Community Charge) - it seems obvious that that fund is better able to afford such support than the poorest and most challenged members of society, those who qualify for Housing Benefit. In other words, the rate of Council Tax should be increased to maintain Housing Benefit at its present level.
imposing more hardship on the vulnerable is in keeping with this government but is morally wrong
I am happy to support families with children under school age. But once the children are at school I believe the parents should be given an incentive to work.



For a council that has spent so much on new offices to propose this small cut/savings makes no sense especially when the 'small' cut becomes a big financial blow to those affected, the weaker and more vulnerable members of our community. Local government does not need to follow national government, that is why we have local government.

This is a cut to working age families which will affect the "just managing" families Mrs May says she is concerned about.

This is a cut to working age families and will affect the "just managing" families the Government says they are concerned about + see Q12

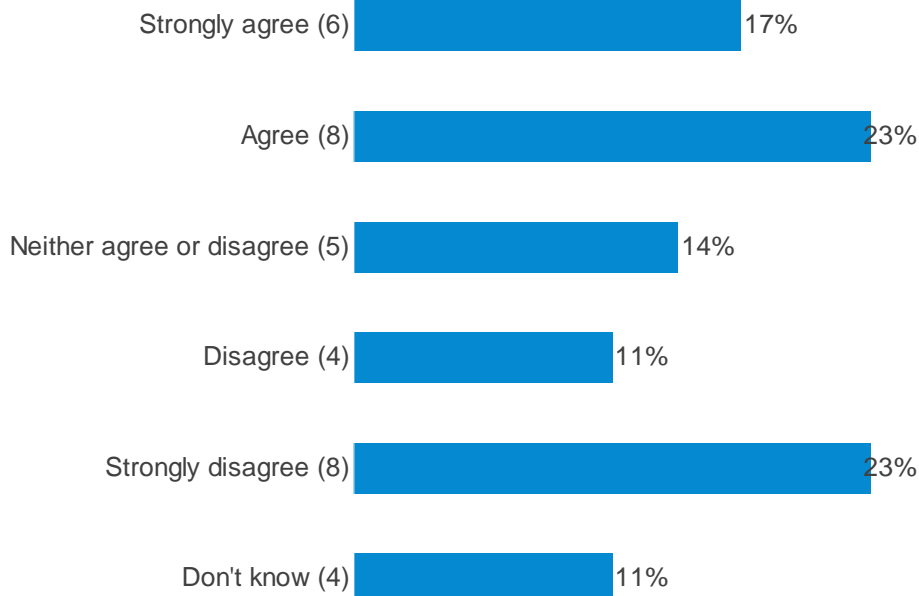
Weymouth & Portland

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposed change to the scheme?

Of the 36 respondents who answered this question in relation to the Weymouth & Portland scheme, 40% agreed with the proposal to some extent (17% strongly agree, 23% agree). Whilst 34% disagreed to some extent (11% disagree, 23% strongly disagree).

Net Support = plus 6%

(35 responses)



If you disagree or disagree strongly, what alternative would you propose?

Respondents made the following comments in relation to the Weymouth & Portland scheme.

Keeping this the same
Take higher Tax's from the wealthy to make society more fair!
equal council tax for every household
Taxing corporations such as Amazon, Google , Vodaphone properly to expand UK tax base so that the poor do not have to pay for banker's bonuses and for bail out of banks
Allow the Family Premium to remain for households with at least one child under the age of 5
Introduce 10year rule to paying into our tax systems before being able to claim any benefits.
For someone on a low income needing support from the state £17.45 is a lot of money to have taken out of your meager income.

Please provide any additional comments about this proposal

Respondents made the following comments in relation to the Weymouth & Portland scheme.

Allow parents to feed thier children
working people already pay higher tax, i feel this proposal doesnt encourage people to work
You do not explain, if the cuts will affect Single Parents, Part-time jobs
Same for nhs 10 year qualifying paying into system

Proposal 2 – Reducing backdating to one month

Purbeck

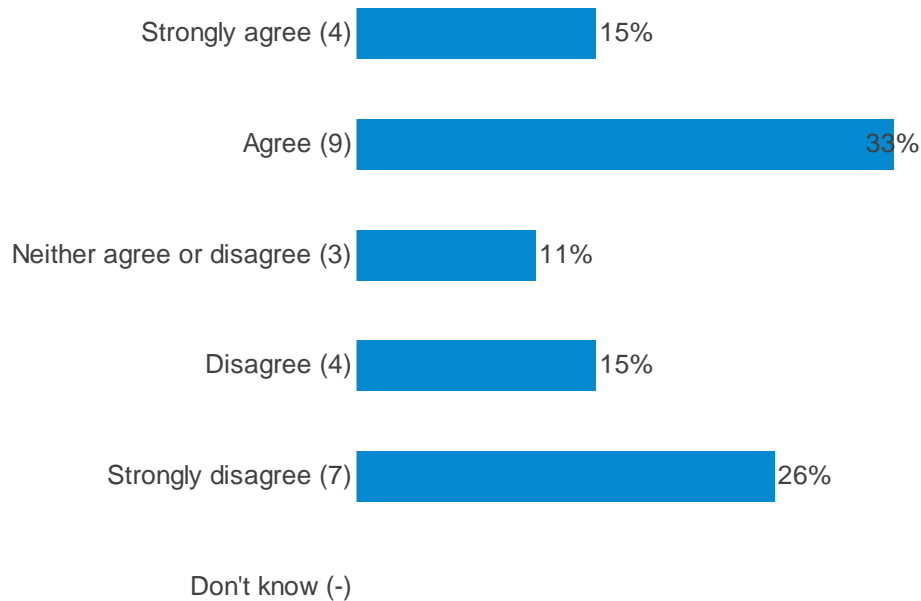
To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposed change to the scheme?

Of the 27 respondents who answered this question in relation to the Purbeck scheme, 48% agreed with the proposal to some extent (15% strongly agree, 33% agree). Whilst 41% disagreed to some extent (15% disagree, 26% strongly disagree).

Net Support = plus 7%



(27 responses)



If you disagree or disagree strongly, what alternative would you propose?

Respondents made the following comments in relation to the Purbeck scheme.

As before making easy for yourself , not thinking about the people ,
Anyone who is entitled to support should be able to receive it and if they were unable to claim at the time ,and can show why ,then it needs to be backdated. the alternative is to keep it as it is .
Combine with all councils to reject that.
Most people are not made aware of the impact of Council tax costs And while preparing for work forget to apply for council tax reduction. The money lost for the up to six months could break a persons aspirations. Better communication between departments would be more encouraging. If not backdating at all at least three months is better than no backdating. a s
3 months, one month is hardly enough time to gather any relevant information.
Keep the period to 6 months or else give a reduced amount for up to 6 months.
As some people might not be aware or be told of the benefit at the time or have the means or inability to make the claim on-line then these groups should be granted an exception from the rule and allow backdating for the same as the current period.
See above comments

Please provide any additional comments about this proposal

Respondents made the following comments in relation to the Purbeck scheme.

Does it help us ,NO
I used to work for DWP job centre and was shocked when some advisors openly commented how they deliberately didn't provide all necessary information to job seekers."Let' s see how so and so fall flat on their faces". Only 20% of advisors were decent and personally my contact with Purbeck District Council left me stressed as they also prided themselves in not giving all information ifnotasking the right questions. Felt treated with arrogance and superiority rather than kindness and courtesy.
If the method for claiming is complicated I would not be surprised if people did not claim for a few months if they had other difficulties in their lives. If they are entitled to the money then 6 months does not seem to be too long for a backdated claim.
See above comments

West Dorset

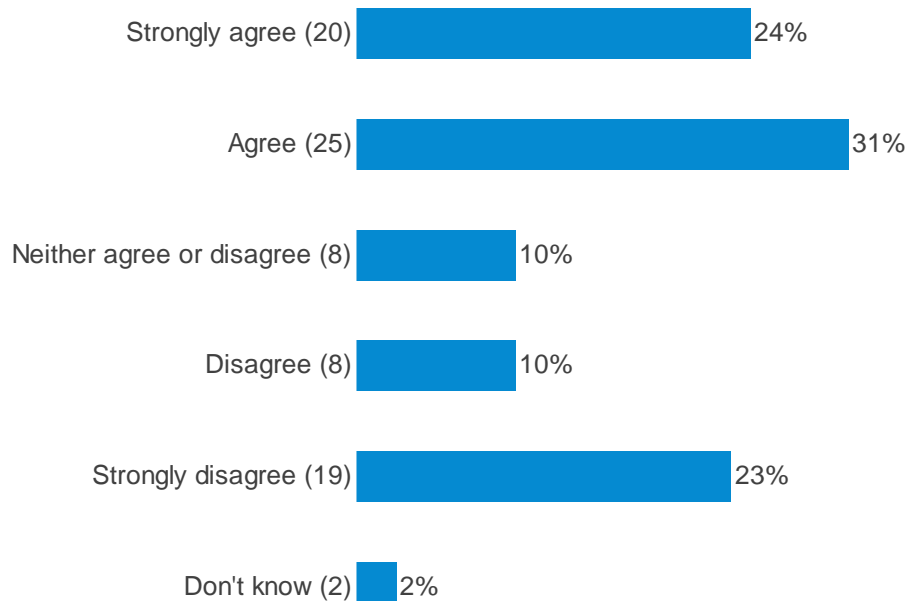
To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposed change to the scheme?

