

Diversity impact assessment

TITLE
Council tax for care leavers policy
DATE
14 February 2022
LEAD OFFICER.
Patrick Knight, Head of Revenues and Benefits and Gemma Gilley, Benefits Manager, Finance, BSD
1 Summary description of the proposed change
What is the change to policy / service / new project that is being proposed? How does it compare with the current situation?
<p>Helping care leavers to secure and sustain accommodation is a key outcome in the cross-Government care leaver strategy, Keep on Caring. The Department for Education's guidance for local authorities advises on applying corporate parenting principles to looked after children and care leavers. Medway Council in their role as corporate parent can support vulnerable groups to help manage their council tax liabilities by offering a reduction in council tax for care leavers. This will be an important step in providing financial assistance and preventing debt for vulnerable people.</p> <p>Currently, council tax liabilities are paid by the Leaving Care team however, through moving to a formal policy, Revenue and Benefits can ensure that appropriate reductions are added prior to the application of discretionary relief. Creating a policy means that Medway Council can support all care leavers in Medway, and in line with Government advice, make this a part of our local offer for care leavers.</p>
2 Summary of evidence used to support this assessment
Eg: Feedback from consultation, performance information, service user. Eg: Comparison of service user profile with Medway Community Profile
<p>Service user records show that many care leavers struggle to pay their council tax bill often resulting in court action and enforcement action.</p> <p>Keep on Caring, the cross-government strategy to transform support for young people leaving care. This strategy encourages local authorities to consider how they can support their care leavers with council tax.</p> <p>1/2021 Council tax information letter – 13 January 2021 which highlights the Department for Education report "National implementation adviser for care leavers' second report: the decade of the care leaver". This report confirms that a good local offer for care leavers involves a full council tax exemption. The effect of the discretionary policy will ensure 100% of the liability is covered however, it will also empower the care leaver to apply for other council tax reductions.</p> <p>Recommendations from the Children's Society report, "The Wolf at the Door" which shows the effect that council tax debt has on young people and recommends strategies for helping care leavers.</p>

Diversity impact assessment

3 What is the likely impact of the proposed change?

Is it likely to:

Adversely impact on one or more of the protected characteristic groups

Advance equality of opportunity for one or more of the protected characteristic groups

Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't

(insert Yes when there is an impact or No when there isn't)

Protected characteristic groups (Equality Act 2010)	Adverse impact	Advance equality	Foster good relations
Age	Yes	No	No
Disability	No	No	No
Gender reassignment	No	No	No
Marriage/civil partnership	No	Yes	No
Pregnancy/maternity	No	No	No
Race	No	No	No
Religion/belief	No	No	No
Sex	No	No	No
Sexual orientation	No	No	No
Other (eg low income groups)	No	Yes	No

4 Summary of the likely impacts

Who will be affected?

How will they be affected?

Age

Care leavers will only be supported until they are 25 however, by ensuring other appropriate reductions are applied we can mitigate the effect of the change in age. The age criteria mirrors our responsibility as the corporate parent.

Diversity impact assessment

Marriage/civil partnership

The care leaver will be supported if they are living with a partner and therefore being treated the same as a care leaver who is single.

Low-income groups/families

As the policy provides financial assistance, it will provide care leavers with support they previously may have struggled to get.

5 What actions can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impacts, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations?

What alternative ways can the Council provide the service?

Are there alternative providers?

Can demand for services be managed differently?

The Council could provide a full council tax exemption for all care leavers however, it is thought that through empowerment and education of the system, care leavers will be in a better position once their support ends.

The policy will be reviewed annually and developed where needed.

6 Action plan

Actions to mitigate adverse impact, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations and/or obtain new evidence

Action	Lead	Deadline or review date
Monitoring of spend and accuracy of applications and awards.	Revenues & Benefits	Ongoing
Promote the policy on Medway.gov.uk and other appropriate platforms.	Revenues & Benefits	Ongoing
Add to the Local Care Leavers' Offer to demonstrate the support given	Revenues & Benefits	Added

7 Recommendation

The recommendation by the lead officer should be stated below. This may be: to proceed with the change, implementing the Action Plan if appropriate, consider alternatives, gather further evidence

If the recommendation is to proceed with the change and there are no actions that can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impact, it is important to state why.

It is recommended that Cabinet agree to the policy. Actions will be taken by Revenue and Benefits to mitigate and monitor any adverse impacts.

8 Authorisation

The authorising officer is consenting that the recommendation can be implemented, sufficient evidence has been obtained and appropriate mitigation is planned, the Action Plan will be incorporated into the relevant Service Plan and monitored

Assistant Director

Date of Authorisation