

Name of meeting: Corporate Parenting Board
Date: 13th November 2017
Title of report: Council Tax Exemptions for Care Leavers

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	No
Key Decision - Is it in the Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)	
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	Yes
Date signed off by <u>Director</u> & name Is it also signed off by the Director of Resources? Is it also signed off by the Assistant Director (Legal Governance and Monitoring)?	Elaine McShane 03.11.2017
Cabinet member portfolio	Cllr Erin Hill

Electoral wards affected: ALL
Ward councillors consulted: NIL
Public or private: PUBLIC

1. Purpose of report

To advise Corporate Parenting Board and Liberal Democrat Councillors of Kirklees Council's current policy in regards to the exemption of care leavers paying council tax.

2. Summary

In reviewing Kirklees Council's current policy, I can confirm that a briefing note was produced in 2014 advising of an initiative to allow discretion for care leavers to be exempt from council tax. This was formulated with staff across the Leaving Care Service, Customer and Exchequer Service and Sue Grigg, Directorate Lead Children and Public Health. The Discretionary Council Tax and Reduction Policy, dated 13 June 2014 states that the Council Tax liability of a care leaver is "capable to being reduced to nil, if they engaging with the authority to find a solution to their financial situation". The policy further states that "The decision maker must be satisfied that the customer or family member will suffer if a DTTR is not made. It is not enough that a risk of suffering exists." The policy does not define an age or end date for this assistance.

From viewing the records, the policy was finalised on the 29 July 2014 and subsequently adopted by Cabinet. In practice, when a care leaver moves into a tenancy in Kirklees, their personal advisor contacts customer and exchequer services and the young person applies for an exempt. At this stage the young person can remain exempt generally until the age of 21 years, when the service ceases. If a young person remains in education or training they will continue to be exempt until the service

ceases, which could be at age 25. This council tax exemption is discretionary and is not open to all care leavers. When Kirklees young people are placed in other local authority areas, there are no arrangements that make them exempt from council tax.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 discusses extending the role of the personal advisor and the access to the leaving care service up to the age of 25. The Department of Education is currently consulting on this piece of legislation and whether this will mean that the service just continues for young people or whether this may be discretionary or focus on task centred issues.

A great deal of research exists citing poor outcomes for young people leaving care such as the National Audit Office (2015), Stein (2005) and more recently The Children's Society (2016) report calling for Local Authorities to make care leavers exempt from council tax up to the age of 25.

3. Information required to take a decision

Reading the original briefing note from 2014, it was estimated that the potential cost implications of the council tax exemption would be approximately £13,500 to support approximately 45 young people.

When the figures of council tax exemption are reviewed since the implementation of the policy, the financial implication is not as high.

Years	Cost Implication	No of Young People Supported
2014/ 2015	£1,370.90	13
2015/ 2016	£3077.19	37
2016/2017	£2,132.08	31
2017/2018	£2901.40	28 (not year end)

As of the 31 October 2017, the Leaving Care Service is working with 209 young people aged between 18 -25. By the nature of the policy being discretionary, not all young people are necessarily eligible and not all young people involved with the service reside in the Kirklees area. There are no reciprocal arrangements.

4. Implications for the Council

Corporate Parenting Board may consider as part of the pledge and the local authority offer to extend or move a motion that care leavers from Kirklees will all be exempt from council tax (rather than via discretionary arrangements) and clearly publish this in an accessible way for young people.

5. Consultees and their opinions

6. Next steps

- Information to be considered by the Board

7. Officer recommendations and reasons

- That the board take note of the information contained within the report.
- Consideration be given to considering a Council Tax exemption for all care leavers up to the age of 25 – extending and clarifying the current position.
- Consideration of discussing at full Cabinet.

8. Cabinet portfolio holder's recommendations

9. Contact officer

Belinda Cashman, Interim Service Manager Leaving Care Service – 01484221000 email:
Belinda.Cashman@kirklees.gov.uk

10. Background Papers and History of Decisions

- Existing policy attached for consideration.

11. Assistant Director responsible

Elaine McShane, Head of Social Work