

CABINET MEMBER DECISION



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Decision:

That approval is granted for a class of local discretionary Council Tax discount of up to 100% for care leavers aged 18 – 21 years, under the provisions of Section 13A 1(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

(1) Details of Decision

To seek approval for a class of local discretionary Council Tax discount of up to 100% for care leavers aged 18 – 21 years, under the provisions of Section 13A 1(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

(2) Considerations/Evidence

The Government recognise in it's 'Keep on Caring' Strategy (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keep-on-caring-supporting-young-people-from-care-to-independence>) that young people leaving care constitute one of the most vulnerable groups in society, and both government and wider society have a moral obligation to give them the support they need as they make transition to adulthood and independent living.

The Strategy focuses on embedding a culture of corporate parenting across all parts of local authority. An increasing number of local authorities are now introducing measures that mean more and more care leavers across the country no longer have to pay Council Tax.

The Government state in the 'Keep on Caring' Strategy that it wants all local authorities to be thinking creatively about how they can support care leavers in ways that reasonable parents would.

The provisions of Section 13A Local Government Finance Act 1992 give flexibility for local authorities to support vulnerable groups to help manage their council tax liabilities.

There are currently around 19 care leavers in the South Kesteven area aged between 18 and 21. Information obtained from Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) indicates

- almost 70% of care leavers in the county are in education,

- employment or training.
- 8% are in unsuitable or not known accommodation.

Changes through the Children and Social Work Act 2017 extended the age for entitlement to receive support from a Personal Adviser from 21 to age 25, although this does not necessarily mean that local authorities have to provide the same level of support to care leavers aged 21 to 25.

Whilst it is not possible to accurately cost the provision of a discount, the number will in fact be lower than the figure referred to in report CFM457 (1.5), and many will have no or reduced Council Tax liability; even where there is a Council Tax liability that there will be other entitlements that would be awarded first, before any discretionary amount. It is estimated the cost of this discount would be approximately £18,000 per annum, based on the number of potential eligible claimants.

The full cost of any discount awarded under S13A 1(c) is however met fully by Council Tax payers and cannot be shared with major precepting authorities. The full cost would be borne by this Council.

For financial year 2019/20 onwards consideration will be given to incorporating care leavers reduction into the new Council Tax Support Scheme – it is too late for the Scheme to be introduced for the year 2018/19 due to the required statutory consultation.

It is recommended that a new class of discretionary discount is created with effect from 1 April 2018 to reduce the amount of Council Tax liability for any care leaver living within the district by up to 100% between the ages of 18 – 21, with discount ending on the individual's 22nd birthday.

Administration of such a scheme would be kept to a simple application process, whereby LCC would pass on an application form to care leavers in the district for completion and return to this Authority. At the point of processing the discount, a check would also be carried out to ensure all other reductions have been made first.

(3) Reasons for Decision:

The reasons for this recommendation are namely to support young people coming out of care as they go through the transition to adulthood and independent living.

Conflicts of Interest

(Any conflict of interest declared by any other Cabinet Member consulted in relation to the decision to be recorded).

NONE

Dispensations

(Any dispensation granted by the Monitoring Officer in respect of any declared conflict of interest to be noted).

NONE

Decision taken by:

Name: Councillor Adam Stokes
Cabinet Member for Finance

Date of Decision: 04 April 2018

Date of Publication of Record of Decision: 05 April 2018

Date decision effective (i.e. 5 days after the date of publication of record of decision unless subject to call-in by the Chairman of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or any 5 members of the Council from any political groups):

13 April 2018