

Care Leavers and Council Tax

Purpose

The purpose of this agreement is to address the demands on care experienced young people moving into independent living, creating a reciprocal arrangement between 12 North East Local Authorities to fund the payment of council tax for care leavers.

Scope

Council tax will not be charged or re-charged by (individually named) Council for young people aged 18 to 24 who are eligible for support from one of the following North East Local Authorities (NE LA) under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, 'former relevant young people':

- Darlington Borough Council
- Durham County Council
- Gateshead Council
- Hartlepool Borough Council
- Middlesbrough Borough Council
- Newcastle City Council
- North Tyneside Council
- Northumberland County Council
- Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
- South Tyneside Council
- Stockton on Tees Borough Council
- Sunderland City Council

Care leavers living in areas outside of the 12 NE LAs listed above are not included in this agreement.

Policy Statement

The following principles apply:

1. The scheme becomes effective following completion of the decision-making process within each NE LA; reductions will be effective from 1 April 2025.
2. Where an application for another council tax discount or reduction (including council tax reduction) has been received this may be considered ahead of any reduction under this scheme.
3. Where an application for an alternative discount or reduction has not been received but the LA considers the care leaver may qualify, they can request an application and consider the alternative reduction prior to consideration of a reduction under this scheme.
4. LA's may wish to use an application form requesting details including the LA that provided care and the name of the social or support worker.
5. The care leaver must be personally liable for the payment of council tax to receive the full reduction.

6. If the care leaver is jointly liable with another party the reduction will be applied to the full bill.
7. Individual LA's can choose how they fund the reduction. Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 permits LAs to apply discretionary reductions with an option of S13A (1) (c) with the reduction being funded from the general fund or S13A (1) (a) forming part of the council tax reduction scheme and funded from the collection fund.
8. The reduction will continue as long as the eligibility criteria continues to be met and will cease on the date of the care leaver's 25th birthday.

Procedures:

1. Completion of application (where required by individual LA) by care leaver or personal advisor. An example of an application form has been shared however each LA can choose to use their own design if preferred.
2. Care leavers living in the Borough in which they received care – internal verification process for each LA.
3. Care leavers living in different NE LA to which they received care – a list of contacts is available at Appendix A including email address to be used to verify care leaver status.