Of the 82 respondents who answered this question in relation to the West Dorset scheme, 55% agreed with the proposal to some extent (24% strongly agree, 31% agree). Whilst 33% disagreed to some extent (10% disagree, 23% strongly disagree).

Net Support = plus 22%



(82 responses)



If you disagree or disagree strongly, what alternative would you propose?

Respondents made the following comments in relation to the West Dorset scheme.

One month is insufficient for many people, why not reduce from 6 months to 2 months which gives a little more leeway whilst still reducing the permissible time to backdate.
Keep it to the time limit at the moment.
again, take away councillor allowances
If people are due the amount that they were not told about, they should get it backdated for more than a month, a formal appeals process would be satisfactory.
If their circumstances were the same 6 months prior to claiming then they are entitled to the support
keep as at present. Entitlement should not be removed if the applicant was simply not able to apply for this benefit at an earlier time
Leave the system as it is
Local government can set the standard, not comply with its own cruel erosion
Raise council tax (same as previous question) - more money in the system to allow a better cushion to those in very difficult circumstances.

If people cannot claim straight away and have a good reason for not doing so, it doesn't mean they shouldn't get it backdated. As I understand it, at the moment the council is struggling to process the current claims in good time (at least 4 weeks behind) which seems one rule for the council without penalty and another rule for the needy, do it now or miss out, without exception.
6 month 'rule' should remain for exceptional cases e.g. Mental ill health & physical ill health conditions preventing timely application, marital/partner relationship breakdown.
Assessing each case individually a proportionately.
That the present system should remain unchanged.
3 mths if no alternative otherwise leave it as is
See above - of all the miserable (and minor) cheese-paring savings involved, this must take the biscuit !
There is enough knowledge about the benefits available, if people are not going to apply when they should then the rest of us should not be donating more to them!
Each case should be investigated to determine the delay in claiming for Tax support.
Reduction in the support for pensioners would allow a fairer acknowledgement of difficulties of working age claimants by allowing 3 month backdating.
leave it to the 6 months
no change
No change at all.
KEEP AS PRESENT-NO CHANGE
No change, keep as at present

Please provide any additional comments about this proposal

Respondents made the following comments in relation to the West Dorset scheme.

This will cause anxiety to many people which in turn will affect health and ability to work.
As long as the claim is made on time and the calculations are carried out in the time scale I can't see the problem. As long as there are no hold ups out of the claimants control, as if that is the case they will be left in a very difficult financial situation
Why should those people new to the benefits system loose out, there are many reasons why things should be backdated that are beyond the control of the claimant at the time. Stop depriving those who really need help & the money of it. If you are in the position of having to claim then suddenly you are vulnerable,



& until that time people really have no clue how hard it is going to be already without adding to their plateful
assess reason for delay in support request - e.g. could be a victim of domestic violence. Are the 'rules' about backdated claims clear enough?
See previous answers. Watch the film 'I, Daniel Blake' to see the effects of benefit cuts or visit any CAB
It seems extremely mean-spirited. A month is a very short time if you have a chaotic or disrupted life, and this may be for reasons beyond your own control. So the most vulnerable are likely to lose out to the greatest degree.
there IS NO FLEXIBILITY IN THIS NEW PROPOSAL, SOME PEOPLE STRUGGLE ON NOT KNOWING THEY COULD HAVE CLAIMED, FOR INSTANCE THE NEWLEY WIDOWED PARENT.
yet again every person should PAY SOME Council tax,it would reduce the burden on those that are currently subsidising the non-grafters. tried to put that politely.
1 month could be the default position but where the applicant could provide a "good reason" why they had not been able to make a claim earlier then up to 6 months should be allowed.
A limited number of cases may need discretionary treatment
I suspect that more often than not, the delay is either caused through misinformation or complete lack of knowledge that such a benefit exists.
The present level of expenditure on Housing Benefit should include all the present methods by which applicants can be protected from poverty and homelessness. Council Tax payers are the best people to give effect to such charitable policies.
the proof is on the claimant if request is agreed then it is accepted that there is a need.
Think there needs to be some flexibility if a claimant is seriously physically ill & unable to claim within a month - if in hospital for example, & likewise re some mental health issues - severe depression/anxiety etc as people don't always get support services in place within a month.
This all adds to burdens on the struggling working age group
It takes a while ,when circumstances change, to find out what help is available and to claim it . One month is not long enough.
When circumstances change leading to a loss of income it takes a while to find & obtain help. 4 weeks is insufficient + see Q12

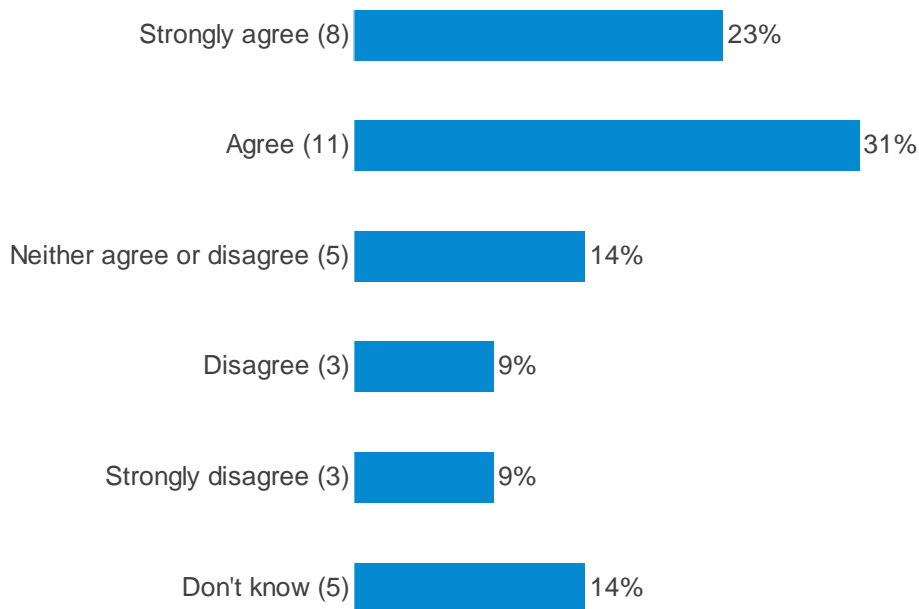
Weymouth & Portland

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposed change to the scheme?

Of the 35 respondents who answered this question in relation to the Weymouth & Portland scheme, 54% agreed with the proposal to some extent (23% strongly agree, 31% agree). Whilst 18% disagreed to some extent (9% disagree, 9% strongly disagree).

Net Support = plus 36%

(35 responses)



If you disagree or disagree strongly, what alternative would you propose?

Respondents made the following comments in relation to the Weymouth & Portland scheme.

So even though they were entitled to claim, and they have provided you with evidence to show why they were unable to claim at that time, you will not allow them to backdate. This doesn't seem right. If they provide a legitimate reason for the delay, then I don't see why CTS couldn't be paid from when they were entitled. After all, new applicants to CTS have normally just undergone a massive change in their lives, perhaps losing their job, family breakdown, illness and having to make your application within a month may be problematic for those already struggling.

This will hit the poorest and most vulnerable the worst
3 months
If the period must be reduced then perhaps 3 months would suffice. From things that I have heard, applications can get delayed and even lost because of what seems to be a permanent backlog in processing them which all contributes to them not being received on time.. There is also the problem of a claimant having left one property and taking up residence in another. From what I hear, this process can take up to 3 months for a claim to be sorted.
There should be no backdating. All systems should be up to date with the computer systems that are in place
The award for Council Tax relief should start from the date the claim was submitted even if this a long process.

Please provide any additional comments about this proposal

Respondents made the following comments in relation to the Weymouth & Portland scheme.

I was not offered this option when I claimed Council Tax Support (I didn't know I was entitled to it at the time and should have been claiming for over a year.)
If you are going to enforce people to apply within a month of being entitled to the support, are you also going to ensure that they receive a decision and are started being awarded council tax during a similar timescale. It would be unfair to say to people you cannot backdate your application further than one month, but we can then sit on it for 3 months before making a decision.
there may be some exceptional circumstances, but I can see no reason why an applicant would need six months to make a claim. I would suggest two months maximum.
I agree only because it makes sense for it to be the same as housing benefit, but I had disagreed with that change to HB as I feel one month may not be enough in certain circumstances. Does the change to HB backdating allow for any extenuating circumstances? If it does, those circumstances must also be permitted for council tax support
If this is to go ahead, then some form of acknowledgement of receipt of a claim should be devised and other safeguards put in place to ease the process..

