

Local Council Tax Support Scheme Consultation 2021

Summary of findings – Appendix 3
Ian Savigar, Interim Revenue & Benefit Officer



Walsall Council

PROUD OF OUR PAST OUR PRESENT AND FOR OUR FUTURE

Background and methodology

At September cabinet it was agreed that we would consult upon a new local council tax reduction (LCTR) scheme to be introduced from April 2022.

The principal of the changes are

- to create an income banded discount instead of a benefit award.
- making it simpler to understand and to administer
- making it easier for customers to budget

The consultation sought the views of:

- 5,000 current LCTR claimants
- 5,000 council tax payers not in receipt of LCTR
- Online responses from the general public
- Providers of support and other key stakeholders.
- Major Preceptors
- Staff



Background and methodology

Consultation began on 1st October 2021. with a closing date of the 30th November 2021

Consultation with current claimants and council tax payers

5,000 randomly selected claimants, including working age and pensioners as well as 5,000 non claimants were sent information about the consultation, along with a paper questionnaire to complete and return. The questionnaire contained questions about each proposed change to the current scheme.

Consultation with general public, providers and key stakeholders

Anyone not currently in receipt of care and support as well as key stakeholders could have their say via an online questionnaire (alternative formats available). A wide range of key stakeholders (internal and external) attended a workshop about the proposals..

Consultation with Major Preceptors

Letters were sent to Finance Officers at the Police & Fire authority along with details of the proposals and they were asked to comment.

Background and methodology

The consultation sought to gather feedback on;

- A proposed change to LCTR
- Comments on each aspect of the proposed changes

- A summary of responses is contained in this document and a full copy of all responses can be made available on request

Alternative formats were made available on request as well as support given to those who needed help to respond. Easy read versions of the information and questionnaires were also made available as well as information in BSL.

The consultation was publicised via a news release, via social media and other community networks. Information was available on a dedicated webpage

Responses

By the closing date (30-11-2021) the following number of responses to questionnaires and easy read versions had been received;

- **Consultation with current LCTR claimants**
 - 409 respondents

- **Consultation with Council Tax payers**
 - 522 respondents

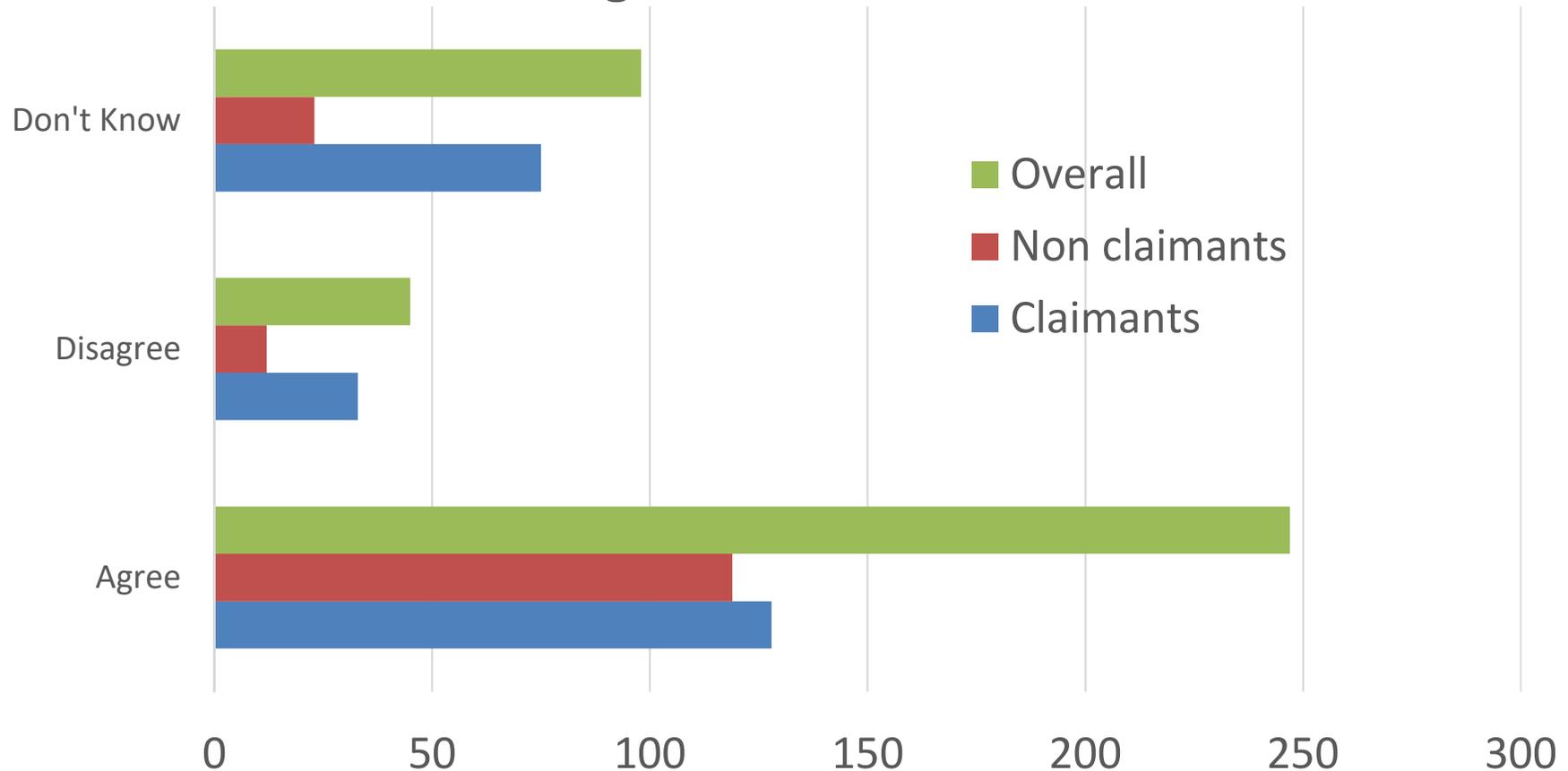
- **Consultation with providers and key stakeholders**
 - Workshop discussion

