

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:

**Sue Chandler,
Cabinet Member for Children’s Integrated Services**

DECISION NO:

20/00005

Unrestricted

Key decision: YES

Subject: Council tax exemption for Care Leavers

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Children and Integrated Services, I agree that:

Kent County Council will fund the council tax payments for Kent young people who are Care Leavers from the age of 18 years, up to the age of 21 years. All young people will be expected to claim any council tax benefit/discount entitlement and no backdated payments will be made. For implementation from 1st April 2020. This will be published as part of the Kent Care Leavers Local Offer.

Reason(s) for decision:

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.

Furthermore, the children’s social care inspectorate, Ofsted, has the ‘Experience of Looked After Children and Care Leavers’ as a key judgement area in its evaluation of local performance, and expects Councils and children’s services to provide clear evidence that it supports it’s young people leaving care, in a way that optimises their outcomes.

This proposal for a council tax exemption for Kent care leavers is in keeping with the aims and aspirations stated in the DfE document “Keep on Caring”, particularly achieving financial independence.

Kent has 1,718 young people who they have corporate parenting responsibility for as Care Leavers aged 18 -25 years. The vast majority are living in Kent, with 155 in Medway and 408 placed outside of the county. The original proposal was to work with the 12 Local District Borough Councils to request an exemption for council tax for all Kent Care Leavers living within the county. After extensive work on the logistics involved in this, the request is to implement a simplified proposal, in which Kent County Council in their role as a Corporate Parent would fund council tax payments where young people who are care leavers are eligible to pay. This would be for young people who are Kent Care Leavers aged 18-21 years, wherever they are living.

The proposal meets the objectives of ‘Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council’s Strategic Statement (2015-2020)’ through:

- The Strategic Statement underpins the proposal for the payment of council tax in our aim to improve the lives of children and young people by giving them the best start in life. It meets our responsibility

of being the best Corporate Parent we can be and being aspirational for our Care Leavers as they transition into adult hood.

- Agreement to the funding would improve the outcomes of Care Leavers by ensuring that they are financially supported and give them the best possible opportunities for their futures as adults.

For those young people currently paying council tax, it would open up the opportunity to use their own income for more social and leisure activities, promoting and improving their mental health and well-being.

Equality Implications

An Equality and Impact Assessment has been completed. This identified that the original proposal for a district exemption would discriminate against those young people who are Kent care leavers but living outside of the county. If agreed, the decision will be published through the Local Offer and will be open to all eligible Kent Care Leavers where Kent County Council are the corporate parent. This offer would not apply to Care Leavers placed into Kent by other Local Authorities

Financial Implications

The estimated cost to KCC will be £594,230 per year. This is based on all eligible discounts being applied for by the young person and starting from 1st April 2020. No historic council tax arrears would be funded.

Legal Implications

There are no known legal implications and there are currently 76 Local Authorities that have implemented or are in the process of implementation of council tax exemption for Care Leavers.

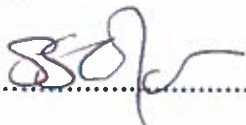
Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The CYPE Cabinet Committee considered the decision at its meeting on 10 January 2020 and agreed to fund the council tax payments for Kent young people who are Care Leavers from the age of 18 years, up to the age of 21 years. All young people will be expected to claim any council tax benefit/discount entitlement and no backdated payments will be made. For implementation from 1st April 2020. This will be published as part of the Kent Care Leavers Local Offer.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Consideration was given to funding council tax for young people who are care leavers from the age of 18-25 years. After careful consideration of the budget implications for this, the current service does not have capacity to support the number of young people aged 22-25 years that would be likely to return. The service would have to be funded to meet this need, at a total cost of over 3 million. This would not be a viable option and would be a significant budget risk to Kent County Council.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken, and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer: None



signed



date