Proposal 3 – Reducing the period for which a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive Council Tax Support to four weeks

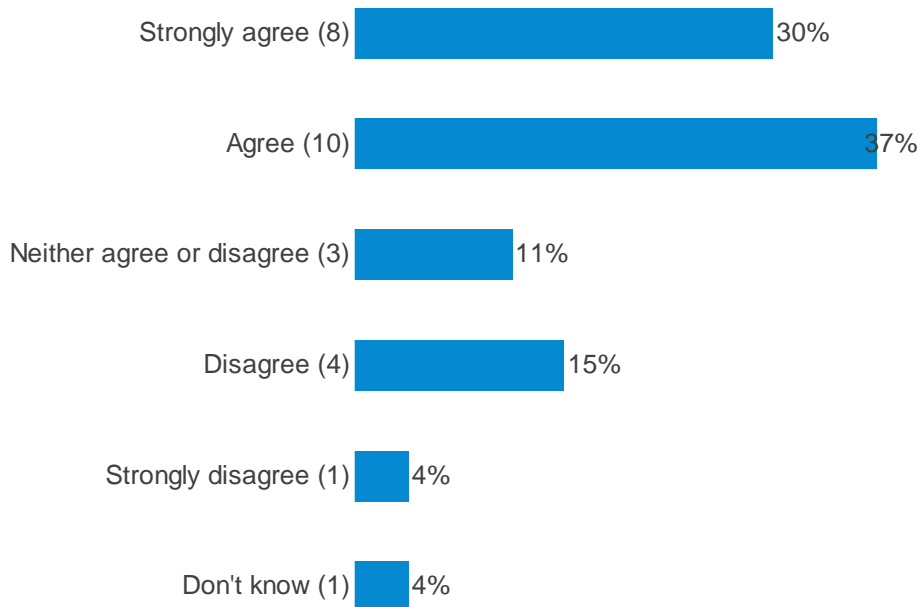
Purbeck

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposed change to the scheme?

Of the 27 respondents who answered this question in relation to the Purbeck scheme, 67% agreed with the proposal to some extent (30% strongly agree, 37% agree). Whilst 19% disagreed to some extent (15% disagree, 4% strongly disagree).

Net Support = plus 48%

(27 responses)



If you disagree or disagree strongly, what alternative would you propose?

Respondents made the following comments in relation to the Purbeck scheme.

NO , if we are in title for the support , why should we reply , more work for us to do , less for you

I think there needs to be consideration of why the person is away for so long . Is it to be with a sick relative ? An alternative is more compassionate grounds on which a person can be absent for longer .

Keep as is!

That should pay it all

3 months.



Please provide any additional comments about this proposal

Respondents made the following comments in relation to the Purbeck scheme.

what is good for one is good for another , exceptions for certain armed forces and mariners , best to get a job with them
this should be against economic migrants
I wasn't aware of this present rule again misinformation given as was told it was four weeks and as I had to fly out of UK to look after parent to support brother and give him a break. I could have stayed for 2 months.
If a retired person were to visit a child in, say New Zealand, for an extended period, one month is too short a time.
An absence due to a family illness or some other emergency should not be included within the new proposal.

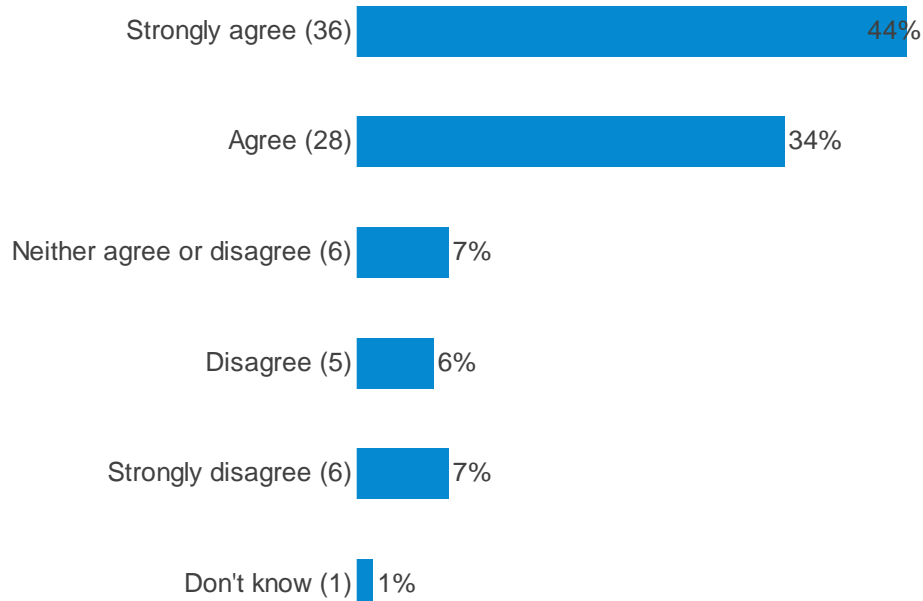
West Dorset

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposed change to the scheme?

Of the 82 respondents who answered this question in relation to the West Dorset scheme, 78% agreed with the proposal to some extent (44% strongly agree, 34% agree). Whilst 13% disagreed to some extent (6% disagree, 7% strongly disagree).

Net Support = plus 65%

(82 responses)



If you disagree or disagree strongly, what alternative would you propose?

Respondents made the following comments in relation to the West Dorset scheme.

There needs to be special circumstances built into this, eg in cases where single person has to be out of area looking after a family member
keeping it the same
inhumane. makes unfounded assumptions.
Exceptions should also be made for anybody who goes abroad to volunteer at charitable projects.
But you could add a clause relating to "exceptional circumstances."
In owner occupier circumstances to maintain current rules.
13 weeks should be left alone
no change
Leave it unchanged. the expense of administering the exemptions would eat into whatever savings were made.

Please provide any additional comments about this proposal

Respondents made the following comments in relation to the West Dorset scheme.

If someone can be absent for 4 weeks and still get council tax support, but if over 4 weeks then stopped form day of absence - why not round this to a maximum absence of 4 weeks for everyone regarding of length of absence. There would be no confusion then.
Definitely agree with this. If people are out of the country for more than 4 weeks then they should NOT be in receipt of council tax support
People have family they visit abroad not very often, or partners
If a certain amount of poverty means reliance on benefits, then those absent on holiday should not have been able to afford to travel for so long....so should have to reapply.
upon investigation/return means testing should reveal any concerns
I'd like to see projected figures for the savings and costs of such a change.

Weymouth & Portland

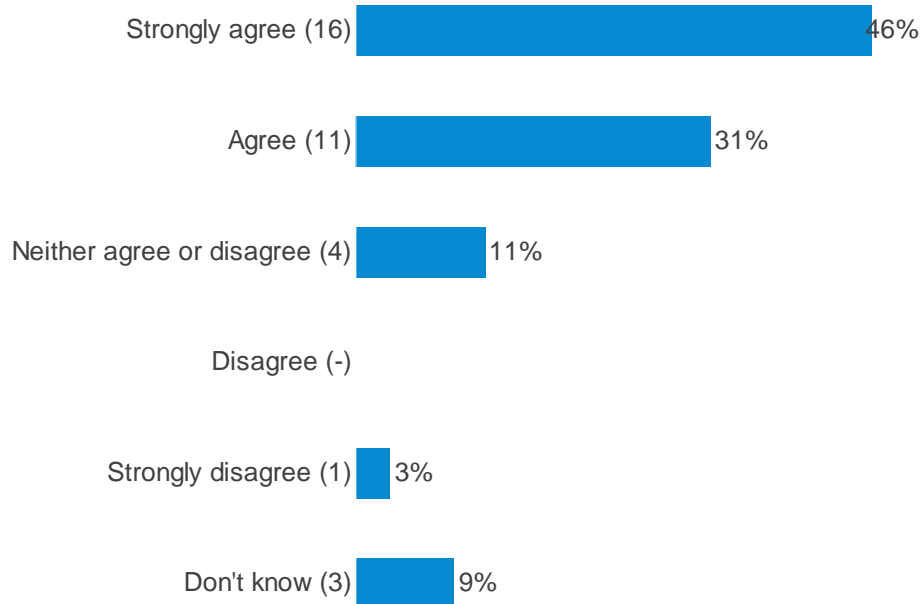
To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposed change to the scheme?

Of the 35 respondents who answered this question in relation to the Weymouth & Portland scheme, 77% agreed with the proposal to some extent (46% strongly agree, 31% agree). Whilst 3% disagreed to some extent (0% disagree, 3% strongly disagree).

Net Support = plus 74%



(35 responses)



If you disagree or disagree strongly, what alternative would you propose?

Respondents made the following comments in relation to the Weymouth & Portland scheme.

keeping ti the same
on their return there should be a qualifying period of paying into UK tax system(see payslips) of six months before they can claim any benefits

Please provide any additional comments about this proposal

Respondents made the following comments in relation to the Weymouth & Portland scheme.

What if someone was long term sick in hospital voer our 4 week limit, talk about kicking somewhen they are down.
You dont state what the position is for people temporarily absent from their homes for more than 4 weeks, but who remain in the UK.
What does it mean by saying absent? does going on holiday come under this, and also 4 weeks is that in one block or a total in a given year? this is not clear and needs more clarification or thought!.



I agree but it needs to be clarified. HB is if a person is absent from Great Britain for more than 4 weeks, but your council tax support wording above is "absent from their homes". It is entirely conceivable that a person could be in hospital, for example, for more than 4 weeks which would make them absent from their home but not from Great Britain. In the hospital example it would be outrageous to cancel a person's support, leaving them with a debt upon discharge from hospital. So, clarify - it absolutely must be clear whether you are talking about absence from home or absence from GB

This would prevent those on pensions and benefits from wintering in warmer places where it is cheaper to live whilst still taking advantage of UK benefits.