- **Consultation with major preceptors**
 - Neither had any comments on the proposals



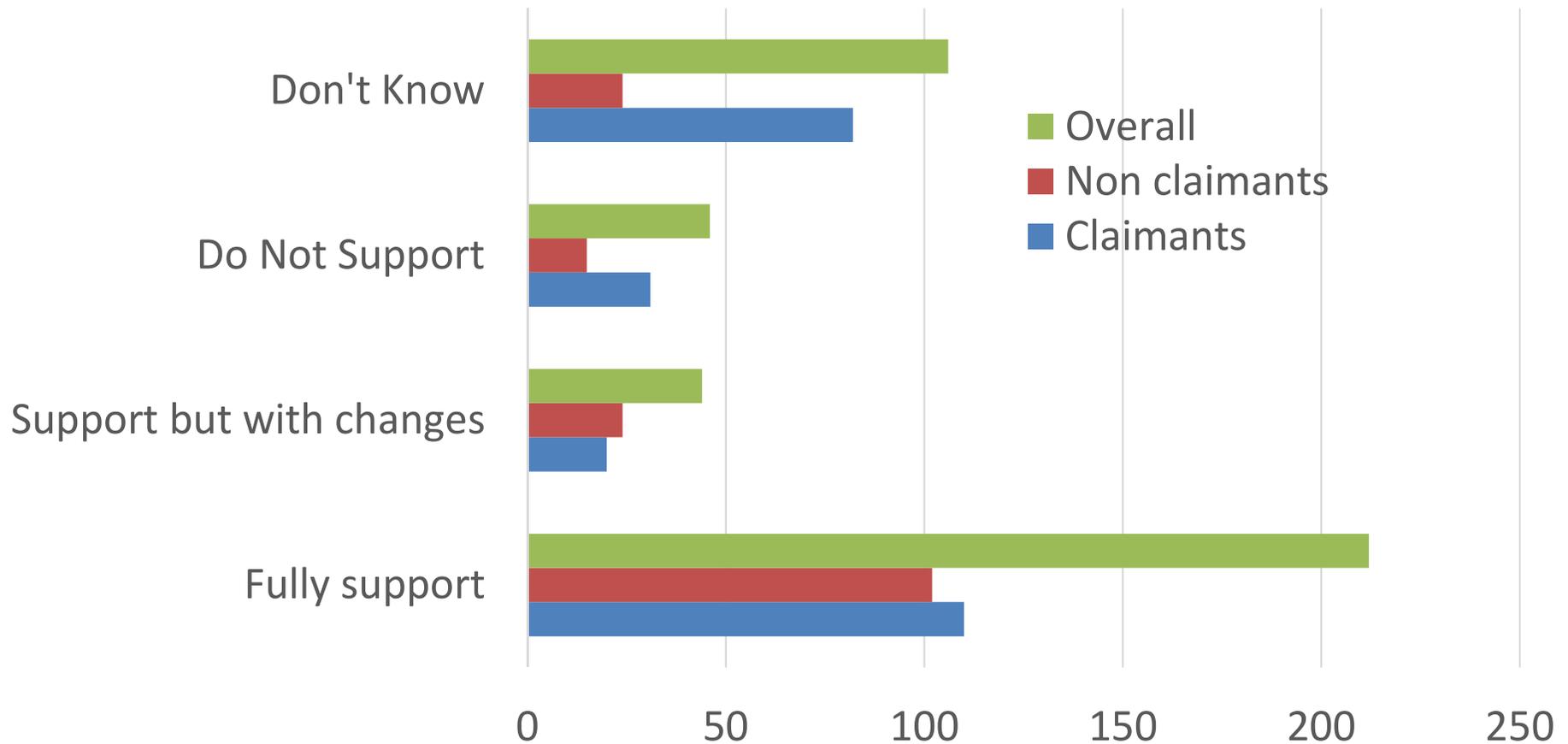
Findings: All Respondents

Do you agree or disagree that the council should make changes to the LCTR scheme?



Findings: Current Claimants

Do you support the council's proposal to introduce an income based banded discount scheme as outlined?



Claimants: Why do you say this?

Less complicated system

I don't understand it

Not Really sure how its all worked out

Current system is too complicated

because of small variations in my wages my council tax bill is constantly amended. it's very inconvenient and means i cannot get on with Direct Debit.

it be better for people to understand it more than before

why change something that doesn't seem to be broken

Any simplification of beauracratic paper work is beneficial

the present system seems to work for m

to help you to know how much you have to pay so you can manage your money better



Non Claimants: Why do you say this?

from a brief look at the current scheme it looks quite complicated

changes look good

People on low income should pay less

The Taxes gone up .The people get paid still not enough to cover utility bill

its unfair for one person to be working and paying council tax for 2 people in the house, other not working. council tax should be based on what you earn not house size

Better understanding through simplification has to be good as does the cost saving element

Makes it simple and easy for everyone

A simplified, more efficient system

Have no idea how Council Tax works

Do not know enough of Council Tax to opinion



Comments on: Council tax discount would be based on the total net income of the applicant and their partner (net income is reduced in some circumstances)

Claimant Responses fell into the following themes with the vast majority of comments in favour of the proposal.

