



North  
Northamptonshire  
Council

Appendix A

# Council Tax Discount for Care Leavers

Policy 2021-2022

[www.northnorthants.gov.uk](http://www.northnorthants.gov.uk)

## **Background**

The Government made recommendations in its Care Leavers Strategy published in 2016, that local authorities should consider exempting care leavers from Council Tax, using their existing discretionary powers under Section 13A (1) (c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. This provision is separate to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTSS) and it allows Councils to reduce the amount payable after all statutory discounts, exemptions and LCTS.

North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) understands that the transition out of care for young people can be very challenging. Without the support of a family and the need to manage their own finances, care leavers may be more susceptible to financial difficulties.

The Council is keen to offer support to those young people who may be liable for Council Tax by giving further financial support in addition to the other discounts that may be available such as single person discount and Local Council Tax Support.

## **Eligibility Criteria for discount**

### **18 years of age – 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday**

- A care leaver, for the purpose of this policy, is defined as a young person aged 18 – 21 who was formerly a child in the care of North Northamptonshire Children's Trust and then became a 'Former Relevant Child' as defined by The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. The Care Leaver must be resident and liable for council tax on a property within North Northants.
- The care leaver must be the liable person for council tax, either solely or jointly and severally with other(s), at the dwelling in respect of which the application is made. The council tax bill must be in their name.
- Where a care leaver lives in a House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) or other property where they are not the council taxpayer no discount will be awarded.
- The care leaver discount will apply to occupied properties only.
- The care leaver discount will be awarded after statutory discounts, exemptions, disability discount and local council tax support have been applied. This will also include accounts where a care leaver is jointly and severally liable with others.
- The discount for care leavers aged 18-21 years of age and will ensure that any gap between their eligible discounts under their local authority's LCTS and the individual's liability for council tax will equate to 100% reduction, in all cases.

## **21<sup>st</sup> Birthday – 25<sup>th</sup> Birthday**

In the interests of young adults gradually progressing to full independence from 21 – 25 years of age, care leavers will be means tested for LCTS with no automatic discount applied additionally. However, where the individual's financial liability for council tax is judged to be unmanageable due to their specific circumstances and vulnerabilities, a written statement by their personal advisor or social worker can be provided to justify the case for the care leaver's discount to apply for the whole (or remainder) of that financial year.

The discount will be subject to annual written statement and review, up to the individual's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## **Other criteria**

- The scheme is only intended for care leavers who were previously looked after by North Northamptonshire Children's Trust/West Northamptonshire Children's Trust/Northamptonshire County Council and who continue to reside in North Northamptonshire.
- Given that Care Leavers for several years will have originally been looked after by Northamptonshire County Council and the level of movement across the boundaries of North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire there will be a reciprocal arrangement between North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council where Care Leavers from either Council boundary are eligible to the discount in each council area.

## **Application process**

For care leavers aged 18-21 the Leaving Care team will seek consent from the care leaver to provide information such as name, address, date of birth, details of other adults in the property and relationship to them to the Revenues and Benefits team so that a discount may be considered. The discount will be awarded once other discounts and Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) have been awarded.

Care leavers aged 21-25 will be expected to apply for LCTS. However, where the individual's financial liability for council tax is judged to be unmanageable due to their personal circumstances and vulnerabilities, a written statement by their personal advisor or social worker can be provided to support the case for the care leaver's discount to be awarded for the remainder of that financial year. This discount will be subject to an annual review up to the individual's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## **Awards**

Awards will be made directly by a discount in Council Tax liability and this will be notified by way of a revised Council Tax bill.

Regular reviews will be undertaken appropriate to the individual circumstances of each case.

The care leaver (or the acting appointee or recognised third party acting on his/her behalf) must advise the Revenues and Benefits team of any changes in their circumstances which may affect entitlement to the discount within 21 days of the change.

### **Backdating**

The Revenues and Benefits team will consider backdating an application to the start of the financial year, or to the date that the care leaver became responsible for Council Tax so long as the date is not more than 12 months prior to the date of application.

The Care Leavers discount cannot be awarded prior to 1 April 2021

### **Right of Appeal**

Under Section 16 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, there is a right of appeal if a person applying for a discretionary reduction under Section 13A (1) (c) is not happy with the Council's decision. The appeal must be in writing to the Revenues and Benefits service. The Council will then reconsider the discount request, together with any additional information provided, against the policy criteria.

If the original decision is upheld and the applicant remains dissatisfied, or the Council does not make a decision within two months, there is a further right of appeal to the Valuation Tribunal. The Valuation Tribunal for England is an independent body which adjudicates on disputes between taxpayers and the Council. Appeals must be made directly to the Valuation Tribunal.

### **Policy Review**

The Council will review the Council Tax Discount for Care Leavers Policy on an annual basis but the Council reserves the right to review and revise the policy at any time as a result of information gained as a result of operating the policy.

The Executive Director of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance has delegated authority to agree any revisions to the policy.