Its stealing from the UK if claiming when not paying in whilst out of our Country

Other comments

Please describe any alternative options you would like the council to consider

Responses in relation to Purbeck

Remove Second Adult Rebate

Look at the amount of money you give to those not working but able to work and stop making it harder for those who are working to live a life debt free!!!

don't do it

more pay cuts for council managers etc, less spending trying to impress . higher tax rates for economic migrants. less hand outs for economic migrants. equal rights for native claimants. higher tax rates on holiday home owners

Purbeck District Council operates their own systems and rules and ought to maintain their uniqueness although I haven't been made of it before. Independence is gone.

Double tax holiday and second homes. If folk can afford two houses (especially in such an expensive area) then they can afford to pay double council tax to make up for the damage they do to the local economy by removing houses from the residential market. Likewise any pensioner on higher rate tax should pay double council tax, as they can clearly afford it. If folk of working age are claiming this benefit I assume they are on a very low income, and they CAN'T afford it. I'm on a reasonable income and I find it hard.

Responses in relation to West Dorset

remove second adult rebate

Central Government has made their decisions so those of the worse off in society are going to be even worse off, nothing new there!!



I feel strongly benefits such as winter heating allowance should be stopped once a person has left this country. I know that these allowances are continued to be paid to people in New Zealand and Australia once they have returned to live in their own countries. When I've queried this in the past I've been told its easier to leave the people on the list & to keep paying them than to remove them!!

It is not clear to me if you have reconsidered the % awarded

At present, do 2nd home owners pay full council tax? If they don't, I think they should, or smaller communities suffer...these people might use services infrequently, but ought to pay for the maintenance of the infrastructure/council operations eg waste disposal, street lighting, police etc, as they are privileged enough to be able to afford a second home, and choose its location because of the local community/area, which will not survive without financial help.

The burden of the reduction in support should be spread by making pensioners' support means tested.

Wealth is very unevenly distributed in West Dorset. Please do consider doing whatever you legally can to raise Council Tax for those who can afford to pay it. I would gladly pay more Council Tax to improve my local area, but can't because of the central government rules on the cap. It must be time for local government to consider challenging this at national level, because the burden is falling on local government. If it hasn't been done already, a full cost-benefit analysis of what happens to these families if the support is removed - i.e. are they likely to end up costing WDDC or other local bodies more in other forms of support, once in even greater need. Perhaps the savings are not so great when considered in the broader context. Otherwise, no, I realise that there are very few alternatives which don't lead to a different group of people being harmed instead. But that's why seeking more income is the only way forward at this point - there's no real moral alternative and it would be great to see the councillors start to stand up for their constituents properly by pursuing this.

We need to support families with children. Transport in Weymouth, Portland and Dorchester is very expensive. Everyday ticket to school it's 11pounds per week per one child. You should think about it.

Its great to ask people for comments to these surveys, but in truth Councillors will not implement these positive alternatives because they are a political time bomb. people need to realise that BUDGETS ARE GOING TO BE CUT by central Government and as stated before the shortfall should not be picked up by the few when the many get a free ride on our coat tails.



As described previously, we all seem to sit back and accept that there are people who are draining the system of much needed taxes. Why is this? I can't believe the voices of councillors and local MPs are useless in the face of central Govt. What's the point of electing them in this case? Get up to Westminster and ask why HMRC is so slow at taking over 4.000 cases of tax avoidance amounting to billions of pounds, to court. And while you're at it, you can ask why the Govt has allowed tax loop holes to appear in the first place.

Make no changes.

Keep the Family Premium and Backdating parts of the scheme as it is.

Keep family premium and up to 6 months backdating as at present

Responses in relation to Weymouth & Portland

Remove Second Adult Rebate

To help make our society more even/balanced and fair the council must consider the option of raising the cost of council tax for the WEALTHY! this is because there are too many decent hard working people and family's who are struggling to make ends meet! and this new scheme could break them, I am sure that this council does not want to send people out from their homes and onto the streets!?

i really would like to see a scheme where working people are being supported.

consider people work on low wage if it is cut back to much people will get in the arrears you will have trouble recovering the debt because they will have know money left

It seems a little unfair that single people who have well paid jobs, savings etc are still eligible for Council Tax support whilst married couple pensioners who cannot work because of age or disabilities or medical conditions but have savings are not.

The rights of UK tax payers have been abused for too long; we need to get tough to balance UK income against expenditure therefore if we haven't enough income we can't give it away without proper authentication and/or rules

Please make any other comments on the scheme

Responses in relation to Purbeck

Its not really helping the public

The real and only reason for the changes are to save, ie avoid spending money. The PM may well scrap this in light of the new announcement, on Oct 1.

I obviously needs to involve myself more in the goings on at District level as now feel properly duped through misinformation.



Please do not ignore lone parents, who are living in their own homes and working, but still need support due to low incomes.
I would like to see a one stop shop for people to go to where they can be informed of all of the benefits available to them if they become unemployed or retire. They could also receive assistance in making said claims. Being that all of this is moving online means that you feel that you are now talking to a machine and you are left uncertain as to what is happening in the background and where your claim could just be dropping into a deep digital hole to which you get no response. This also goes in line when trying to call the various Government departments when you are left on hold for hours and in the end you just give up. Gradually we will all end up as non persons...
Introduce a capital limit lower than £16,000 to reduce CTS expenditure.
It makes sense to simplify as much as possible. Too much time and money is already spent on dealing with variations
It is designed to make the poor even poorer and will bring much worry and misery.

Responses in relation to West Dorset

Benefits and assistance hardly offer enough to live on, by reducing the support offered will just place claimants in a worse situation
I believe the proposed changes are sensible and in line with those made by Central Government for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit.
What changes if any would there be for single people with no dependants on Jobseekers? Especially those with health or mental health issues who struggle to gain work but are refused ESA support
Introduce a capital limit lower than £16,000 to reduce CTS expenditure.
Without the support I get from the council (am on income related ESA), I would not be able to pay. I really need LCTS and am very grateful for it.
In general, the vulnerable should not have to pay for the councils' administrative complexities, albeit that these have been created by central government.
The proposals have a rational logic, and the efficiency of a parallel system is clear. There will be savings from doing this, compared to not doing it. However there will be no end to that logic, and effectively it is not local control - central government is driving local policy. How then is that really a change from the system previously?
Scheme is OK, if you are not on time it's your fault, if you have money to go abroad, just pay your council tax in full. Always can ask for help just respect the rules.



IMPROVE AWARENESS OF ANY HELP THERE IS FROM CHARITIES OR VOLUNTEERS SUCH AS CAB FOR PEOPLE TO ACCESS HELP WITH RULES AND FORM FILLING, MUCH OF WHICH IS DAUNTING TO PEOPLE IN DISTRESS.

Please take into account when the desire appears to be to align CTS rules with HB rules that not all CTS applicants are in rented accommodation, but some reside in their own homes. With mortgages if not owned outright...

You haven't explained how making the changes saves money. When the time comes to sell this proposal to residents it would help if you could give examples showing exactly how cost savings flow from alignment. You need to demonstrate administrative savings not just the savings in benefits paid out otherwise it seems unfair.

In principle I would also be happy to agree any future alignments with housing benefit and Universal Credit

There are many people claiming benefits who know how to use the system. It is extremely annoying for people who pay their own way, knowing that they are subsidising these spongers. Rant over! I do think that the forms one has to fill in are, on many occasions, ambiguous and not always clear.

You have the discretion to tailor the scheme to the needs of your area. That was one of the purposes of the 2013 delegation by the Government. You do not have to follow the Government's changes which themselves have been opposed by many groups including the Labour Party. For reasons of administrative efficiency you propose to cut the help given to struggling families. We in the Labour Party do not support this. We believe the cost of running 2 systems, Council Tax Relief alongside HB & UC will not be major and is a price worth paying to continue this vital support to just managing families. The Council has £54 million in investments and found money for its offices, it can fund this cost.

Government delegation of Council Tax Relief to Councils gives local discretion and therefore freedom not to follow Government changes. You don't have to do this. Administrative efficiency is an inadequate reason to cut the help given to just managing families. Any cost of running 2 systems - council tax relief alongside HB & universal credit (which I suspect will be small) can be covered from the same pot from which money was found for the new council offices of WDDC's £54million investments



Responses in relation to Weymouth & Portland

<p>What is vital is that frontline staff are properly informed, empowered to make decisions and polite to their customers - whatever their circumstances. Staff MUST be non-judgemental and able to offer advice and support. I was shocked by the attitude of staff when I attended an appointment with someone I was mentoring - very patronising, and would not entertain the idea that they might have made a mistake (they had.) Only when I challenged their attitude did they investigate and return full of apologies at the error which had meant letters to my client threatening court action when they did not owe any money.</p>
<p>I think you should work at speeding up the decision making process for new applicants. When I lost my job I had no money, but yet I had to continue to pay council tax at the full rate for a period of 2 months whilst a decision was made on my case. It should have been straight forward as I was too ill to work and was claiming ESA, but yet I had to borrow money to pay my council tax bill before it was assessed. Telling me on the telephone, its ok, it will be backdated, hardly helps, when you take your direct debit from my bank account wiping out all my ESA benefit leaving me with nothing for food.</p>
<p>The council needs to consider other options that do not target the working poor!</p>
<p>we already pay tax, we dont rely on benefits. we pay full price to support our children's education, buses, rent etc. increasing taxes, fees for us will result more people to stop working or changes from full time to part time to part time in order to reduce expenses.</p>
<p>Introduce a capital limit lower than £16,000 to reduce CTS expenditure.</p>
<p>N/a</p>
<p>It's great that these systems are now being sensibly reviewed, its about time we looked after UK residents who have paid in all their lives and now struggle to be able to live a good life</p>

The council has a duty to take into account the impact of decisions on people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation). Are there any positive or negative impacts that you believe the council should take into account in the decision making process in relation to protected characteristics? If so, please describe below, and suggest any ways in which the council could reduce or remove any potential negative impact or increase any positive impact.