It should be on the number of occupants

Agreed

i strongly agree

Too many penalties for working hard and earning a living

This would make my life and the life of others impossible losing money for food / Heating ETC

if your going to include income you also need to include other disability and pensions income, not just workers



Comments on: Council tax discount would be based on the total net income of the applicant and their partner (net income is reduced in some circumstances)

Non Claimant Responses were more critical of this proposal, with a number of references to pensioners who are not impacted by these proposals

No account taken of others income within the house

Yes

net income can vary over the year

non dependent workers in a house should have full income assessed as householder may have several high earning children in a house where householder is on a low income

why should working family's pay for those who don't work to have same level of service

The bands are ridiculous why not in round figures? Working to pence seems extremely petty



Comments on: The maximum support available (reduction in council tax) would be capped at 75%

Claimant Responses are again largely supporting of the 75% maximum award although some do consider it should be 100% and there is concern about peoples ability to afford basics

i think this is a fair capped percentage

i agree

Should be 100% discount

This means everyone on very low income would pay 25% irrelevant of disability etc

The council are hitting the poorer people. if they are only getting £94.96 per week

yes everyone of working age should contribute somethin



Comments on: The maximum support available (reduction in council tax) would be capped at 75%

Non Claimant Responses are similar to those of claimants with most being in favour of the maximum award suggested.

100% discount for the severely disabled as how

Agreed

yes that seems fair

This cap or any cap should be applied equally for the residents regardless of their benefits of disability. working class deserve more

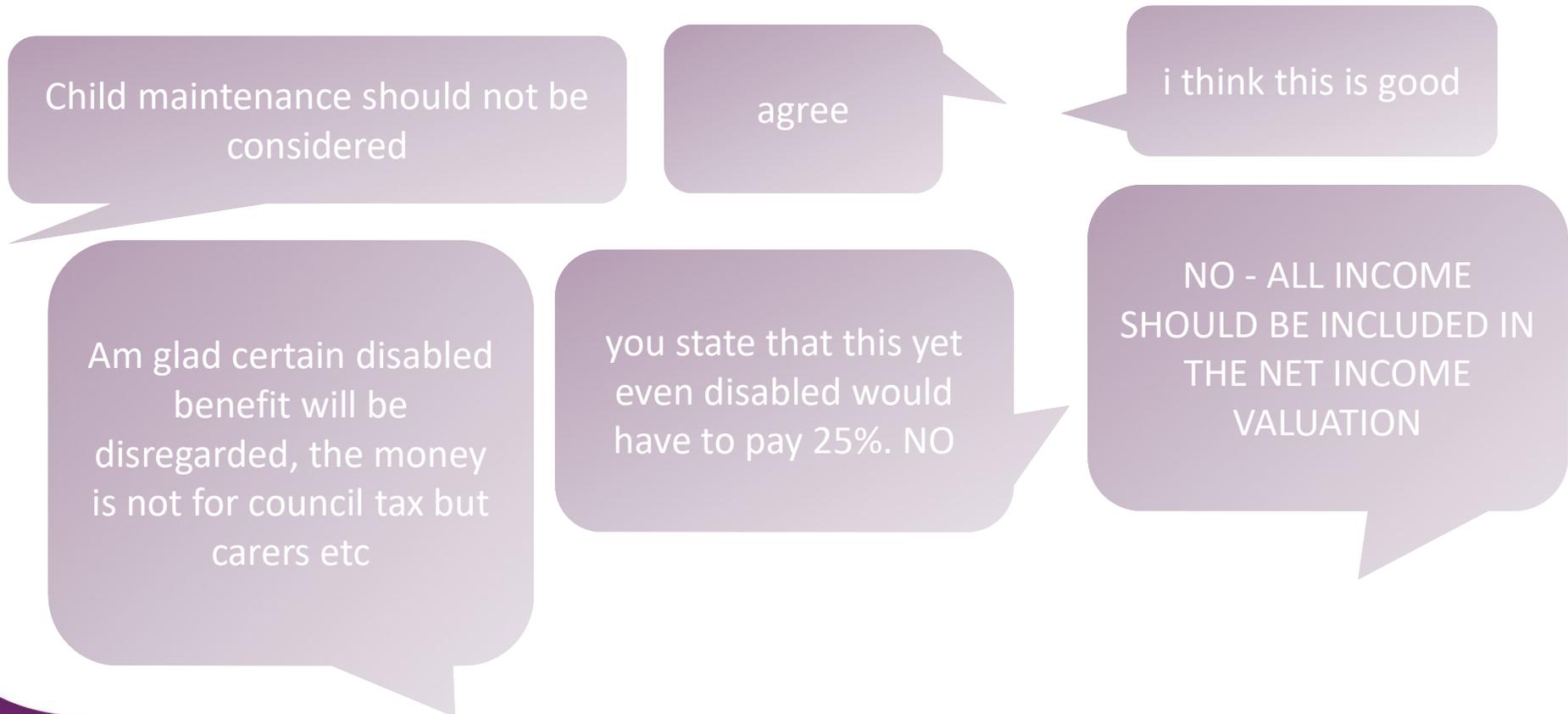
Seems reasonable but it feels like there would be some people who would struggle (refugees, asylum seekers etc)

I don't understand the current system but I would be against any household with a low income seeing any increase of Council Tax



Comments on: As at present certain disability benefits and child benefit would be disregarded from total net income. Child maintenance will also not be taken into account when calculating total net income

Claimant Responses are again largely supportive with most commentators agreeing with the statement although there was some disagreement.



