

Response from CAB received 19/11/2012 includes the following recommendations

- To pay Local Council Tax Relief in full, to people that have lost disability benefits but they are still vulnerable.
- Introduce facility for people affected by the changes to access financial capacity support.
- To review the policies prior to the end of the transitional period.
- To amend forms to enable UDC benefit staff to identify care leavers and those that have had their renewal of disability claims refused.
- Review the practicality of transferring the burden of these suggested changes to the wider full council tax community as CAB feel that the weekly amount would be negligible and the affects would be more evenly spread.
- CAB would recommend that UDC remove the requirement for all those, living alone and claiming means tested benefit, to pay any contribution towards council tax. CAB would ask that the decision is made now and not left until the end of the transitional period as this could mean that many of those who were vulnerable could already be in significant arrears.

CAB also made extensive comments about the two particular groups who will be hard hit by changes to the welfare system; including the tighter definitions of “disability” by the DWP (to reduce the benefit bill) that leaves households with substantially reduced income – often affecting claimants with mental health issues; and the other group is single people under 25 who live alone without partner or children; this group includes family estrangement and individuals who have ‘left care’; who have significantly lower income than any other type of household.

CAB also commented on high “defaulting” costs of additional debt including bank charges for ‘bounced’ direct debit payments, high court costs and UDC transaction charges for ‘non-electronic’ payments. CAB provided copies of 2 recent CAB reports on Employment and Support Allowance and the work capability assessment (“Right First Time?” Jan 2012 and “Not working” March 2010)

Officer comments in response to the CAB:

There are currently 130 Council Tax benefit claimants under the age of 25 years;

- a. 38 are single individuals with no partner or children (the remaining 92 have a partner and/or children)
- b. 11 of the single individuals are currently receiving DLA and will be protected by the UDC proposal
- c. 4 single individuals are in employment and will get more support than current CTB scheme as the wages disregard of £25 gives a considerable work incentive.
- d. 23 remaining single individuals will (on average) have to pay £1.51 per week which is 2.7% of their DWP benefit of £56.15 per week.

Care-leavers usually get support from the ‘leaving care’ team at ECC and present for additional Housing Benefit support so no explicit need to amend the claim form

UDC do not currently record how many claimants have disability awards withdrawn to quantify impact.

UDC intend to have a ‘exceptional hardship fund’ and any single individual may apply for assistance and each application will be assessed on its own merits.

Cabinet 20 November 2012

Item 2

Local Council Tax Support – final scheme proposals

Supplementary pages

- **Additional worked example (Appendix D)**
 - **Example 8 Protected disabled claimant**
- **Updated information on other Essex LCTS schemes (Appendix E)**
- **Consultation response from CAB received on 19/11/2012**