Responses in relation to Purbeck

What is the point , you will just go ahead and do the propose, weather the public wants it all notstill waiting for lower council tax what was promise!!
I think it is time for the Council to look and focus on positive impacts rather than always negative. The Council needs to inspire and encourage residents, treat them with respect, provide timely information and look to a bright future as per the lead of our new PM and government!
I dont know enough about the potential impacts upon the various groups to comment further.
see above
If this applies only to those of working age, surely it is discriminating against them because of their age? Why should the crumblies get everything on a plate when economically active people get so little?

Responses in relation to West Dorset

Everybody should be considered on an individual basis, and by preventing discrimination against those with needs, you are potentially discriminating against those without any or who choose not to be labelled and therefore do not disclose.
People with health or mental health issues who are deemed fit for work but are unable to gain employment should continue to get as much support as possible. A number of those people do unpaid voluntary work and work hard, but constantly fail at interview.
Age - obviously - this is clearly going to affect younger sections of society (including children) more than others. The council needs to demonstrate why it is not considering changing the rules for pensioners, for example. (Not that I think this would be desirable, but the current proposal is demonstrably unequal on this ground).
You can't miss the fact that families with children are raising new tax payers, and it is good to support them.
Mental disability or age might be "good reasons" for not making claims within the default time.
Going abroad for medical treatment for a household family member should also be excluded, along with claimants who are unable to return home within four week limit as planned due to unforeseen circumstances
The impact assessment in aligning CTS rules with HB rules, as described in this proposal, would negatively impact pension age owner occupiers significantly, hard working families with school age children who r also owner occupiers (likely mortgaged), marital/civil partnership owner occupiers, disabled owner



occupiers
I cannot understand how the religious beliefs or sexual orientation can have any relationship to the needs of those to whom the suggested changes (which I assume will come about, whatever woolly-minded liberals like me say) will apply. This political 'correctness' carried the realms of absurdity.
the proposals would increase the hardship of most claims this is unacceptable and would increase the poverty of those concerned
No
Maternity, disability and pregnancy can all impact on speed of application and back dating and reduction to 1 month would adversely affect those with these characteristics.

Responses in relation to Weymouth & Portland

Yes I think the council should think about the negative impact on people under the Equality Act 2010, for example age and disability
Keep it neutral
Although I agree in principle with the proposed changes, primarily because of the streamlining effect with changes to housing benefit, I do think that extra consideration has to be given to those many claimants who are experiencing mental ill-health which is either necessitating their claim or is a result of their straitened circumstances and also to those who have learning difficulties which may impact on their ability to claim in a timely manner. Support services for people in difficulty are being reduced daily and the charities that are replacing state support don't always act in a fully coordinated manner (this is an observation, not a criticism: cuts to funding, data protection and the challenges of engaging with hard-to-reach families makes their task quite impossible). Whilst the rules should be changed in line with the proposals, staff should be given permission to backdate further if they think there is good reason to do so.
The council must not take any action under which those who are already the poorest become the hardest hit. The sick and disabled are always easy targets when there are discussions about cost-savings. To place further burdens upon this section of the population is utterly disgusting in this apparently civilised world in which we live.
Protected characteristics should be fairly accessed with regard to whether they have paid into UK tax systems prior to any claims
All disabled people that are not in any employment should be entitled to a rebate, because most of them would love to be able to work but they are discriminated against because of a disability.
council should protect families



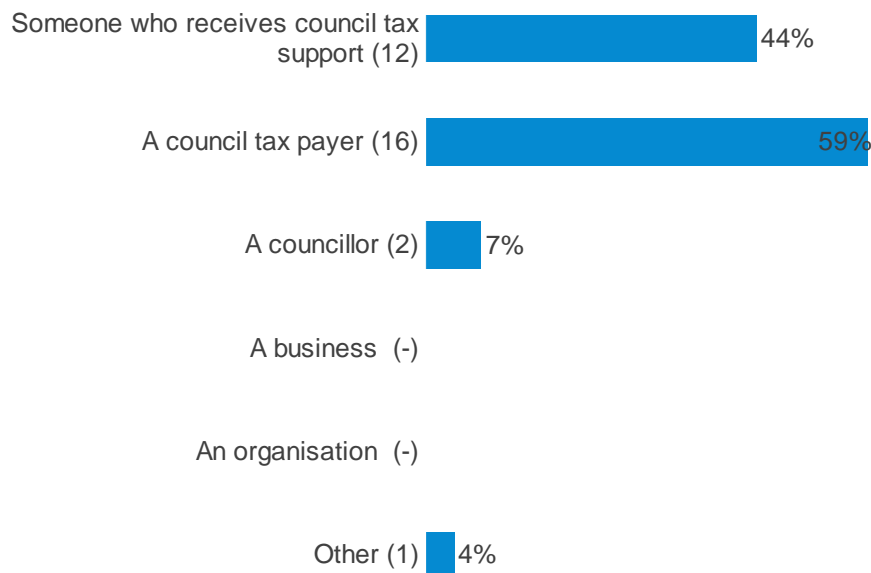
About You

Are you responding as....?

Purbeck

Of the 27 respondents who answered in relation to the Purbeck scheme, 59% were responding as a council tax payer, and 44% as someone who receives council tax support. Two councillors responded. The respondent who selected 'other', identified themselves as 'a pensioner'.

(27 responses)



West Dorset

Of the 82 respondents who answered in relation to the West Dorset scheme, 74% were responding as a council tax payer, and 24% as someone who receives council tax support. One councillor responded, and one respondent was representing an organisation. Of the two respondents who selected 'other', one identified themselves as a "holiday home owner living in Surrey, but responding in my personal capacity as a CAB volunteer", the other did not specify.

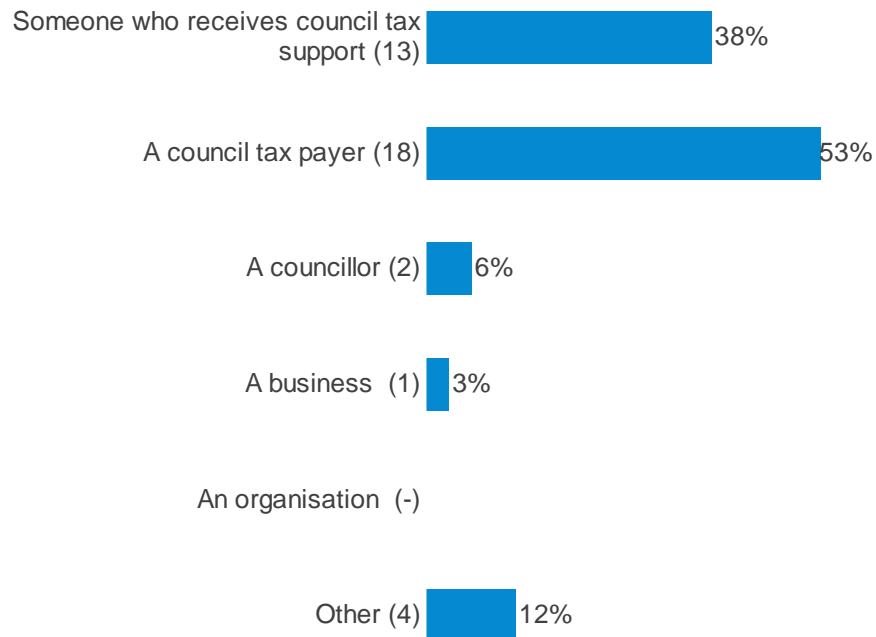
(82 responses)



Weymouth & Portland

Of the 34 respondents who answered in relation to the Weymouth & Portland scheme, 53% were responding as a council tax payer, and 38% as someone who receives council tax support. Two councillors responded, and one respondent was representing a business. Of the four respondents who selected 'other', one identified themselves as a "mentor", one as responding "on behalf of my brother" and the other two did not specify.

(34 responses)



Are you providing your organisation's official response or a professional view?

One respondent was providing an official response in relation to the West Dorset scheme, and one in relation to the Weymouth & Portland scheme. There were no official responses in relation to the Purbeck scheme, and no respondents were providing a professional view in relation to any of the schemes.

What is the name of your organisation/business?

The organisation providing the official response in relation to the West Dorset scheme was Dorchester & District Labour Party.

The business providing an official response in relation to the Weymouth & Portland scheme did not provide their name.

Which council area do you live in?