Comments on: As at present certain disability benefits and child benefit would be disregarded from total net income. Child maintenance will also not be taken into account when calculating total net income

Non Claimant Responses are again similar to those of the claimants surveyed with most in agreement with the proposed disregards.



Comments on: Applicants receiving certain benefits (Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance, Employment and support allowance), will automatically receive a maximum discount of 75% (Band 1)

Claimant Responses mostly supportive, a number of comments requesting further support for disabled people

yes i do support this one 75% capped

Agree

that would be practical they wouldn't have to apply themselves

very glad as long as its not more that what i'm paying now.

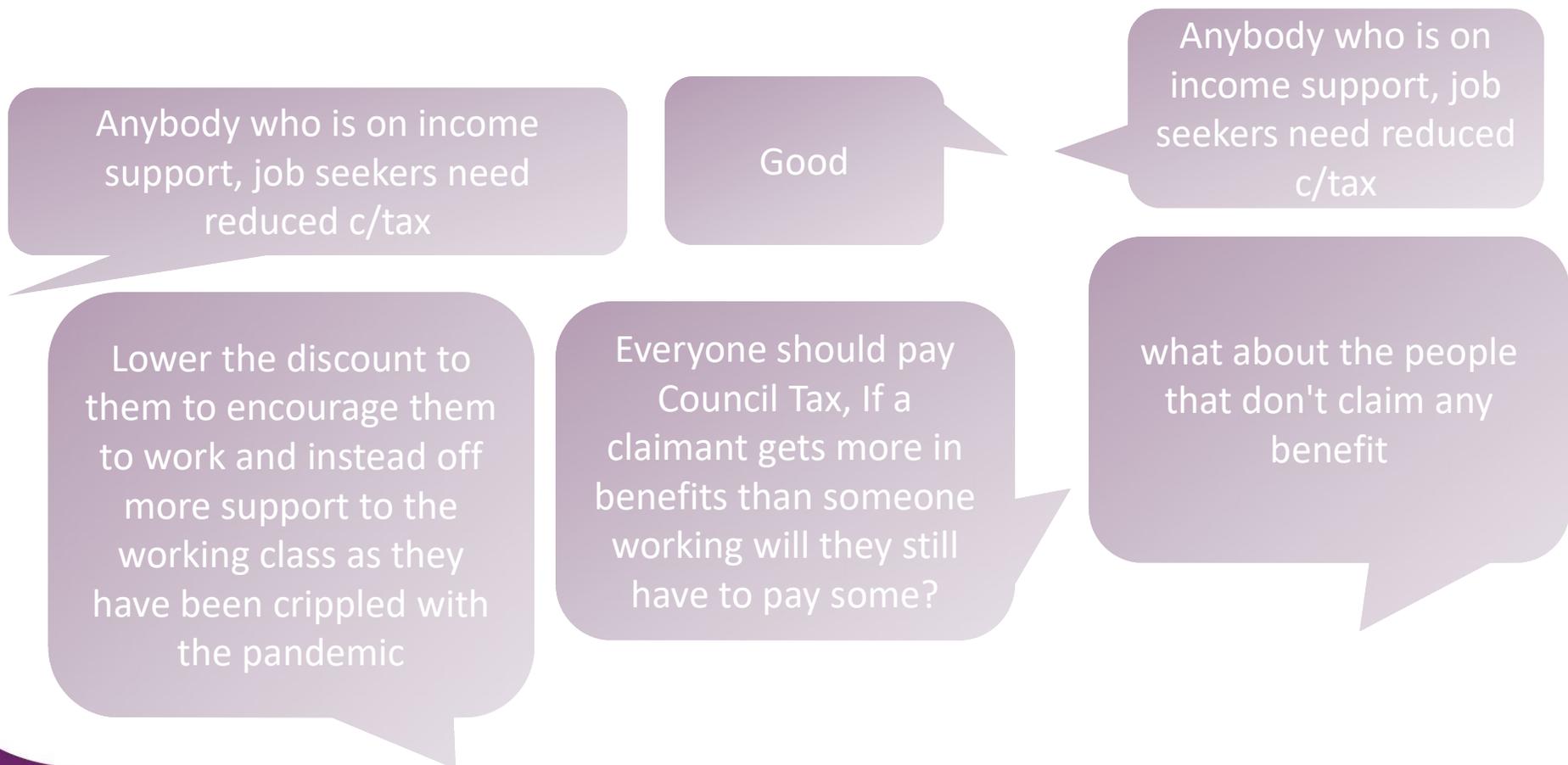
good because their earning less, so any discount helps them to spend more

75% means i would pay more as a disabled person



Comments on: Applicants receiving certain benefits (Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance, Employment and support allowance), will automatically receive a maximum discount of 75% (Band 1

Non Claimant Responses are a little less supportive of this proposal.



