

Exeter City Council – Council Tax Support Scheme 2024-25 Consultation

The public were asked to share their views on a proposed plan to give care leavers a 100 per cent discount on their council tax. The aim of the plan is to financially support care leavers whilst they develop independent lives and life skills.

To qualify the care leaver must be:

- up to the age of 25,
- living in the Exeter district,
- and be looked after by Devon County Council.

The proposal

To introduce a class of support within the working age scheme to award 100% council tax support to care leavers looked after by Devon County Council, up to age 25.

The response

44 responses were received: 39 in support of the proposal and 5 not in support.

Comments received in support of the proposal:

- Care leavers are clearly disadvantaged and need as much help as they can get when making the transition into the wider adult world.
- I agree that all care leavers need as much support as possible to help them with budgeting and life skills and the proposal supports this.
- To give them a good start in life.
- Benefit rates are so low for this age group, and they are by their very nature very vulnerable people. So, placing additional financial issues on them is unhelpful.
- Young, Care-experienced people are at a huge disadvantage. They are often navigating a difficult world without the help of parents or family. There are so many areas where they could benefit from additional support and must be protected, nurtured, and supported in any way possible. While this is only a small amount, even this will be beneficial. For a young person moving into their own home. arranging their finances, sorting out their life-skills etc it is a really testing time. Alongside this we must consider the other impacts rather than just financial. Many of these young people have been through issues of loss and trauma. Anything that assists them as they move into independent living should be explored. A lot of these young people need assistance through the free-food providers because they are just learning those skills that other young people take for granted having learned from their family and with the support of their family.
- Supporting those most vulnerable is so important in the early stages of their lives.
- I think young people should be given as much opportunity to build a sustainable future rather than making the affordability of everyday essentials harder especially as we are facing a cost of living crisis. I believe this will provide some breathing space for them.
- Because care leavers require additional support, and this will also remove the potential for incurring council tax arrears and the associated problems caused by debt collection.
- Because Care Leavers need support.
- Care Leavers have so many disadvantages in life and no family support network to help them make a good start in life. This is a lovely idea.
- Care leavers require extra support while they transition into independent living.

- Great idea to give a boost to societies most vulnerable. Excellent thinking from Devon partners.
- Care leavers already have multiple challenges as they transition to living on their own. To relieve them of one of these burdens will only help them financially but psychologically as well.
- As a care experience person from years ago, I understand the pressures facing young people leaving care and therefore fully support the idea.
- Care leavers only have corporate parents to support them as they take their first steps in adulthood. Regular kids get to live at home for free with their families.
- Care Leavers tend to receive less support compared to their peers who can benefit significantly from family providing them with free rent and other subsidy towards general living and accommodation expenses. The plan to discount Council Tax for Care leavers will vastly improve living standards and career progression prospects for Care Leavers.
- No family or support or other choices than to pay. Seems reasonable to maintain this until they are 25 to give them parity with other children with families.
- I feel we owe care leavers every support possible after living in extreme adversity, especially in the tricky transition to adulthood.
- Care leavers do not tend to earn much, so any help is good. It also shows we care about them.
- Most of the council tax provision is returned to Devon County Council and so as corporate parent this feels correct.
- This makes perfect sense, and really only a minimum to support care leavers.
- Because I feel they need support. Many other youngsters have support from their families as they grow up but if young people have been in care, when this ends, they are often alone.
- Care leavers have, often, suffered rejection, trauma, many moves of care placements and schools and usually have little practical or emotional support from family. To expect them to be immediately able to manage financially on leaving care is unreasonable. Financial support for a period whilst they acquire coping skills is essential.
- Care leavers have a very tough time becoming independent, without the family support which most young people enjoy. They are in care through no fault of their own, but because of family circumstances beyond their control. Your proposal would go a small way towards recognising their situation and giving them a small financial incentive to succeed in their independent lives.
- I have previously managed support services and social housing for young people and understand the additional pressures that Care leavers face without family support. This proposal will assist with financial pressures and hopefully contribute to giving Care leavers a positive future.
- The cost to me as a CTax payer is negligible, but to the very few care leavers liable for CTax it will be a huge benefit.
- Care leavers need all the support they can get in the absence of continuing emotional and financial support from their 'carers'.
- It's really outrageous the lack of support given to children leaving care. I support anything that might help.
- Young people leaving care need a fair start in life. Parents give financial support if they can, so should the council.
- Care leavers can be very vulnerable and need all the help they can get.
- Care leavers are a disadvantaged group. It is a challenging time for a young person to leave care and to have to manage finances on a limited budget and with little support.

- Because these young people, through no fault of their own, are having to face and manage so many challenges with very little financial and emotional support.
- With cost of living increasing, unaffordable housing and low wages, young people will benefit from any financial support, especially those who have come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Any excess funds can be used towards improving their health and wellbeing and paying for opportunities they would otherwise miss out on if this proposal isn't passed.
- Care leavers deserve support.
- Tough start in life - the young people deserve every break they can get. For many of us we have the support of families that we can fall back on or who help to set us up.
- Young people in care have already had difficulties in their lives, through no fault of their own. Many will face more hurdles when they leave care. Anything that can be done to support them is positive.
- I think it a very worthwhile initiative to give care leavers the best start that we can. On the whole they start their adult lives at a significant disadvantage to others and plans such as this can help redress the balance.
- The road for care leavers to independent adulthood is difficult enough and this financial support would be invaluable. It would help care leavers to make ends meet and would be one less thing to worry about.
- It's an excellent proposal.
- It is a wonderful idea and I'd be happy to pay a little more on my Council Tax to support it.

Comments received not in support of the proposal:

- It will increase other people's council tax to cover this proposal.
- No one should get anything for free. It's bad enough the students of this city don't contribute causing the locals to pay more. Now another group of non-payers to force my bill upwards.
- Other services struggling.
- Council has a £5m debt and just making it harder to repay. Enough of cuts elsewhere is done!
- Discount of 100% is too much support, as many others need support too.

Other comments received about the proposal:

- As I recently received an enquiry, the care leavers did not understand anything about council tax, what it was, how to pay, what discounts he could get. His named care/support worker was not aware of the process to apply for care leavers or anything online, so perhaps we could supply them website addresses and information to the people who deal with care leavers and to provide a separate contact number or link to a form they could complete and send to us on their behalf.
- I propose a 95% reduction until 21 and a 90% reduction to 25. This reminds care leavers that once they reach 25, they will be responsible for their council tax. When you don't pay anything, it is a shock when you have to find the council tax from potentially the same income at 25.
- Well done Exeter Council for thinking about care leavers in this way.
- Other LAs did this years ago and it's about time Exeter and Devon took this step.
- Fantastic initiative, well done Exeter City Council! Please ensure this passes!
- It would be good to ensure that Care Leavers receiving this exemption are still under the care and support of DCC as part of the eligibility criteria.
- This should be expanded out to support more vulnerable groups in Exeter.

- Ideally more support would be continued by the council, but this often isn't possible.
- I would hope this is but one first step the City Council can take to alleviate the problems faced by care leavers. I hope more steps are to follow.
- I would be proud for this to be how ECC applies its discretion.
- Perhaps if out of county students (excluding care leavers) paid a proportion of council tax for the private houses they are renting this would raise much needed money towards providing all the extra services that are required to service these houses and towards supporting the less fortunate.
- Can we do anything else.
- Suggest 50% to expand to wider audience.