

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**CHILDREN, FAMILIES, LEARNING AND LEISURE
CABINET MEMBER**

CARE LEAVERS COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT

1 OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Cabinet Member regarding the existing arrangements and seek approval for the proposals in relation to helping Care Leavers to live independently and manage their finances through support to pay their Council Tax.

2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 North Lincolnshire Council is committed to supporting young people as they progress from care into adulthood and ensuring that our young people are helped to become independent and resilient adults.
- 2.2 The recent national campaign by the Children's Society reported that nationally over half (57%) of young people leaving care have difficulty managing their money and avoiding debt when leaving care.
- 2.3 North Lincolnshire Council has a comprehensive local offer to all care leavers that is fully supported by Corporate Parents across the council and our partners. This is in line with our statutory responsibilities to ensure that Care Leavers live in suitable accommodation and have support to help them manage their finances. This has been reinforced by the Children and Social Work Act 2017 that requires Councils to offer support to Care Leavers up to 25.
- 2.4 Care Leavers are helped to budget responsibly and have comprehensive plans that are regularly reviewed to ensure they have the help they need to manage all aspects of their lives including their finances.
- 2.5 Nationally young adults are staying at home longer and therefore have more support within their own families to become financially independent. Care Leavers are also increasingly continuing to live with their carers or in supported accommodation. Those over the age of 18, however, who live in their own accommodation are required to pay Council Tax. North Lincolnshire currently provides financial support with this through Council Tax Support up to 77%.

3 OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 There are 2 options proposed in relation to the support provided to Care Leavers with their Council Tax:
- 3.2 Option 1 - Continue with the existing arrangements whereby young people are required to pay council tax, but receive Council Tax support up to 77%
- 3.3 Option 2 - Build on the existing arrangements to increase the Council Tax support package to Care Leavers up to 100% of the amount they are required to pay up to the age of 22. For those who are earning a living wage or above and those who live with a non-care leaver partner, the level of support would be reduced based on the household circumstances. This can be implemented immediately as it is within the existing scheme.

4 ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 The implications in relation to the options are:

Option 1

- 4.2 No additional financial implications to the current arrangements. This will mean that there will be no reduction in the financial pressures for young people in progressing to their own tenancy and managing their finances effectively.

Option 2

- 4.3 This would mean an additional cost of approximately £10,000 p.a. This will support young people in the transition to adulthood, and enable them to become established within their own tenancies without the additional financial pressure of Council Tax up to the age of 22. It will also enable planning and budget management to take place with the young person with the expectation that they begin to develop their responsibility for managing their finances whilst services are still in place to support them as care leavers up to the age of 25.
- 4.4 This option demonstrates support with the Children's Society campaign and the recommendation to the government by the Communities and Local Government Select Committee in 2016 that care leavers be made exempt from council tax up to at least the age of 21.
- 4.5 In order to continue to build on and develop the help the Council provides to care leavers through collective responsibilities as Corporate Parents, the comprehensive local offer to care leavers is continuously reviewed. In line with this, Option 2 is the preferred option and its adoption will provide a balanced approach to providing extra help to young people as they progress to live in their own accommodation through additional financial support with the expectation that as they progress into adulthood they begin to take responsibility for their

finances, managing their income and expenditure. This is also in line with the objective of providing Care Leavers with the help they need whilst enabling them to live 'ordinary lives'.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

5.1 There are no staffing or resources implications, the financial implications are as detailed above.

6 OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

6.1 N/A

7 OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

7.1 Young people are regularly consulted as part of their individual planning and through the children in care council and other consultation forums. Feedback from young people is that they worry about their finances as they leave care and value the support of the Council and partners.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 That the Cabinet Member approves option 2 and increase the council tax support package available to care leavers to up to 100% to the age of 22.

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: None