Comments on: Applicants not in receipt of certain employment benefits, and where their total net income is above the levels specified in band 1 would be awarded the appropriate discount according to bands 2, 3, 4 & 5

Claimant Responses are again mainly supportive but concerns raised about the awards at this level being enough to meet basic expenditure

ok if income can feed and heat property

agree

that would be fair

that would be appropriate if not exceeding the amount they have to pay now

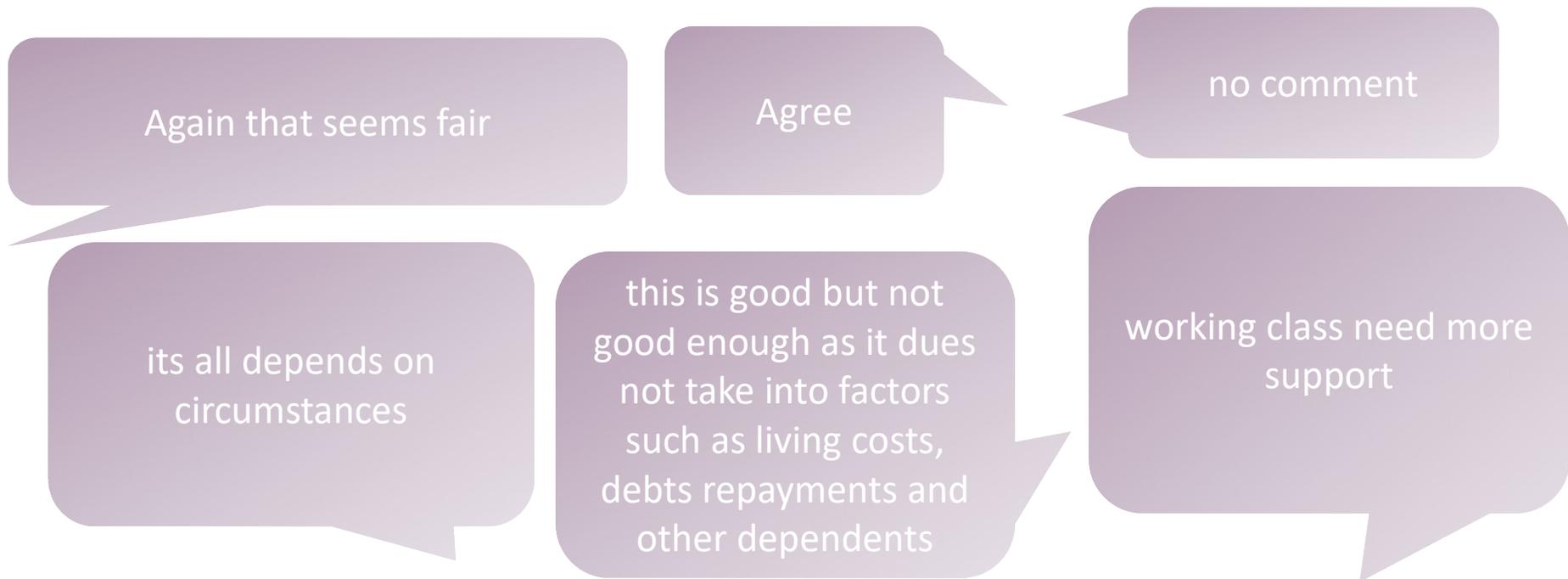
This will help the working class to spend more in the economy

It should depend on their circumstances if they can afford to pay it



Comments on: Applicants not in receipt of certain employment benefits, and where their total net income is above the levels specified in band 1 would be awarded the appropriate discount according to bands 2, 3, 4 & 5

Non Claimant Responses were limited on this question although the majority were in support of the proposal, there were some responses from pensioners who are not impacted by this.



Comments on: A maximum of 2 dependant children would be taken into account when calculating the discount by the variation in the income bands (dependant child being someone for whom child benefit is normally applicable)

Claimant Responses to this question were supportive but there were also a number of responses which did not think this was fair.

with kids have people struggling especially during the pandemic

Agree

Sounds fair

Disagree, what if a person / couple has triplet, Quads ETC, More children means more cost to the household. they already lose family allowance after 2 children. Your proposal would cause more hardship

It should be more than 2 children

That's not fair. All children should be taken into consideration



Comments on: A maximum of 2 dependant children would be taken into account when calculating the discount by the variation in the income bands (dependant child being someone for whom child benefit is normally applicable)

Non Claimant Responses comments were around 60 – 40 in favour of this, with a number of detailed comments as reflected below.

i think this is fair, others may disagree

Agree

the council tax system should be fair for al

all children should be included as child poverty is on the rise and some children go to bed hungry

Families need help but if they chose to have more children they should be willing to support them

yes parents should not use more children for financial reasons e.g Larger House, more money



Comments on: Applicants in paid employment would have £25 disregarded from their net income

Claimant Responses were again mixed on this with some being confused as to the purpose of this being to encourage people back in to work.

£25 is not enough should be almost £50

Not sure

i agree with that

Why? All earned income should be cancelled

it help working people who want wage increase that help people to save

depends on wages they receive



Comments on: Applicants in paid employment would have £25 disregarded from their net income

Non Claimant Responses were minimal to this question with most being in favour, a number questioned why it was not higher, others thought no discount should be awarded.

Maybe increase to encourage employment

yes

WOW - £25 big Deal

i presume this is to improve the calculations somehow, it seems an odd figure!

