



Council Tax Discretionary Discount Policy – Solihull Care Leavers

1 Background

- 1.1 Billing Authorities have the power to allow a local Council Tax reduction under S13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended), for individual cases or a class of cases.
- 1.2 Care Leavers often have to start living independently much earlier than their peers taking on more financial responsibilities, when they might be on a low income and without the same family support network.
- 1.3 As a corporate parent, Solihull Council has a responsibility to support Solihull Care Leavers whilst they are developing the skills and confidence to live independent lives and learn vital life skills.
- 1.4 By granting a full reduction in Council Tax for Solihull Care Leavers living as single adults or living with other Solihull Care Leavers under the age of 25, the Council will be providing financial assistance for a group of people who need help at a very important time in their lives.
- 1.5 In order for the discount to apply, Solihull Council must have been the Corporate Parent and held responsibility for the care leaver as detailed in section 2.7.

2 Operation of the discount

- 2.1 Solihull Care Leavers will be disregarded (not counted) for discount purposes.
- 2.2 Where a qualifying Solihull Care Leaver is liable to pay Council Tax either as the only resident or living only with other Solihull Care Leavers, a full 100% discount will be allowed reducing the Council Tax charge to nil for the qualifying period.
- 2.3 Where a Solihull Care Leaver lives with others who are all disregarded and would have otherwise been exempt as provided by Council tax regulations, then a full 100% discount will be allowed reducing the Council Tax charge to nil for the qualifying period.
- 2.4 The Council Tax discount will take effect from 1st April 2020 (or such subsequent date when Council Tax liability commences). Solihull Care leavers with responsibility for Council Tax on 1st April 2020 will be granted the discount from that date. Solihull Care leavers who become responsible for Council Tax after this date will be granted the discount from the date of occupation
- 2.5 The reduction will be awarded only after entitlement to other discounts have been applied (except Council Tax Reduction).
- 2.6 The qualifying period will last until the Solihull Care Leaver(s) reach the age of 25 years.
- 2.7 A Solihull Care Leaver is defined as a person under 25, who has been looked after by Solihull Council for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14; and who was looked after by Solihull Council at school-leaving age or after that date.

2.8 The Act defines the categories of children entitled to leaving care support as:

- Eligible children are those young people aged 16-17 who are still in care and have been 'looked after' for a total of 13 weeks from the age of 14 and including their 16th birthday;
- Relevant children are those young people aged 16 and 17 who have already left care, and who were 'looked after' for at least 13 weeks from the age of 14 and have been 'looked after' at some time while they were 16 or 17;
- Former relevant children are those young people aged 18 to 25 who have been eligible and/or relevant.

2.9 Solihull Council will apply the discount automatically where records show that the Care Leaver meets the conditions shown in 2.7.

2.10 Once an award has been made an adjustment notice or bill will be sent confirming the discount.

2.11 The Solihull Care Leaver must advise the Council within 21 days of any change in circumstances which may give rise to a change in entitlement to discount such as a new adult moving in or the Solihull Care Leaver vacating the dwelling.

3 Review of decision and appeal process

3.1 S16 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 provides that a person may appeal against any decision by a Billing Authority that he or she is liable to pay Council Tax or a calculation as to the amount to pay.

3.2 Any Solihull Care Leaver aggrieved by a decision of the Billing Authority not to award a Solihull Care Leavers Discount may in the first instance request a review of the decision.

3.3 A review should be instigated by contacting the Income Team at Solihull Council via email to council.tax@solihull.gov.uk or by post to:

Income Team
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
PO Box 1761
Council House
Manor Square
Solihull
West Midlands
B91 9RR

3.4 A request for a review should detail the reasons in full.

3.5 If a review is requested, the decision on entitlement will be independently reviewed by a different officer from the one involved in the initial determination.

3.6 A final decision following a review will be sent in writing to the Solihull Care Leaver.

- 3.7 Following a request for a review, if the Solihull Care Leaver is still aggrieved an appeal may be made to the Valuation Tribunal within 2 months of the review response at 3.6. Or, if there has been no response, within 4 months of the date of the request for a review the Care Leaver may appeal to the Valuation Tribunal.
- 3.8 The Valuation Tribunal's contact details are:

Valuation Tribunal
3rd Floor
Crossgate House
Wood Street
Doncaster
DN1 3LL
Email: vtDoncaster@valuationtribunal.gov.uk
Tel: 0300 123 2035