Responses in relation to the Purbeck scheme:

- 93% of respondents live in Purbeck District Council area
- 4% of respondents live in Weymouth & Portland Borough Council area
- 4% of respondents live in another area of Dorset



Responses in relation to the West Dorset scheme:

- 98% of respondents live in West Dorset District Council area
- 1% of respondents live in Purbeck District Council area
- 1% of respondents live in Weymouth & Portland Borough Council area

Responses in relation to the Weymouth & Portland scheme:

- 97% of respondents live in Weymouth & Portland Borough Council area
- 1% of respondents live in Purbeck District Council area

Please provide your postcode

Purbeck

Half of those responding in relation to the Purbeck scheme were from the BH20 postcode area, 23% from the BH19 postcode area, and 14% from the BH16 postcode area. The remaining 14% were from the DT2 and DT5 postcode areas.

Postcode area	Count	%
BH16	3	14
BH19	5	23
BH20	11	50
DT2	2	9
DT5	1	5

West Dorset

Just over a third of those responding in relation to the West Dorset scheme were from the DT2 postcode area, 28% from the DT1 postcode area, and 15% from the DT6 postcode area. The remaining 22% were from DT3, DT4, DT7, DT8 and DT9 postcode areas.

Postcode area	Count	%
DT1	19	28
DT2	23	34
DT3	6	9
DT4	1	1
DT6	10	15
DT7	1	1
DT8	3	4
DT9	5	7



Weymouth & Portland

Just under half of those responding in relation to the Weymouth & Portland scheme were from the DT4 postcode area, 33% from the DT3 postcode area, and 15% from the DT5 postcode area. One response was eligible.

Postcode area	Count	%
DT3	9	33
DT4	13	48
DT5	4	15
eligible	1	4

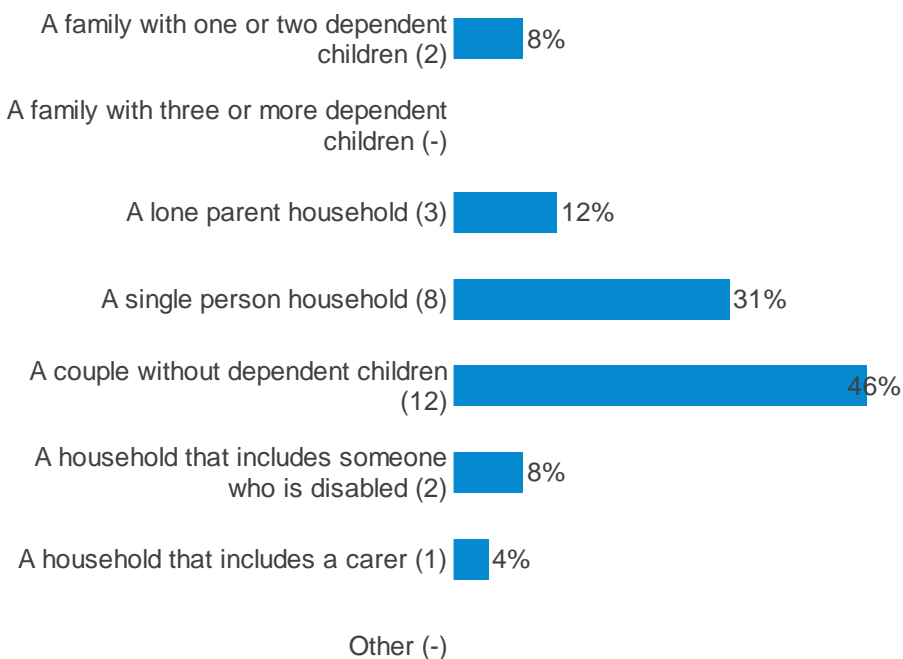
The following questions were optional.

Which of the following describes your household?

Purbeck

46% of those who responded in relation to the Purbeck scheme are couples without dependent children, 31% are from single person households, 12% are from lone parent households, 8% are from families with one or two dependent children and 8% are from households which include someone who is disabled. 4% are from households which include a carer.

(26 responses)

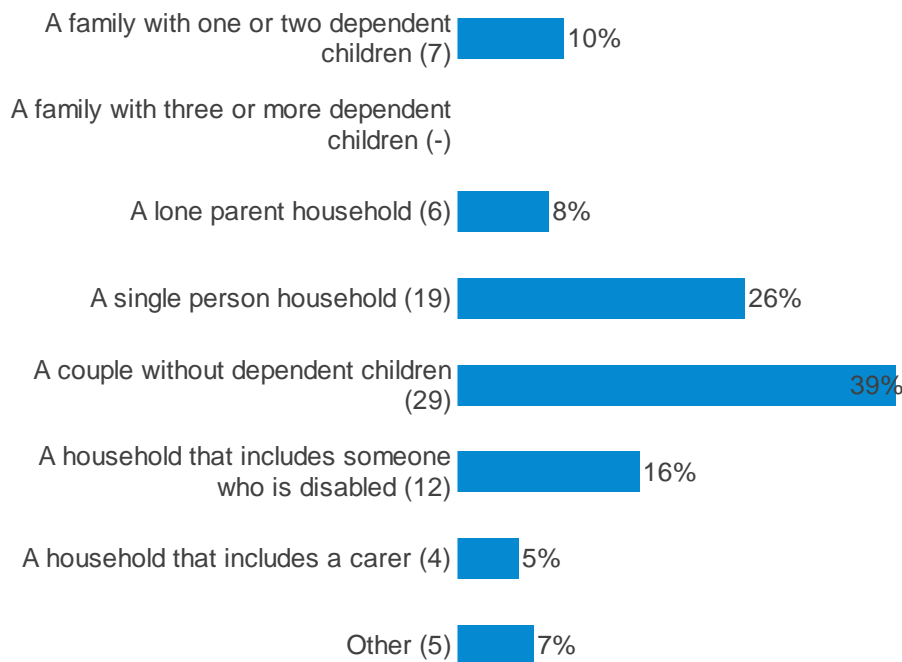


West Dorset

39% of those who responded in relation to the West Dorset scheme are couples without dependent children, 26% are from single person households, 16% are from households which include someone who is disabled, 10% are from families with one or two dependent children, 8% are from lone parent households, 5% are from households which include a carer.

A further 7% selected 'other', with three of these specifying as follows: 'mental health sufferer on JSA', 'single parent, with one dependent daughter over 18 at university', 'holiday home used for letting'.

(74 responses)

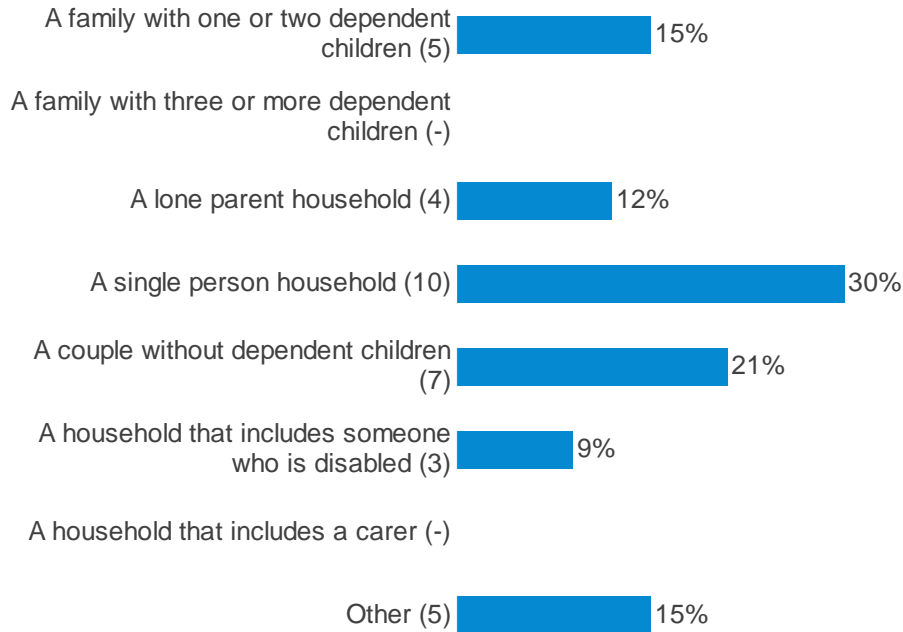


Weymouth & Portland

30% of those who responded in relation to the Weymouth & Portland scheme are from single person households, 21% are couples without dependent children, 15% are from families with one or two dependent children, 12% are from lone parent households, 9% are from households which include someone who is disabled, and 9% are from households which include a carer.

A further 15% selected 'other', with one specifying 'a household that included someone with learning difficulties and mental health issues'.

(33 responses)



Are you likely to be prospective parents (through pregnancy, paternity, adoption or surrogacy) on or after 1 April 2017 (proposal 1 may affect your benefit if you make a claim on or after this date)?

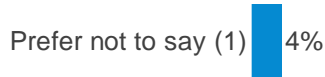
Purbeck

89% of respondents in relation to the Purbeck scheme do not consider themselves likely to be prospective parents on or after 1 April 2017. 8% say they are likely to be prospective parents at that time.

(26 responses)



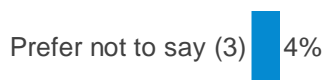
Don't know (-)



West Dorset

91% of respondents in relation to the West Dorset scheme do not consider themselves likely to be prospective parents on or after 1 April 2017. 3% say they are likely to be prospective parents at that time.

