

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

DONCASTER METROPLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Due Regard Statement Template

How to show due regard to the equality duty in how we develop our work and in our decision making.

Due Regard Statement

A **Due Regard Statement** (DRS) is the tool for capturing the evidence to demonstrate that due regard has been shown when the Council plans and delivers its functions. A Due Regard Statement must be completed for all programmes, projects and changes to service delivery.

- A DRS should be initiated at the beginning of the programme, project or change to inform project planning.
- The DRS runs adjacent to the programme, project or change and is reviewed and completed at the relevant points.
- Any reports produced need to reference “Due Regard” in the main body of the report and the DRS should be attached as an appendix.
- The DRS cannot be fully completed until the programme, project or change is delivered.

<p>1 Name of the 'policy' and briefly describe the activity being considered including aims and expected outcomes. This will help to determine how relevant the 'policy' is to equality.</p>	<p>Council Tax Exemption Scheme for Care Leavers</p> <p>Doncaster Council is proposing to provide 100% exemption from the payment of Council Tax from 1 April 2018 to care leavers who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ have left the care of Doncaster Council;○ are resident and otherwise liable to pay Council Tax in Doncaster for a property they occupy as their sole or main residence; and are under 25 years of age. <p>Information provided in May 2017 by Doncaster Children's Services Trust (DCST) shows there are 255 DMBC care leavers living in Doncaster. 66 of these care leavers are liable for Council Tax and, under these proposals, would see their liability reduced to zero from 1 April 2018.</p> <p>The aims of the proposed Council Tax Exemption Scheme for Care Leavers are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To support eligible care leavers until they reach the age of 25 and future young people leaving the care of Doncaster Council by alleviating the financial pressures encountered by this vulnerable group of young people.• To prevent care leavers becoming vulnerable to Council Tax debt and the resulting potential enforcement action reported by The Children's Society as harmful to these young people.• To support eligible care leavers generally in the transition from care to independent living by reducing the pressures encountered when setting up payments and managing their budgets for the first time and to improve their on-going life chances.• To help reduce care leavers' dependence on other Council services.• To meet the Council's 'Corporate Parenting' responsibilities which is a statutory function of the Council.• To meet the aims of the Government's care leavers' strategy – 'Keep on Caring' which encourages Council's to do what any reasonable parent would do to help their children get the best start in adult life.
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To meet the aims of the Children and Families Act which encourages Councils to do all they can to support care leavers, and Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act which places a statutory duty on Councils to make a clear offer to care leavers, and extends the corporate parenting responsibilities for care leavers from age 21 to age 25. <p>In addition to the eligible care leavers, the citizens of Doncaster will benefit generally from the scheme as the exemption will support one of the most vulnerable groups in our community. By helping to alleviate financial pressures which may contribute to poverty and deprivation amongst this group, improved outcomes should be achieved in terms of the contribution care leavers make to the community.</p>
2	Service area responsible for completing this statement.	Finance and Corporate Services/Revenues and Benefits/Revenues Service
3	Summary of the information considered across the protected groups. Service users/residents Doncaster Workforce	<p>Age The proposed Council Tax exemption will apply to care leavers under the age of 25. This is in line with the age at which corporate parenting responsibilities end and is affordable within the Council Tax Collection Fund surplus. At the point an eligible care leaver reaches the age of 25, they will become liable for full Council Tax (subject to any statutory discounts and exemptions). However, these care leavers will be advised to claim Council Tax Support which is a means-tested support scheme based on the care leavers circumstances.</p> <p>Disability The scheme is based on care leaver status and is not influenced by disability. Data is not available for this characteristic and there are no plans to collect this data as it has no impact.</p> <p>Race The scheme is based on care leaver status and is not influenced by race and ethnicity. Data is not available for this characteristic and there are no plans to collect this data as it</p>

