



# **WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## Council Tax Exemption Policy for Care Leavers up to the age of 25 years

UNCLASSIFIED

## Document Control Information

Title: **Council Tax Exemption Policy for Care Leavers up to the age of 25 years**

Date: April 2021

Review date: April 2022

Version: 1

Classification: Unclassified

Owner: Jasmine Grimshaw, Service Manager, Corporate Parenting

Version	Date	Description
Version 1	April 2021	Council Tax Exemption Policy for Care Leavers up to the age of 25 years, effective from 1st April 2021. Reviewed with Andrew Kupusaevic (revenue) and Here4you team ( 03/21

## Contents

Introduction .....	3
Definition .....	3
Criteria .....	4
Application process .....	5
Appendix 1 - Council Tax Care Leavers - Discretionary Reduction Application .....	5

## Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to confirm Wokingham Borough Council's commitment to offering Council Tax exemption to its Former Relevant care leavers up to the age of 25 years.

Wokingham Borough council wants to improve the lives and life chances of its care leavers. We recognise that care leavers are among the most vulnerable groups in our society by granting up to 100% discretionary discount from Council Tax to Wokingham's Former Relevant care leavers, we aim to provide practical help and financial assistance to these young people while they are developing independent lives and life skills. Wokingham Borough Council wants to see care leavers succeed into independence and be protected from the threat of financial hardship, which can lead to debt, eviction and ultimately homelessness. To this end, Wokingham Borough Council aims to provide financial assistance with Council Tax bills to support its care leavers from the age of 18 until their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Legislation sets out statutory exemptions which the council must apply, but also permits the local authority to introduce its own exemptions under discretionary powers provided by Regulation 13a of the *Local Government Finance Act 1992*. Councils therefore have the power to reduce the amount of Council Tax that an individual is required to pay.

The proposal to exempt care leavers from Council Tax is aligned with Wokingham's *Care Leaver Offer* and is part of an overall package of support offered to prepare our care leavers for independence and support them in the successful transition to adulthood.

Local authorities must plan for looked after children so that they have the support they need as they make their transition to managing adult responsibilities.

For the purposes of this policy, a care leaver is a young person aged 18 - 25 who was a Former Relevant child in the care of Wokingham Borough Council, and then became a "care leaver" as defined by The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.<sup>1</sup>

## Definition of a Care Leaver

A care leaver is defined as a person who has been in the care of the local authority (looked after) for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who was looked after by the local authority at school leaving age, or after that date.

Other important definitions are as follows:

- **Eligible child** is a child aged 16 and 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who is still being looked after

---

<sup>1</sup> This includes young people who were in the care of the council by voluntary agreement or because of a court order.

- **Relevant child** is a child aged 16 and 17 who has been looked after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who has left care. This also includes young people who were detained (e.g. in a youth offending institution or hospital) when they turned 16, but who were looked after immediately before being detained
- **Former relevant child** is a young person over 18 who was previously 'eligible' or 'relevant'. Councils support this group until aged 21, or longer if they are in education or training
- **Qualifying child** is any young person under 21 (or 24 if in education or training) who stops being looked after or accommodated in a variety of other settings, or being privately fostered, after the age of 16. This also includes young people who are under a special guardianship order
- **Former relevant child pursuing education** is any former relevant child whose case was closed, for any reason. If we're informed that they're planning to continue education or training they can ask the council for support. If eligible, any help would last until their 25th birthday
- **Extension to 25 years old** - If you are under 25 year old and previously open to the leaving care team, under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 you are entitled to return for support, contact the leaving care team and ask to speak with the duty officer.

## Criteria

To be eligible to apply for Care Leaver Council tax exemption you will need to:

- Have been looked after by Wokingham Borough Council.
- Be a Former Relevant Care leavers as defined above
- Be a care leaver liable for Council Tax on a dwelling within the Borough of Wokingham
- Recorded as liable to pay Council Tax.
- If you live alone, you will be awarded a 100% discount.
- If you live with one other person who is also liable to pay the Council Tax, then the reduction will be 50%.

- If you join a household comprising of a single adult who is recorded as liable for council tax we would look to award a discount of 25% where a care leaver or care leavers join that household as a sub –tenant; however each case will be treated on its facts
- If you are a former relevant care leaver and no longer remain open to Children’s Services you will still be entitled to the exemption. The Local Authority will endeavour to ensure that all care leavers are aware of how to make an application up until the age of 25 years.
- If you are living outside of the Borough and a Former Relevant Wokingham Care leaver you are eligible to apply for an exemption. Wokingham will fund you or Council Tax liability by making payment on their behalf and arrange for the payments to be made to the relevant authority via children services.
- No reduction or exemption will be made for Care leavers of other authorities living within the Borough.

## Application process

In order to apply for a Council Tax exemption, the **Council Tax Care Leavers - Discretionary Application Form** must be filled in, signed and returned to your personal advisors. The full application form can be found under [Appendix 1](#), and is also available from our Procedure library [here](#).

If a Care Leaver requires any assistance in completing the form, they should discuss this with their Personal Adviser in the first instance. If you are no longer open to Children’s Services you can make contact with the Leaving Care Team who will be able to support you with this.

## Appendix 1 - Council Tax Care Leavers - Discretionary Reduction Application

### Council Tax Care Leavers - Discretionary Reduction Application

In order to be considered for a discretionary reduction the person must be a former relevant care leaver under the age of 25 who is paying Council Tax or living with someone who pays Council Tax and was looked after by Wokingham Borough Council

To apply please complete this form in full and ask you care worker to complete part three. Please email or post to the above address.

**Part One: About You.**

Your name:	
Date of Birth:	
Your address:	
Your Council Tax Account Number	

**Your declaration:**

I wish to apply for a Council Tax Care Leaver’s discount. I understand the following:

- My information will be cross-checked with social care records to confirm entitlement.
- Details of the discount, including the reason, will be shown on my Council Tax bill.
- I must notify Wokingham Borough Council, within 21 days if: I move address; or as a result of a change in my circumstances, I no longer qualify or will be entitled to less discount.
- I may be fined if I fail to promptly report a relevant change in my circumstance.
- I have the right to withdraw my consent to receive this discount at any time.

I declare that the information I have given on this form is correct and complete

<b>Signature</b>		<b>Date</b>	
------------------	--	-------------	--

**Part Three: (to be completed by your Support Worker/Appointee)**

By noting the below and signing this form you are confirming that the person named in Section 1 meets the criteria in the policy for the Care Leaver’s Discount Scheme

I confirm that: -

- The person named in Section 1 is a Care Leaver as defined by The Children Leaving Care Act 2000.

b) The person named in Section 1 has applied for any relevant national reliefs, exemptions or discounts.

c) The person named in Section 1 is a Wokingham Borough Council Leaver and is currently residing in Wokingham

d) The person named in Section 1 is between 18-25 years old.

e) I confirm that the person named in Section 1 was in the care of Wokingham Borough Council for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and that they were in care on their 16th birthday and left after 1st October 2001.

If you are able to confirm all of the above, please complete and sign below.

Name:		Title:	
Signature:		Date:	
Contact Phone Number		Contact Email Address	