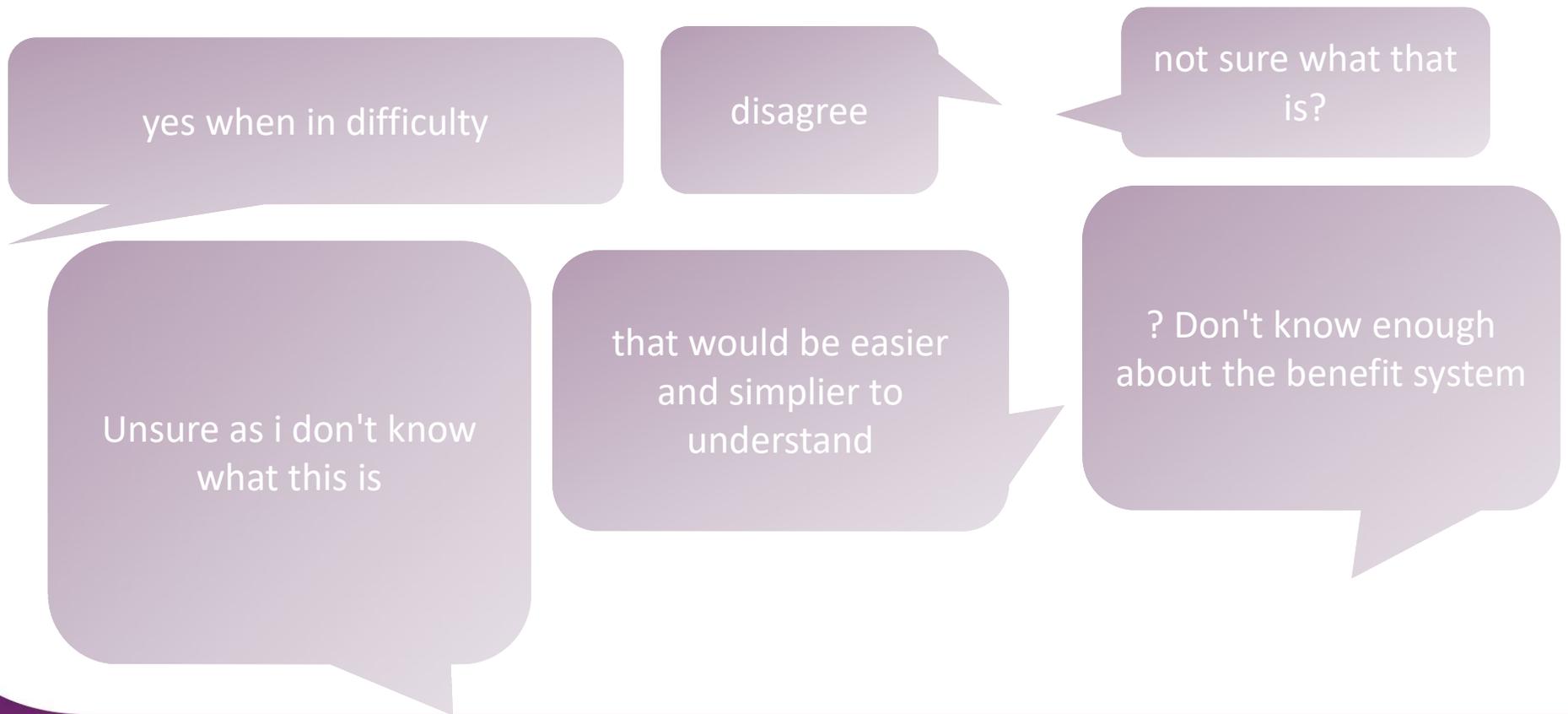
yes that seems alright

should be all of their income NOT disregarded



Comments on: The extended payment provision, for those in receipt of Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance, Employment and support allowance would be removed as they move on to Universal Credit

Claimant Responses were limited, with a mixed response as detailed below.



Comments on: The extended payment provision, for those in receipt of Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance, Employment and support allowance would be removed as they move on to Universal Credit

Non Claimant Responses were similar to those of claimants with majority in favour

yes that seems fair

Accept

no comment

If thats how this (UC) benefit is worked out, then ok. So they can manage their costs.

Fair

I do not support those who are on benefits



Comments on: Changes and variations in circumstances / income would be calculated on a daily basis rather than weekly

Claimant Responses were limited and largely supportive, this is more of an administrative change than anything that will have an impact on claimants

Sounds fair

I agree to that

not sure

Good that good for those who work hard in daily basis taking long hours

Disagree this would mean more administration not less and end up with more charges being made to cover cost!

Dont really know if thats a better option?



Comments on: Changes and variations in circumstances / income would be calculated on a daily basis rather than weekly

Non Claimant Responses similar to claimants, this should not impact claimants and is a technical change

Good - As a zero hour contract employee, i don't always get work so sometime 2 weeks no work no pay

Good idea

Agree

Daily basis will create more unnecessary red tape and people will fall into debt

Seems like it could lead to confusion and be hard to know what discount you would get

Yes as a system is now in place to verify this



Comments on: Consider backdating claims up to 12 months where a good reason is provided

Claimant Responses are largely supportive of this proposal providing good cause is proven

yes if good reason is provided

Agree

yes because some people may have a claim their are right

Only if a good reason is given

that should be helpful for poor people, they would get a big amount of money at the start

Unsure where this comes from, but would expect 6 months to be sufficient

Comments on: Consider backdating claims up to 12 months where a good reason is provided

Non Claimant Responses are largely in support of this proposal with a few considering the period to be too long

too vague

agreed

accept

can't think of anything that would qualify as a good reason - may be 3 months in exceptional circumstances

No.. unless claim was made 12 months prior and was valid only get back pay from date of claim

What would be a good reason? 12 months seems over generous



Comments on: Continue to protect disabled persons by not taking into account certain disability benefits in the calculation of total net income and provide a further income disregard of £45 per week where either the applicant, partner or a dependant is in receipt of certain disability benefits

Claimant Responses are again largely in agreement although there were a few comments suggesting disabled income is higher than working people.

Any money coming in should be calculated whether earned or given

Agree

That's fair

yes but please don't take a lot of disabled person money

Agree but think any one disabled to the extent that they are on full benefit and unable to earn an income should be exempt.