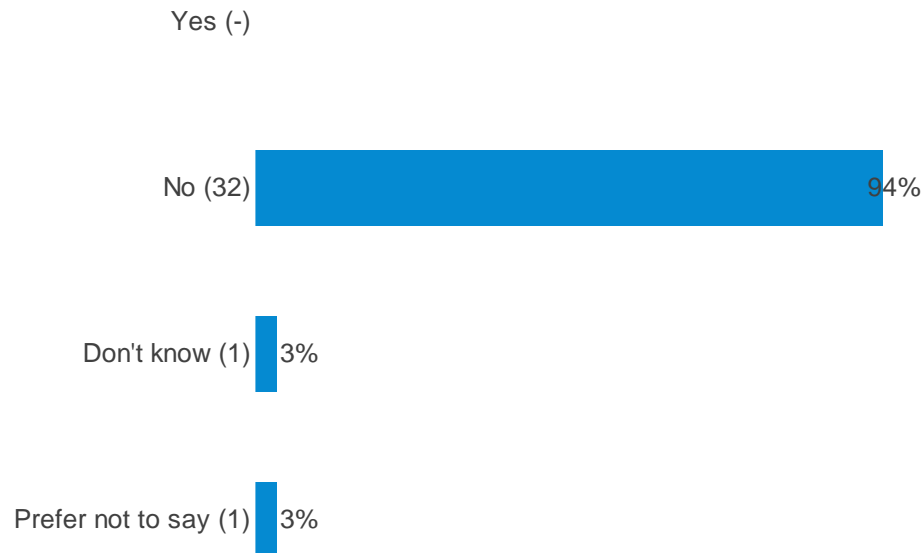
(74 responses)



Weymouth & Portland

91% of respondents in relation to the Weymouth & Portland scheme do not consider themselves likely to be prospective parents on or after 1 April 2017. 3% say they are likely to be prospective parents at that time.

(34 responses)

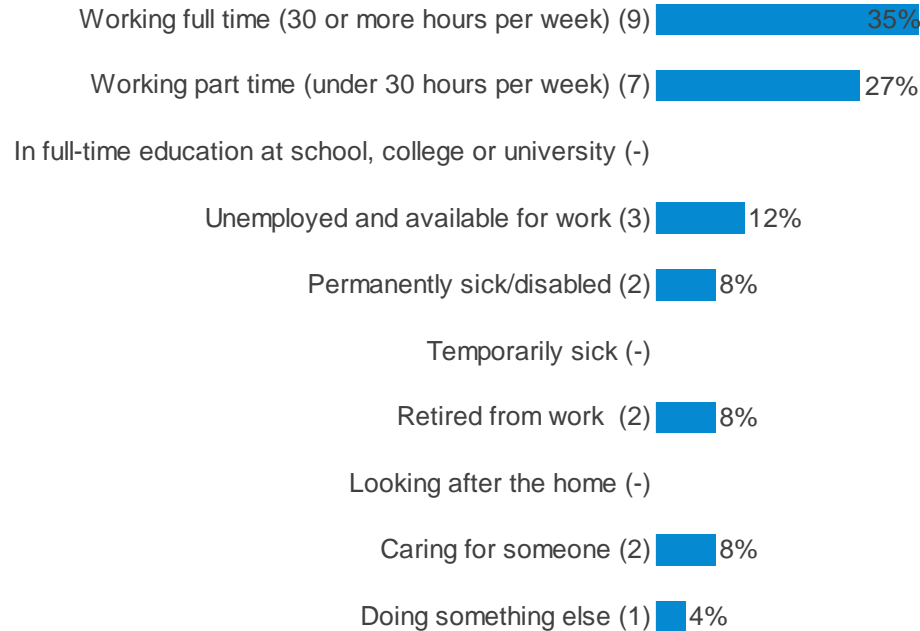


Which of these activities best describes what you are doing at present?

Purbeck

35% of those responding in relation to the Purbeck scheme are working full time, 27% are working part time, 12% are unemployed and available for work, 8% are permanently sick or disabled, 8% are retired, 8% are caring for someone and 4% are doing something else. This respondent specified 'Anglican Mon stipendiary priest'.

(26 responses)



West Dorset

37% of those responding in relation to the West Dorset scheme are working full time, 28% are retired from work, 15% are working part time, 11% are permanently sick or disabled, 3% are unemployed and available for work, 1% are looking after the home, 1% are caring for someone, 1% are temporarily sick and 3% are doing something else. Two of the three respondents 'doing something else', specified 'volunteering 18hrs weekly' and 'volunteering and working as a writer'.

(75 responses)

Working full time (30 or more hours per week) (28) 37%

Working part time (under 30 hours per week) (11) 15%

In full-time education at school, college or university (-)

Unemployed and available for work (2) 3%

Permanently sick/disabled (8) 11%

Temporarily sick (1) 1%

Retired from work (21) 28%

Looking after the home (1) 1%

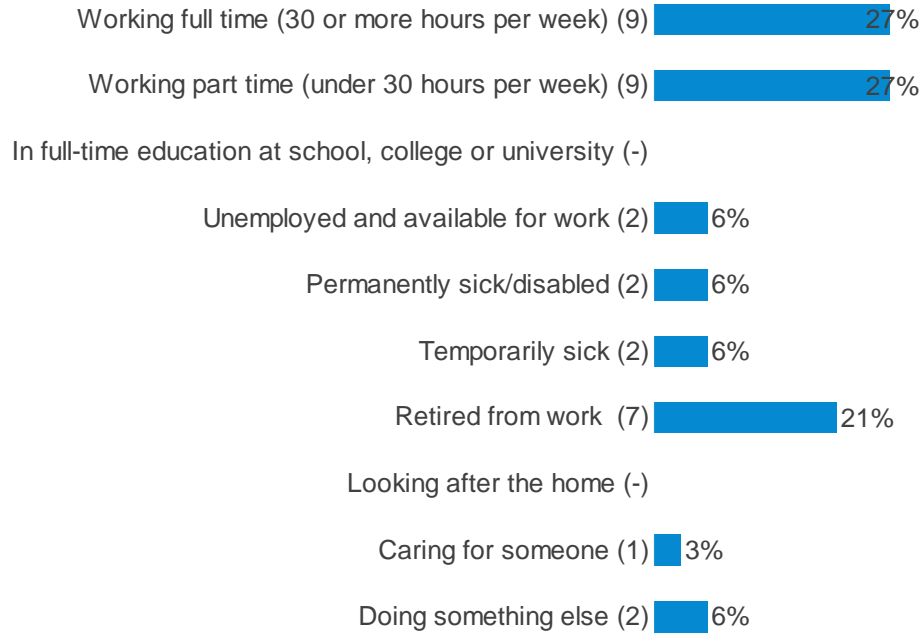
Caring for someone (1) 1%

Doing something else (2) 3%

Weymouth & Portland

27% of those responding in relation to the Weymouth & Portland scheme are working full time, 27% are working part time, 21% are retired from work, 6% are permanently sick or disabled, 6% are unemployed and available for work, 6% are temporarily sick, 3% are caring for someone, and 6% are doing something else. One of the respondents 'doing something else' specified 'self employed pressure cleaner/lawn mower not getting much work in this area'.

(34 responses)

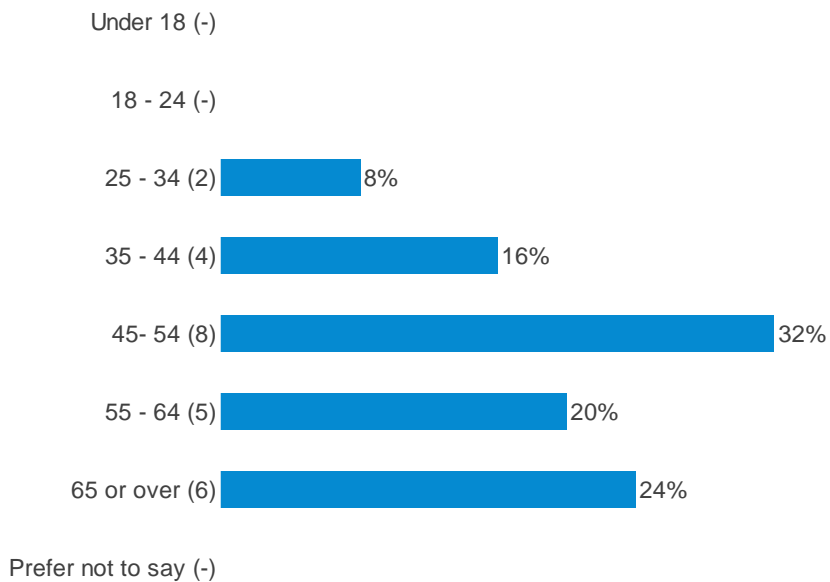


Which age group do you belong to?

Purbeck

The majority (76%) of respondents in relation to Purbeck are aged 45 or over.

