

**Teignbridge District Council**  
**Full Council**  
**16 January 2024**  
**Part i**

## **Support for Care Leavers**

### **Purpose of Report**

To provide members with details of the new support offer for Care Leavers, as set out in the draft 'Support for Care Leavers' Policy, and to request the policy is adopted with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023.

### **Recommendation(s)**

That Council adopts the Support for Care Leaver Policy attached as Appendix C, which incorporates a council tax discount, free membership to our leisure centres, and work experience opportunities.

### **Financial Implications**

The costs of the scheme are highlighted in paragraphs 3 and 4 of this report.

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### **Legal Implications**

See section 5 below.

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### **Risk Assessment**

Risks are set out in 6.1 of the Full Council report 3 October 2023  
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### **Environmental/ Climate Change Implications**

There are no environmental/climate implications

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## Executive Member

Cllr Richard Keeling – Executive Member for Corporate Resources  
Cllr John Nutley – Executive Member for Open Spaces, Leisure, Sport, Resorts and Tourism  
Cllr Martin Wrigley – Leader and Executive Member for Strategic Direction

## Appendices/Background Papers

Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment  
Appendix B – Minutes of Full Council 17 October 2023  
Appendix C – Support for Care Leavers Policy

### 1. Introduction

1.1 On 17 October 2023, Full Council agreed, in principle, to adopt a package of Support for care leavers. The support offer incorporates a council tax discount, free membership to Teignbridge leisure centres and work experience placements. The minutes of this meeting are available at Appendix B.

1.2 In line with the effective date agreed with Devon County Council, it is proposed that the Support for Care Leavers Policy will take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023. The draft policy is available at Appendix C.

### 2. Policy implementation

2.1 Devon County Council has now provided details of qualifying care leavers to all Devon districts. This was received on 1 December 2023. Subject to members approving the Policy the Revenue & Benefits Service will cross-reference these details with council tax records to apply any council tax discount that may be due. There will be no requirement for care leavers to apply for this reduction.

2.2 Care Leavers registered on the database supplied by County will be notified of the package of support available to them and the process by which they can apply for free Leisure Centre membership and/or work experience placement.

2.3 Devon County Council have committed to providing a refreshed dataset on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month moving forwards. The Revenue & Benefits Service will apply any new

council tax discounts or changes to council tax liability as required as well as ensuring any new care leavers appearing in the list are notified of the package of support available.

### **3. Council Tax Discount funding arrangements**

3.1 When Council made its in principle decision to adopt a support package for care leavers, discussions were still being had with County as to how the cost of the scheme would be funded. Based on number of current care leavers within the Teignbridge district the maximum cost to Teignbridge would be in the region of £19,000 per annum if Teignbridge bore full cost of the scheme.

3.2 County has since confirmed that, with effect from 1 April 2024, it will fund the cost of awarding a council tax discount in line with its preceptor share. This represents around 72% of the total cost and significantly reduces any ongoing cost to Teignbridge, (down to around £5,000). The cost for the 6 month period 1<sup>st</sup> October 23 to 31 March 24 will be higher (around £9,500) as Teignbridge will contribute 100% in year one.

3.3 We will be using our Discretionary Discount powers under S13A (1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. Discounts awarded under this provision are met by the Billing Authority in the Revenue Account creating a budget pressure. However, following County's agreement to part-fund, a manual financial adjustment will be made to allocate cost as agreed.

### **4. Financial implications**

4.1 The financial impacts are based on County data and if the figures prove to be understated the costs for providing the council tax discount may increase. Any understatement is unlikely to be significant so cost implications would be minimal, particularly now that County have agreed to fund in line with their precept share. There is also an opportunity to review the support offer periodically (annual budget cycle) to ensure costs remain acceptable.

4.2 With regard to leisure memberships this would be viewed as a potential loss of income rather than a direct cost to the service, so could be reasonably accommodated. It is not currently known if any Care Leavers currently subscribe to our leisure centres so there may be a loss of income on converting these to free memberships. Given there are only 89 Care Leavers in the district in total, any loss of income is likely to be small.

### **5. Legal implications**

5.1 It is considered that the approval of this policy accords with the Council's statutory obligations.

5.2 Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) gives the Council discretion to reduce the amount of Council Tax payable by individual cases or by class.

5.3 However, care must be taken to avoid any unintentional direct or indirect discrimination against other sections of the community.

## **6. Risks**

6.1 There may be a small potential risk of challenge from other groups who consider themselves to be in need and who do not receive similar support but as we have no corporate parenting responsibility to any other groups and our offer reflects government guidance and best practice any challenge would be unfounded.

## **7. Environmental/Climate Change Impact**

7.1 No direct carbon/biodiversity impact arising from the recommendations

## **8. Equality implications**

8.1 This proposal is designed to have a positive impact on a cohort of young adults (care leavers). We have considered the impact in terms of age and whilst the proposal is based on the 18 to 24 age range, age has been used as a criteria to accessibility and in a positive way.

8.2 Care leavers with protected characteristics will be entitled to this discount alongside all other care leavers.

8.3 Further information relating to equalities can be found in the EIA attached as appendix A.

## **9. Conclusion**

9.1 While the Children Act 2004 places the onus upon county councils to make arrangements for improving the well-being of children in its area, district councils have a duty to co-operate in those arrangements. Supporting with the cost of living through a council tax discretionary discount will help care leavers manage the transition to adulthood and help make their own home a safe and affordable space. The access to free leisure offer supports physical and mental health and well-being, with the Work Experience placement offer providing the opportunity to gain the skills, insight and experience necessary to help move into future employment and independent adulthood.