

North East Derbyshire District Council

Council

03 October 2022

Local Offer for Children in Care and Care Leavers

Report of Councillor Alex Dale, Leader of the Council

Classification: This report is public

Report By: Lee Hickin – Managing Director

Contact Officer: Lee Hickin – Managing Director

PURPOSE / SUMMARY

To seek approval for an amendment to the existing 'Local Offer for Children in Care and Care Leavers'.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Council approve the amendment set out at 2.1 of the report; to extend the council tax discount currently offered to Derbyshire care leavers to care leavers who are from other areas now living in the district.

Approved by the Portfolio Holder – Cllr Alex Dale, Leader of the Council

IMPLICATIONS

Finance and Risk: Yes No

Details:

Section 13A of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 allows local authorities to reduce council tax in addition to statutory discounts. There is a financial implication to awarding reliefs under Section 13A as the Council has to finance all such reliefs from its own funds. As this can only be introduced as a local council tax discount, the cost is not shared with other preceptors and all the cost falls to North East Derbyshire District Council. The Council have approved this element of the offer previously in January 2019. Our current policy does not provide for council tax discounts to care leavers from outside of Derbyshire who now live in Derbyshire however.

For 2019/20 we awarded discount on 3 accounts, for 2020/21 on 5 accounts, for 2021/22 on 6 accounts and on 5 accounts for 2022/23 so far. The number of those that have requested a discount but have been denied because they are care leavers

of another county, have been approximated at less than 3 per year since 2019. It is acknowledged however, that there may be some care leavers of other counties that have not approached the Council for the discount as they may already be aware that our 'Local Offer' would mean that the Council wouldn't currently award it.

On Behalf of the Section 151 Officer

Legal (including Data Protection):

Yes

No

Details:

Section 2 of the Children & Social Care Act 2017 requires each local authority (including District Councils) to publish a Local Offer for its care leavers (18 – 25 years).

On Behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

Staffing: Yes

No

Details:

There are no significant direct additional HR implications arising from the proposals.

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

DECISION INFORMATION

Decision Information	
<p>Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds:</p> <p>NEDDC: Revenue - £100,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £250,000 <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i></p>	No
<p>Is the decision subject to Call-In? (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)</p>	No
<p>District Wards Significantly Affected</p>	All
<p>Consultation: Leader / Deputy Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cabinet <input type="checkbox"/> SMT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevant Service Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Members <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/></p>	Yes

Links to Council Plan priorities, including Climate Change, Equalities, and Economics and Health implications.

Council Plan Aim: Our Residents – Objective 4: Protecting the most vulnerable within our communities

REPORT DETAILS

1 Background

- 1.1 There are approximately 80,000 children in care in England at any one time with 950 children in care across Derbyshire as of June 2022.
- 1.2 Many of these children have had a very poor start in life often witnessing things many of us thankfully have never had to. At a time when playing, having fun and making friends should be helping to form the building blocks for their future selves, many of these children are being faced with unspeakable challenges, being removed from a place that should be their sanctuary and plunged into a life of uncertainty, worry and fear.
- 1.3 Recognising the challenges faced by those in care and also the challenges they might face when they leave care, in November 2019 NEDDC led on the District and Borough **Local Offer for Children in Care and Care Leavers** initiative that received universal support from all District and Borough Councils to establish, agree and sign up to;
- A Council Tax discount scheme for Care Leavers
 - An 'Active Fostering' physical activity support programme for children in care, their foster families and those leaving care
 - A level of employment, skills, apprenticeships and work experience support
 - A review of accommodation and housing protocols with view to ensuring that they are fit for purpose and deliver positive outcomes for care leavers across the County
 - A Countywide (District and Borough focussed) ongoing marketing and promotion campaign and support aimed at actively supporting the promotion and recruitment of foster carers and supported lodgings, through the Council's many and varied communication channels, mediums and platforms
 - To work collaboratively with Derbyshire County Council, other District/Borough Councils and other partners and stakeholders across all sectors within the county, to develop a 'Derbyshire Care Leaver Covenant'
- 1.4 Following approval of the above, District Council colleagues have continued to work collaboratively with County Council 'Children in Care' colleagues with a view to implementing the commitment made and to also recognise any further opportunities to collaborate in the interests of those children in care and those leaving the care system – NEDDC are very much leading the way in regard to Districts and Boroughs.
- 1.5 Very recently, NEDDC have been approached by a care leaver from another county currently residing in North East Derbyshire District. The person has

been living in the district for a while and has built relationships and networks within, however because he is a Nottinghamshire care leaver the Council's discount scheme does not apply to him.

- 1.6 Since the adoption of the Local Offer, some other councils in Derbyshire have removed the 'Derbyshire' requirement offering the discount to any care leaver irrespective of where they originate from.

2. Details of Proposal or Information

- 2.1 The proposal is to amend the Council's current 'Local Offer' by extending the council tax discount offered to Derbyshire care leavers to care leavers who are from other areas now living in the district. The numbers affected are likely to be low and in relative financial terms 'insignificant' when it comes to the impact upon the collection fund. For 2019/20 NEDDC awarded discount on 3 accounts, for 2020/21 on 5 accounts, for 2021/22 on 6 accounts and on 5 accounts for 2022/23 so far. The number of those that have requested a discount but have been denied because they are care leavers of another county, have been approximated at less than 3 per year since 2019.

3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 When they leave care, many of these young people will face considerable disadvantage in their lives, compared to that of others. Whilst most young people will continue to rely upon their families well into early adulthood and beyond, young people leaving care often do so without the support of a loving family. For a care leaver there is a very high risk that without continued support and people to care about them, that they will never reach their potential.
- 3.2 Managing budgets can be challenging for most people on low incomes particularly so for vulnerable young people adjusting to living by themselves without the support of a family network. A 2015 report by *The Children's Society* (The Wolf at the Door – How Council Tax debt collection is harming children) suggests that care leavers are a particularly vulnerable group for Council Tax debt.
- 3.3 Whilst relatively financially 'insignificant' for our organisation, such a gesture/discount can make all the difference to a young care leaver. It is hoped that by extending our offer in this way, aligning to some other districts who have already taken this approach in Derbyshire and other counties, that eventually all councils will take up this position removing these barriers for care leavers across the board.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 The publication of a local offer is a requirement for the local authority so there is no option not to have an offer.

4.2 To leave the Local Offer unchanged is an option however the issue facing care leavers from outside the district coming to live in the district in relation to accessing the Council's council tax discount would remain.

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

Appendix No	Title
Background Papers (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet you must provide copies of the background papers)	