

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 22 FEBRUARY 2024

Report Title	Council Tax Discount for Care Leavers			
Purpose of Report	<p>Section 13A(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 gives the council discretion to reduce the amount of council tax payable. This can be for individual cases or by determining a class of case.</p> <p>This report proposes that a class of case is determined for Care Leavers and the existing scheme extends the qualifying age from 18- 21 to 24 including for those from outside of Gloucestershire.</p>			
Decision(s)	The Council RESOLVES to adopt the scheme to be effective from 1st April 2024 as recommended by the Strategy and Resources Committee.			
Consultation and Feedback	This is a county wide scheme set up in consultation and agreement with the other 5 district councils in Gloucestershire and the Gloucestershire County Council.			
Report Author	Simon Killen, Revenue & Benefits Manager Tel: 01453 766321 Email: simon.killen@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	The Council could choose not to amend the Care Leavers discount.			
Background Papers	The Local Government Finance Act 1992 amended by section 10 of The Local Government Finance Act 2012 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/17/contents			
Appendices	Appendix A – Summary of Scheme			
Implications (Further details at the end of report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Section 13A of the Local government Finance Act 1992 gives the council discretionary powers to reduce the amount of council tax payable in individual cases or for classes of case. This includes reducing the amount payable to nil.
- 1.2 The Government made recommendations in its care leavers strategy “Keep on Caring” published in July 2016 that local authorities should consider exempting care leavers from council tax, using their discretionary powers under Section 13A.
- 1.3 Care leavers are considered to be a particularly vulnerable group for council tax debt. Moving to independent accommodation and managing finances for the first time is challenging. Care leavers are faced with a new set of potentially overwhelming responsibilities without the family support and wider network that most other young people can rely on.
- 1.4 On 17 January 2019, Strategy and Resources Committee approved a Council Tax Discount Scheme for Care Leavers between the ages of 18-21 residing in the Stroud District, who were formerly in the care of Gloucestershire County Council. The scheme was effective from 1st April 2019.

2. CARE LEAVERS DISCOUNT SCHEME

- 2.1 The Council Tax Discount Scheme for Care Leavers detailed in Appendix A proposes extending discounts for Care Leavers from the age of 18-21 to 24, for those residing in the Stroud District, who were formerly in care. This will now include those not under the care of Gloucestershire County Council
- 2.2 The scheme will provide for a full exemption from council tax to be awarded where care leavers live alone and a 50% discount where they live with others.
- 2.3 Some Care Leavers will already have their council tax reduced. The Care leaver discount will be awarded after all other discounts, exemptions and council tax support and will end on their 25th birthday.
- 2.4 The full eligibility criteria and arrangements for administering the scheme are detailed in Appendix A
- 2.5 The relevant team at Gloucestershire County Council will liaise with the Revenue Team to ensure the necessary information is available to enable the Care Leavers Discount.
- 2.6 The 6 district Councils and Gloucestershire County Council are working together to provide a common council tax scheme for care leavers which provides a consistent approach across Gloucestershire.

3. FUNDING AND COST OF THE SCHEME

- 3.1 Providing an extension to the Care Leavers Discount Scheme will form part of an overall package to prepare Care Leavers for independence and support them in making an effective social and financial transition from Local Authority care. Ultimately it will help to improve the life chances of looked after children and provide eligibility up to the date of their 25th birthday.
- 3.2 The discounts will sit alongside a number of other support arrangements provided to care leavers by Gloucestershire County Council.
- 3.3 There are 6 care leavers who are currently in receipt of a discount, 2 are getting a 50% discount and 4 are getting 100% discount. Numbers associated with the extended scheme are unknown.
- 3.4 Any reduction awarded using this power must be funded by the billing authority. However, by agreement Gloucestershire County Council will fund its share of the cost of any care leaver discount awarded.

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial Implications

It is difficult to estimate the exact impact upon District Council finances as the number of care leavers is not yet known. The numbers receiving the discount in the existing age bracket suggests the impact will be relatively minor.

As stated in the report Gloucestershire County Council will fund their share of the cost for any discounts awarded.

Andrew Cummings, Strategic Director of Resources
Tel: 01453 754115 Email: andrew.cummings@stroud.gov.uk

4.2 Legal Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

One Legal

4.3 Equality Implications

The council is committed to equality and the fair application of the policy, ensuring that people receive fair outcomes in the standard of service they receive from the Council, regardless of their race, gender, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status and/or disability in line with the principles set out in the Equalities Act 2010.

4.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.