

Council 14 September, 2017

Care Leavers and Council Tax: A Fairer Start for Care Leavers

Labour Group to move:

Council notes that:

- 1 Under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 this Council has a statutory duty to support care leavers under the age of 25.
- 2 The recent Ofsted report on B&NES Children's Services identified the experiences and progress of care leavers as requiring improvement and recommended proactive support.
- 3 A large number of local authorities across the country have introduced measures to exempt care leavers from Council Tax, following publication of The Children's Society's 'Wolf at the Door' report 2015, which showed care leavers to be a group who are particularly vulnerable to falling into Council Tax debt when moving into independent accommodation for the first time.
- 4 Research from The Centre for Social Justice found that over half (57%) of young people leaving care have difficulty managing their money and avoiding debt.
- 5 The 2016 Government Report *Keep on Caring: Supporting Young People from Care to Independence* encourages local authorities to think creatively about how they can support care leavers in ways that reasonable parents would and to consider how they can support care leavers financially through, for example, Council Tax exemption.

This Council believes that:

- 1 Care leavers need support to make their transition from care to adult life as smooth as possible and to reduce the chance of falling into debt as they begin to manage their own finances.
- 2 Care leavers are a particularly vulnerable group for Council Tax debt.

Council agrees therefore:

- 1 To ask the Cabinet to:
 - a) investigate options to exempt care leavers from Council Tax until they are 25;
 - b) report back to Council in time for budget setting for 2018/19.