No. some of them have more money a week than people working



Comments on: Continue to protect disabled persons by not taking into account certain disability benefits in the calculation of total net income and provide a further income disregard of £45 per week where either the applicant, partner or a dependant is in receipt of certain disability benefits

Non Claimant Responses are again similar to claimants views with most supporting this proposal.

Yes disabled people should be protected

i agree

That seems fair

No disability, PIPs should be means tested as it isn't now!! All income into a household should be classed as household income

There benefits should be applied to people with children as they require more support

'This will be good and help out take vulnerable and disabled who cant work or are on certain benefits



Comments on: Protecting carers by not taking into account Carer's Allowance and the support component of Employment and Support Allowance in the calculation of total net income

Claimant Responses are unanimously in favour of this proposal

that would be fair as long as the person concerned needed it

AGREE

i strongly agree

agreed, exempt where the carer is an adult living within a household that is not exempt as this is in effect unearned income if the carer also has any paid employment.

yes because they help us by taking care of the elderly and those with disabilities

Why they already have privileges and some are quite well off money wise

Comments on: Protecting carers by not taking into account Carer's Allowance and the support component of Employment and Support Allowance in the calculation of total net income

Non Claimant Responses are in line with claimants and supportive

accept

seems fair

yes i agree with that

Good! if they are working to do it themselves and not make NHS carers do it or put people in care homes then this helps cut costs / help them out more

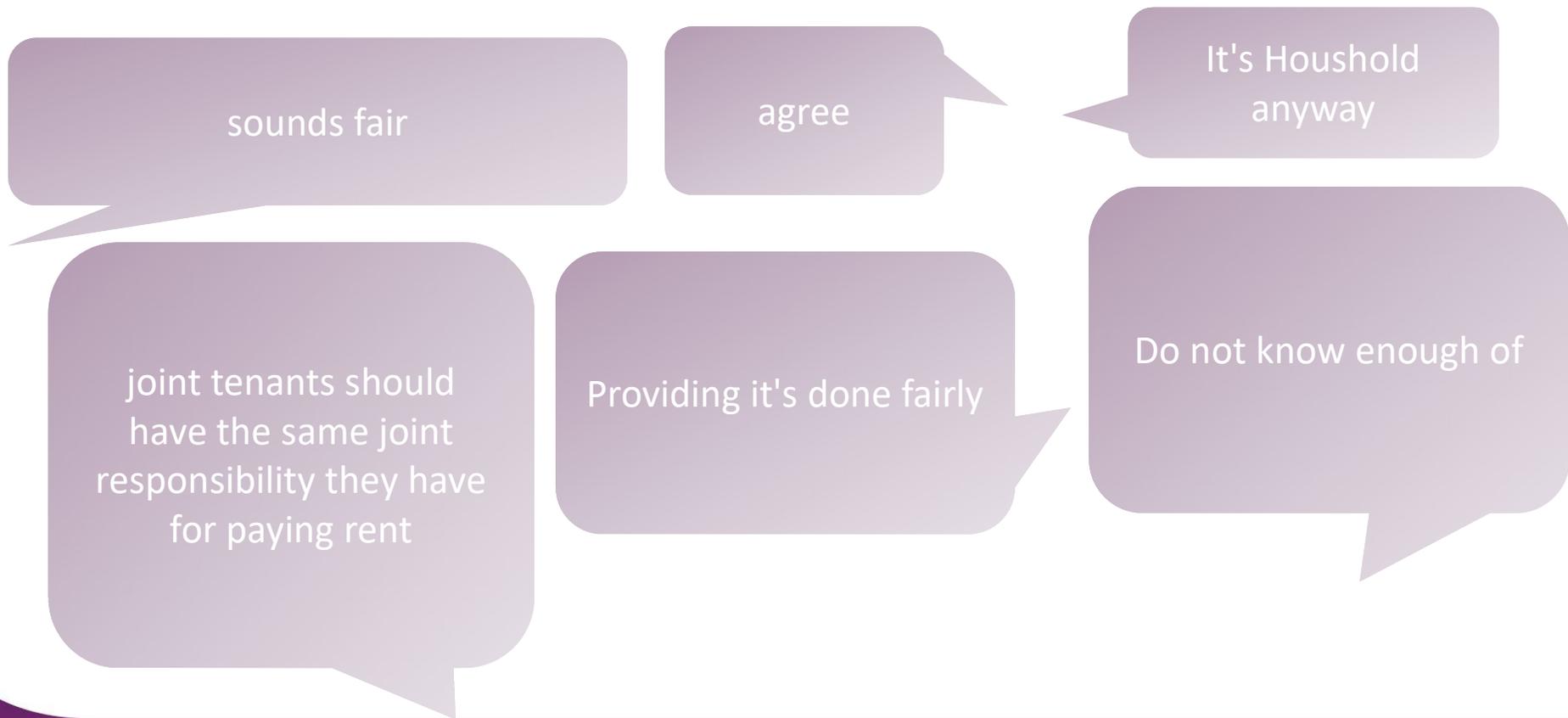
Yes. The most important thing is to protect the low income and unemployed people so that they can alleviate their burdens

This is not fair on the working class with young children as they are struggling



Comments on: Households with joint tenants would have any award calculated based upon their situation and share of the council tax liability

Claimant Responses are in agreement with this proposal



Comments on: Households with joint tenants would have any award calculated based upon their situation and share of the council tax liability

Non Claimant Responses are in favour of this proposal, there were some concerns about administration but this will not be an issue.

