

Haringey Care Leavers

Relief Scheme Policy

Policy for the Award of Discretionary Reductions in Council Tax Liability under Section 13A(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 in respect of Care Leavers in Haringey

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Council agree that young people transitioning out of care can often face a myriad of challenges. They are often for the first time having to manage money which can prove extremely difficult without the assistance of family. The Council is committed to keeping care leavers safe, ensuring their experiences moving into independent living are positive, and improving their life chances. There is clear evidence that care leavers are at considerable risk of falling into debt, including council tax debt.
- 1.2. The Council has a statutory role as a corporate parent and will where possible seek the same outcomes for care leavers that any parent would want for their own children. Given the Council's commitment to the welfare of care leavers, the Council has decided to offer council tax support to care leavers in the borough. The scheme will reduce council tax liability for care leavers residing in Haringey to nil until their 25th birthday.

2. Scope and Definition

- 2.1. Under Section 13A(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Council has the power to reduce liability for council tax in relation to individual cases or class(es) of cases that it may determine.
- 2.2. In order to provide further support for care leavers Cabinet has created a new class of beneficiaries of council tax discount as it is permitted to do under section 13A(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The Council has agreed to reduce the council tax bill for care leavers to nil, after any other national reliefs and council tax support reliefs have been applied. This relief will be referred to as the "Care Leavers Relief Scheme" (CLRS).
- 2.3. Care leavers relief on council tax liability can be awarded for any period from 1st April 2018 as long as the beneficiary is liable for council tax in the borough.
- 2.4. Any relief provided under the CLRS will be discontinued a day before the beneficiaries 25th birthday or on the last day of the financial year (31st March) prior to their 25th birthday whichever of the two comes first. A care leaver could still be eligible for council tax discount under the council tax reduction scheme, but any entitlement under the care leavers relief will end a day before the claimants 25th birthday.

3. **Application Process**

3.1. Award of relief under the CLRS can be granted:

- through the identification and nomination of a care leaver by the Council's Children's Services to the Council's council tax service/Revenues Team or where this information is already held by the council tax service/Revenues Team.
- through the identification and nomination by any other public body or professional organisation including the social services team of a local authority that confirms that the care leaver was in care (was 'looked after' as a result of a statutory obligation).
- through application for relief under the council tax reduction scheme or the council's discretionary award scheme where an applicant has been identified as a care leaver. Applications submitted by a verified care leaver under the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) or the general discretionary policy scheme should automatically be discounted to nil under the CLRS.

3.2. The award comes into effect from 1st April 2018 and can be made for any period after 1st April 2018 where the care leaver is liable for council tax charge to Haringey.

4. **Eligibility Criteria**

4.1. For the purposes of this policy, a care leaver is defined as a person:

- who has been looked after by a local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14;
- who was looked after by a local authority at school-leaving age or thereafter; and
- who is under 25 years old.

4.2. For the purpose of this policy the following evidence will be sufficient to verify that a claimant is a care leaver:

- Confirmation by Haringey Children/Adult Social Care Services that a claimant was 'looked after';
- Confirmation from social services team of another local authority that a claimant was 'looked after';
- Confirmation from other public body or agency that a claimant was 'looked after'.

- A letter, email or other documentation from one the above bodies confirming that a claimant was ‘looked after’ will be sufficient to proof eligibility for CLRS.
- 4.3. The care leaver must be liable for payment of council tax in Haringey (i.e. Haringey Council is the billing authority) to qualify for relief under the Haringey CLRS.

5. Review of Decision

- 5.1. Under the Local Government Finance Act 1992, there is no right of appeal against the Council’s use of discretionary powers. However, the Council will accept a resident’s written request for a further review of its decision if it is supported by further information or evidence and is made within one calendar month of the decision.
- 5.2. Any review will be carried out by a different person from the person who made the decision to which the review relates and shall normally be completed within 28 days from the date the review is received by the Council.

6. Ending or Cancelling the Reduction

- 6.1. In all cases the reduction will end either; at the end of the financial year or; on the same day as the closing of the council tax payer’s account or; where information indicates the council tax payer’s circumstances have changed; on the date of the change or in the case of care leavers when the claimant is 25 years old.
- 6.2. Where it transpires that a reduction has been incorrectly awarded whether based on false information or evidence or otherwise, the Council reserves the right to revoke the decision and recover any council tax already remitted.

7. Decision Making

- 7.1. The levels of decision making are outlined in the table below. In addition, the annual audit of council tax will encompass the application and award of reductions.

Service Manager	Assistant Head	Head of Service
To review and consider applications in accordance with guidelines recommending approved cases and level of award to Head of Service	To review and consider applications in accordance with guidelines recommending approved cases and level of award to Head of Service	To authorise or reject cases submitted.
To reject any case which does not meet guidelines set.	To reject any case which does not meet guidelines set.	
	To review any re-applications.	
	To monitor and ensure compliance with policy.	
	To review and control expenditure.	

8. Equalities and Diversity

- 8.1. This policy is discretionary and relate specifically to a class of council tax payer known as care leavers therefore all council tax payers that were previously 'looked after' will be eligible to apply for reductions. The CLRS will not impact on existing claimants under the CTRS scheme or other council tax support scheme measures. The CLRS is in additional to all other council tax support initiatives.

9. Review of Policy

- 9.1. This policy will be monitored any revisions necessary will be brought back to Cabinet at a future date.