

From: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education
Matt Dunkley, CBE, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: Corporate Parenting Panel – 25th July 2019

Subject: Challenge card update

Classification: Unrestricted

<p>Summary: This report provides Members with an overview of the progress made on the current challenge cards that our young people have made to KCC, in our role as Corporate Parents.</p> <p>Recommendation: The Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to NOTE the challenge card progress to date and to support the actions being taken to meet the challenges.</p>

1. Previous Challenge: Council Tax Exemption

In March 2019, The Young Adult Council raised the challenge:

That all Kent Care Leavers living in Kent should be exempt from paying Council Tax (until the age of 25).

1.1 Background

The Children and Social Work Act (2017) implemented on 1st April 2018, places corporate parenting responsibilities on district councils for the first time, requiring them to have regard to children in care and care leavers when carrying out their functions. Councils have the power to introduce exemptions for council tax for certain groups under section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Corporate Parenting is a statutory function of the Council with the underlying principle that every local authority will seek the same outcomes for children and young people in care that every good parent would want for their own children; for example, successful transition to young adulthood and financial independence.

Care leavers can find themselves grappling with the challenges of living independently; managing a household, continuing education or seeking employment, as well as managing their personal finances and paying household bills for the first time, often on a very low income and without the support of family or previous financial education to help them navigate this. This can make care leavers a particularly vulnerable group when it comes to the collection of council tax when moving into independent accommodation.

Further evidence shows spiralling debt and the threat to their tenancies are amongst the biggest issues in care leaver's lives, often leading to abandonment and tenancy loss, making it extremely difficult for young people to access accommodation at a later stage. This can have a great impact on not only the young person's health and wellbeing but the wider community i.e. homelessness, health, crime and the prison service.

- 1.2 An exemption in council tax would further enhance Kent County Council's offer to its care leavers, alongside the KCC Rent Guarantor Scheme.
- 1.3 KCC accepted this challenge and agreed to investigate further the proposal that care leavers who are the responsibility of KCC, living in Kent and are aged 18 to 25 years would be exempt from paying council tax.

2. Challenge Card Progress:

Lead officers from Kent County Council presented to the Senior Finance Officers for the Kent Housing Districts to engage in initial discussions about the proposal for a council tax exemption for Care Leavers as part of the responsibilities as a Corporate Parent.

- 2.1 The current research and financial data to support the Challenge card has been completed.

2.2 Data and Financial Implications

Data as of 1st April 2019 shows that Kent County Council has 1,560 open case care leavers aged between 18-25 years. Of this 1,560, there are 984 (63%) living independently in Kent and we estimate 465 living in Kent have a council tax liability and pay full or part council tax.

2.3 Kent Care Leavers Data

Total number of care leavers	1,560
Number of care leavers living in Kent	1,182
Number of care leavers living independently in Kent	984
Number of care leavers not liable to pay council tax	519
Number of care leavers paying council tax	465
<u>Council tax paid by Care Leavers</u>	<u>£513,229</u>

- 2.4 Kent County Council will propose to the 12 District Councils, that they agree an exemption of council tax payments for Kent Care Leavers using their power for exemptions to be made for certain vulnerable groups, under section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Kent County Council will work with the 12 Kent District Councils and the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner to seek to agree that all authorities bear their share of the full discount and that a uniform scheme can be implemented across Kent.

2.5 A motion was presented by elected Member Ida Linfield, to the full County Council Meeting on 23rd May 2019 that:

“The council notes the disadvantage that care leavers have when transitioning into adult life and therefore resolves to engage with each of Kent’s twelve district councils and ask for their relevant committees to consider and agree to provide a 100% council tax discount to care leavers who meet the following criteria:

- Have been in the care of Kent County Council (as Corporate Parent) for a period of at least 13 weeks since the age of 14
- Are under the age of 25
- Reside within Kent

The motion was seconded by elected Member Trudy Dean and agreed by the full council meeting, with work to progress through the Corporate Parenting Panel.

2.6 Roger Gough met with Caroline Smith, Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting on 24th June 2019, to plan the work and how to progress the challenge card. The next stage is planned meetings with the District Council leaders and Chief Executives.

3. **New Challenge Cards:**

There are no further challenge cards issued at this point

Recommendation:

Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel are asked to **NOTE** the challenge card progress to date and to support the actions being taken to meet the challenges.

4. **Background documents**

County Council Meeting – 23 May 2019

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=113&MId=7896&Ver=4>

5. **Contact details**

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