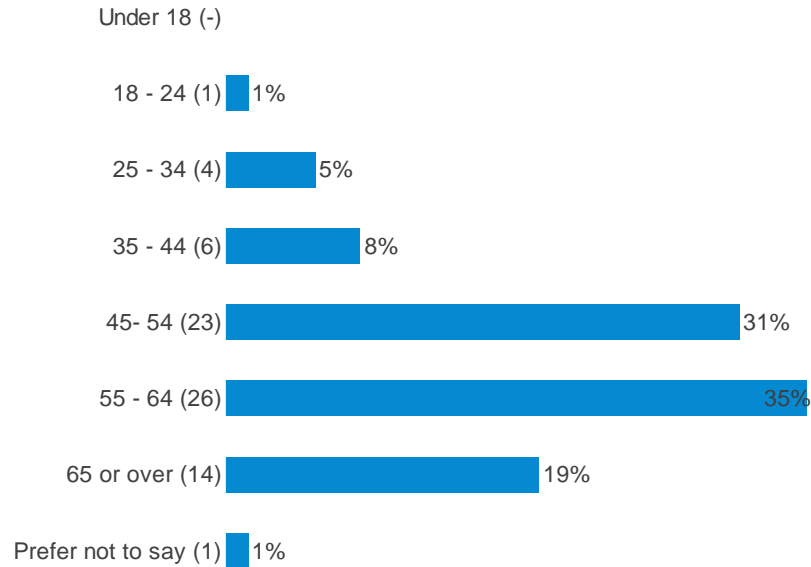
(25 responses)



West Dorset

The majority (85%) of respondents in relation to West Dorset are aged 45 or over.

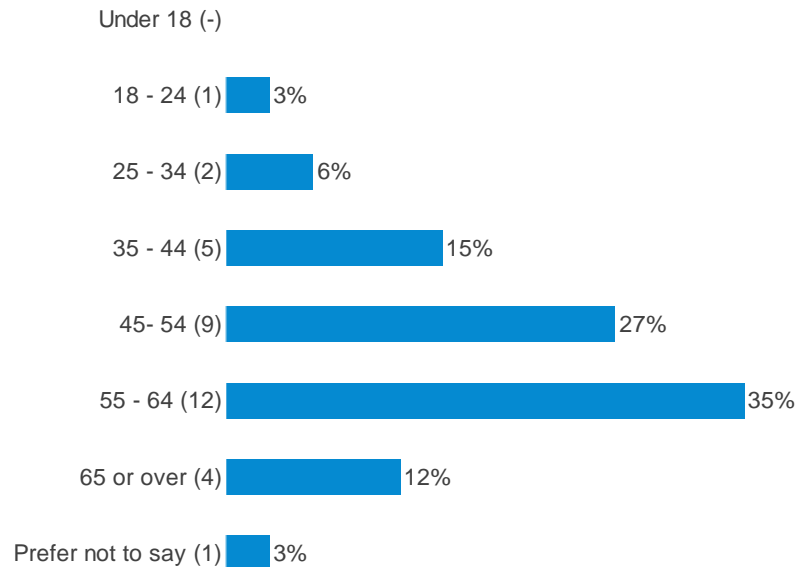
(75 responses)



Weymouth & Portland

The majority (74%) of respondents in relation to Weymouth & Portland are aged 45 or over.

(34 responses)

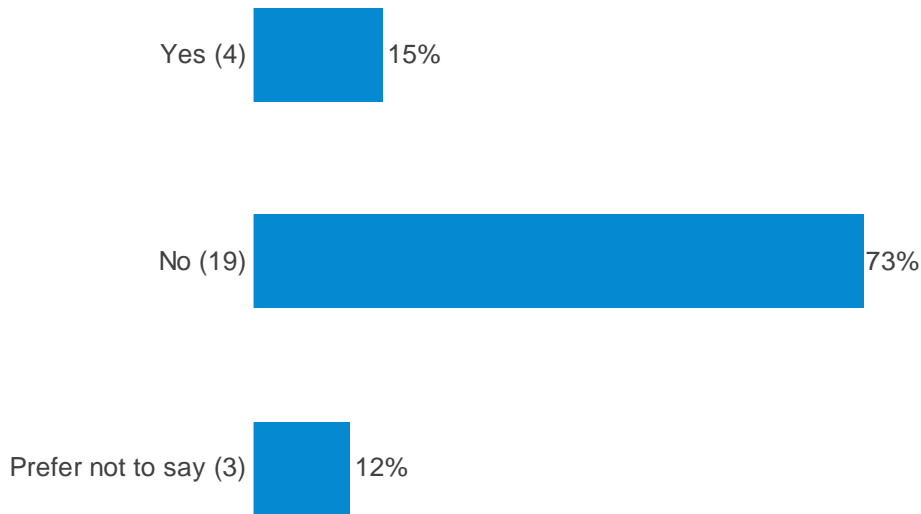


The Equality Act 2010 describes a person as disabled if they have a longstanding physical or mental condition that has lasted, or is likely to last 12 months; and this condition has a substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. People with some conditions (cancer, multiple sclerosis and HIV/AIDS for example) are considered to be disabled from the point that they are diagnosed. Do you consider yourself to be disabled as set out in the Equality Act 2010?

Purbeck

15% of respondents in relation to the Purbeck scheme consider themselves to be disabled.

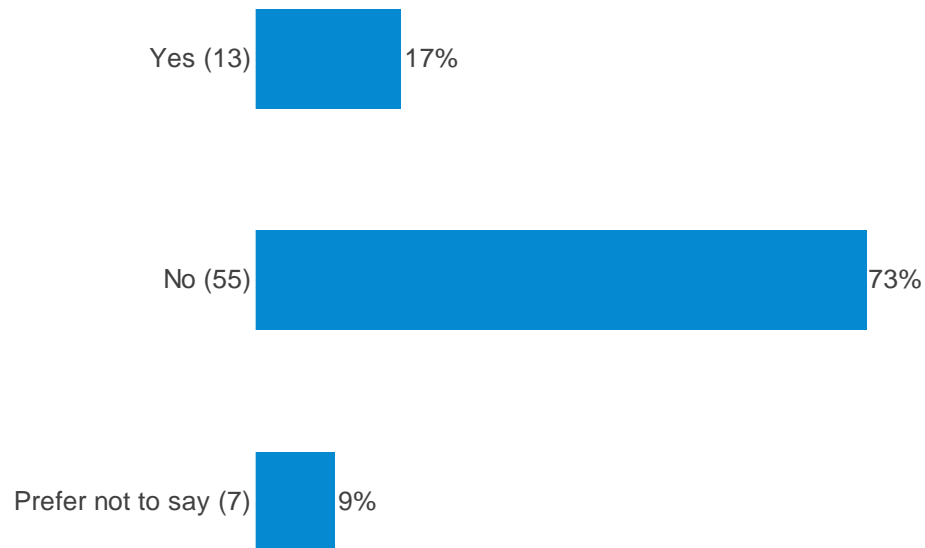
(26 responses)



West Dorset

17% of respondents in relation to the West Dorset scheme consider themselves to be disabled.

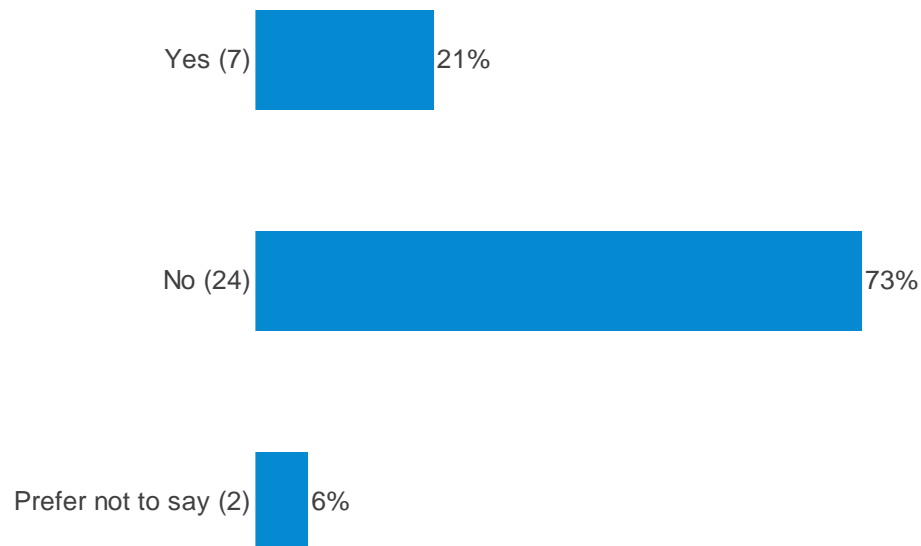
(75 responses)



Weymouth & Portland

21% of respondents in relation to the Weymouth & Portland scheme consider themselves to be disabled.

(33 responses)



If yes, please tell us which type of impairment applies to you. You may have more than one type of impairment, so please select all the impairments that apply to you.

Purbeck

Of those responding in relation to the Purbeck scheme who consider themselves to be disabled, two report having a physical disability, one having a long standing illness or health condition, one having a mental health condition and one having a sensory impairment (hearing, sight or both).

West Dorset

Of those responding in relation to the West Dorset scheme who consider themselves to be disabled, seven report having a long standing illness or health condition, five having a physical disability, four having a mental health condition, three having a sensory impairment (hearing, sight or both), and one having a learning disability/difficulty.

Weymouth & Portland

Of those responding in relation to the Weymouth & Portland scheme who consider themselves to be disabled, five report having a long standing illness or health condition, two having a mental health condition, two having a sensory impairment (hearing, sight or both), and one having a physical disability.