Rebate should take into account others in household eg adult relations or tenants

Agree

Good idea

Joint tenants should jointly liable to pay council tax as the same way children living at home with parents have their income calculated

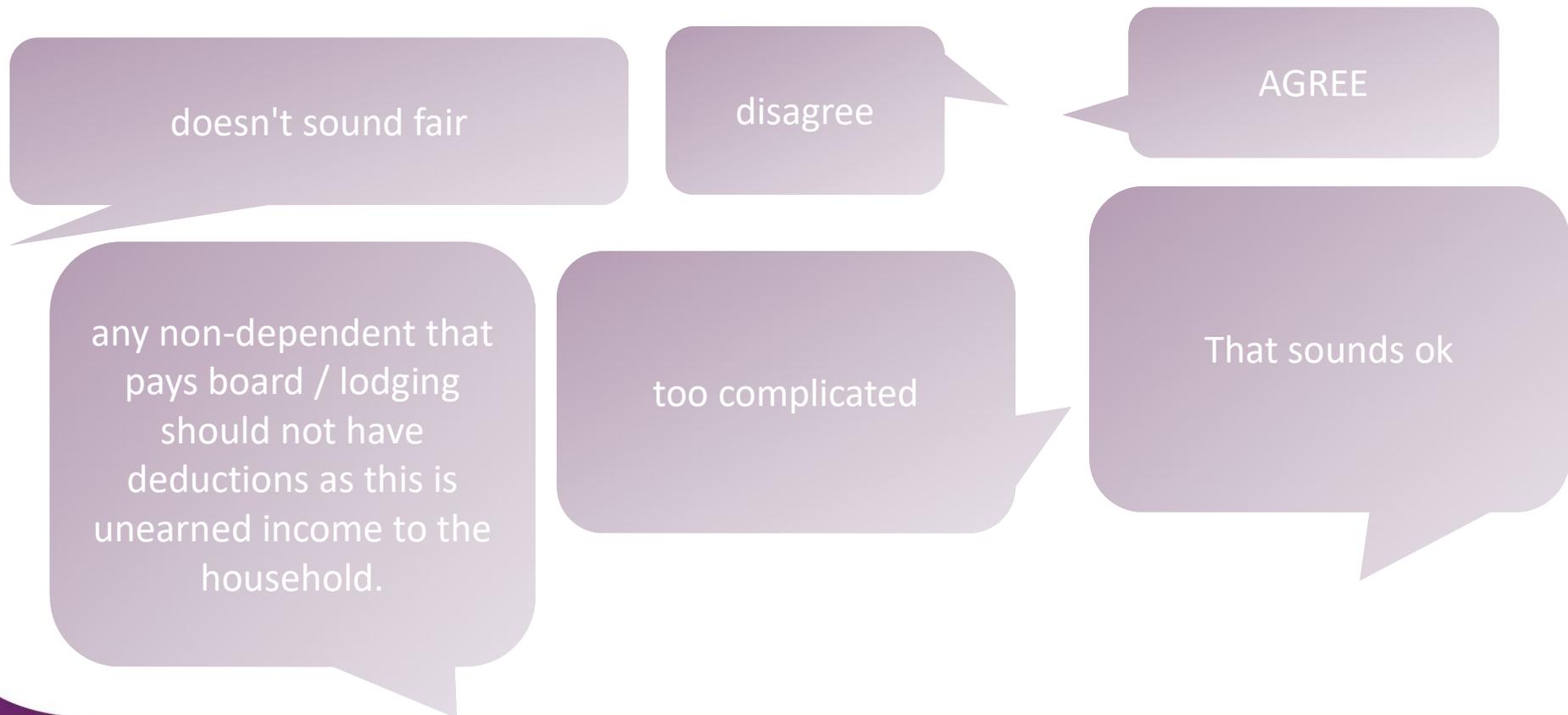
it should be made fairer

Good why shouldn't they all have to a pay fair share



Comments on: Where a non-dependant lives in the household (an adult living in the property that is not liable to Council Tax), a flat rate £10 per week deduction would be made from any entitlement (the income band award) where they are in work. If the nondependant is not in work, a deduction of £5 per week will be ma

Claimant Responses are mixed on this issue with a 50 – 50 split between agree and disagree.



Comments on: Where a non-dependant lives in the household (an adult living in the property that is not liable to Council Tax), a flat rate £10 per week deduction would be made from any entitlement (the income band award) where they are in work. If the nondependant is not in work, a deduction of £5 per week will be ma

Non Claimant Responses are again similar to those of the claimants with a split between agree and disagree.

Agree

no

yes that seem right

Not enough reduction for non-working non dependents - more stress on main payer to cover kids costs

This should be unnecessary if total household income were taken into account

surely a non-dependent should be in a position to contribute to the household budget £10 seems a low figure

Do you have any other comments or alternative options for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme?

Non Claimant Responses are mainly in two camps (1) Keep it as it is (2) Make it simple. There are a number of comments relating to disability and a desire to be supportive to these groups.

I JUST THINK THIS IS THE RIGHT WAY TO Go

more help is needed for the disabled

People on certain disability benefits plus pensions have more money coming in to the household than me working, They should have to pay a certain amount of council tax. Regardless.

keep it as it is don't make it complicated

keep the language and system as simple as possible



Do you have any other comments or alternative options for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme?

Non Claimant Responses are again similar to those of claimants with very few alternative proposals just requests to help disabled groups and families with children.

it will always seem unfair to those who struggle to pay on borderline incomes

Be fair.. do not segregate people based on their income

Do not penalize working parents it is wrong! one child literally doubles the council tax and i see no reasonable excuse for that.

you must protect disabled people and carers by disregarding these peoples benefits

I would like a fairer system which this appears to b