	<p>has no impact.</p> <p>Gender The scheme is based on care leaver status and is not influenced by gender. Data is not available for this characteristic and there are no plans to collect this data as it has no impact.</p> <p>Sexual Orientation The scheme is based on care leaver status and is not influenced by sexual orientation. Data is not available for this characteristic and there are no plans to collect this data as it has no impact.</p> <p>Religion and Belief The scheme is based on care leaver status and is not influenced by religion or belief. Data is not available for this characteristic and there are no plans to collect this data as it has no impact.</p> <p>Maternity and Pregnancy The scheme is based on care leaver status and is not influenced by pregnancy and maternity. Data is not available for this characteristic and there are no plans to collect this data as it has no impact.</p> <p>Gender Reassignment The scheme is based on care leaver status and is not influenced by gender reassignment. Data is not available for this characteristic and there are no plans to collect this data as it has no impact.</p> <p>Marriage and civil partnership Under the proposals, where an eligible care leaver is jointly and severally liable for Council Tax with a person or persons who is/are not a care leaver, (this could be their husband/wife/civil partner), the exemption will still apply to the full Council Tax charge for</p>
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		<p>the property. This will ensure the care leaver is not otherwise pursued for collection of any Council Tax unpaid by the other liable person(s).</p> <p>Data is not available on the number of care leavers who are married or in a civil partnership and there are no plans to collect this data as it has no impact.</p>
4	<p>Summary of the consultation/engagement activities</p>	<p>The proposed Care Leavers Council Tax Exemption Scheme takes into account the findings of The Children's Society 2015 report <i>'The Wolf at the Door'</i>. The Mayor and Executive Board and Doncaster Children's Services Trust have been consulted on the proposed scheme along with four other local authorities that have implemented similar schemes (Cheshire East, Wolverhampton, Oldham and Rochdale). Some of the main design principles of these other authority schemes have been incorporated into the proposed scheme for Doncaster Council. For example, three out of the four authorities only award the exemption to young people leaving the care of their own authority.</p> <p>Consultation has also taken place with Rotherham, Barnsley and Sheffield Councils to establish their plans for implementing a Council Tax exemption scheme for care leavers. Rotherham are working towards implementing a scheme from April 2018. Barnsley and Sheffield Councils have no current plans to introduce a scheme.</p>
5	<p>Real Consideration:</p> <p>Summary of what the evidence shows and how has it been used</p>	<p>Information provided in May 2017 by Doncaster Children's Services Trust (DCST) shows there are 255 DMBC care leavers living in Doncaster. 66 of these care leavers are liable for Council Tax and, under these proposals, would see their liability reduced to zero from 1 April 2018.</p> <p>Based on 2017/18 Council Tax charges for a band A property, the estimated annual reduction in income from exempting the 66 care leavers from Council Tax is circa £55k after all other statutory discounts and exemptions have been applied for 2017/18 (this value will vary annually depending on the number of eligible care leavers). This loss of income will impact on the Collection Fund whose surplus will be reduced accordingly but can accommodate the reduction with minimal risk for this value. The costs may be offset by a reduction in emergency payments made to care leavers in crisis. These types of</p>

		<p>budgets are held by Doncaster Children’s Services Trust or Adults, Health and Wellbeing and any reduction in costs will help to reduce the current overspends in those services.</p> <p>The proposed Council Tax Exemption Scheme is exclusive to young people leaving the care of Doncaster Council and who are living in Doncaster. Consideration has been given to exempting all care leavers living in Doncaster including young people leaving the care of other local authorities and also DMBC care leavers living in other local authority areas. However, this would significantly increase the cost of the exemption having regard to the associated additional loss of Council Tax income to the Council; the increased administration costs of confirming care leaver status with other local authorities for non DMBC care leavers living in Doncaster; and the administration and associated costs of reimbursing DMBC care leavers living in other local authority areas where an exemption did not apply who had paid Council Tax to that local authority.</p> <p>It is also proposed that the exemption does not apply to empty properties as this could act as a disincentive for care leavers to give the appropriate notice to landlords and increase the number of abandoned properties.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Decision Making</p>	<p>Council Tax legislation does not provide a specific discount or reduction for care leavers. However, under Section 13A 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 where national discounts and exemptions cannot be applied.</p> <p>A report published in 2015 by The Children’s Society ‘The Wolf at the Door’ highlighted the vulnerability of care leavers to financial pressures, in particular, the difficulties encountered when entering independent accommodation for the first time. The report suggested that care leavers are a particularly vulnerable group for Council Tax debt and made a number of recommendations, including making care leavers eligible for Council Tax exemptions.</p> <p>The Government’s care leavers’ strategy – ‘Keep on Caring’ encourages Councils to do what any reasonable parent would do to help their children get the best start in adult life.</p>

		<p>In addition, the Children and Families Act encourages Councils to do all they can to support care leavers, and this has been further enhanced by Section 2 of the Children and Social Work Act which places a statutory duty on Councils to make a clear offer to care leavers, and extends the corporate parenting responsibilities for care leavers from age 21 to age 25.</p> <p>The use of Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for a class of cases is a decision which has to be made by Full Council. The proposed Council Tax Exemption Scheme for Care Leavers will be presented to Council on 25 January 2018.</p>
7	Monitoring and Review	<p>The Council will monitor the number of care leavers qualifying for the Council Tax exemption and any issues with the application process. Any complaints and challenges to the scheme will also be monitored and used to inform any future proposals for changes to the scheme which would need to be presented to Full Council for approval.</p>
8	Sign off and approval for publication	<p>Steve Mawson Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Director - Finance</p>