

Test and Trace Support Payment Policy

Introduction

In response to Covid-19 and effective from 28 September 2020 the government have made it a legal requirement to self-isolate if an individual has been contacted by NHS Test and Trace and instructed to self-isolate.

To support those required to self-isolate the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) have setup a payment support scheme for those on a low income who cannot work from home. There are two elements to this scheme: (1) The main scheme; and (2) the extended scheme each with a discretionary element attached to it. All these elements are payable at £500.

This scheme is due to run until 30 June 2021.

DHSC have provided eligibility criteria for the main, extended and discretionary elements of the scheme. Local authorities can introduce additional criteria to determine eligibility for discretionary payments in their area, as long as these operate in addition to, rather than instead of, the criteria set out.

Eligibility Criteria – Main Scheme

Support Payment

Eligibility for a £500 Main Scheme Support Payment is restricted to people who:

- have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because they have tested positive for coronavirus or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive;
- are employed or self-employed;
- are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result; and
- are currently receiving Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit.

Discretionary Support Payment

Eligibility for the £500 discretionary support payment is restricted to people who:

DHSC mandatory eligibility criteria

- have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because they have tested positive for coronavirus or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive;
- are employed or self-employed;
- are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result;

- are not currently receiving Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit; and
- are on low incomes and will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while they are self-isolating.

LBB additional eligibility criteria

- were earning no more than £400 per week prior to being instructed to self-isolate; or
- are in receipt of Council Tax Support; or
- at the discretion of the Assistant Director of Finance or Director of Resources where they deem an application outside of LBB's additional eligibility criteria would cause unnecessary financial hardship.

Backdating

Eligibility for the NHS Test and Trace Support Payment, including discretionary payments, is for people who are told to self-isolate on or after 28 September 2020 and who meet the relevant eligibility criteria.

Applications will not be accepted from people told to self-isolate before 28 September 2020, even if the period of self-isolation continues after 28 September.

Applications from members of the same household

People in the same household can each make an individual application to receive the payment, if they each meet the eligibility criteria.

Multiple claims

Some individuals could be asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace more than once.

Someone can claim more than once (if they are told to self-isolate multiple times), as long as they meet the eligibility criteria for each individual claim and their periods of self-isolation do not overlap.

For example, if someone claims for a period of self-isolation lasting from 1 October to 14 October and then claims again for a second period of self-isolation beginning on 10 October, they would only be allowed to claim once, because the two periods overlap. However, they would be allowed to claim for a second period of self-isolation that began after the first period had ended on 14 October.

Eligibility Criteria – Extended Scheme

Extended Support Payment

Effective 8 March 2021 eligibility for a £500 Extended Scheme Support Payment is restricted to parents or guardians who:

- are the parent or guardian of a child or young person in the same household and need to take time off work to care for them while they self-isolate. This is limited to one parent or guardian per household for the child or young person's self-isolation period;
- are employed or self-employed;
- are unable to work from home while undertaking caring responsibilities and will lose income as a result;
- are currently receiving Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit;
- are responsible for a child or young person who:
 - is aged 15 or under (or 25 or under with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC)) and normally attends an education or childcare setting, and
 - has been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace or by their education or childcare setting because they have been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

Extended Discretionary Support Payment

Eligibility for the £500 extended discretionary support payment is restricted to people who:

DHSC mandatory eligibility criteria

- are the parent or guardian of a child or young person in the same household and need to take time off work to care for them while they self-isolate. This is limited to one parent or guardian per household for the child or young person's self-isolation period;
- are employed or self-employed;
- are unable to work from home while undertaking caring responsibilities and will lose income as a result;
- are not currently receiving Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit;
- are responsible for a child or young person who:
 - is aged 15 or under (or 25 or under with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC)) and normally attends an education or childcare setting, and
 - has been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace or by their education or childcare setting because they have been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- are on low incomes and will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while they are self-isolating.

LBB additional eligibility criteria

- were earning no more than £400 per week prior to being instructed to self-isolate; or
- are in receipt of Council Tax Support; or
- at the discretion of the Assistant Director of Finance or Director of Resources where they deem an application outside of LBB's additional eligibility criteria would cause unnecessary financial hardship.

Backdating

Eligibility for the Extended Support Payment, including discretionary payments, is for a child or young person who are told to self-isolate on or after 8 March 2021 and who meet the relevant eligibility criteria.

Applications will not be accepted for a child or young person told to self-isolate before 8 March 2021, even if the period of self-isolation continues after 8 March.

Applications from members of the same household

Parents and guardians who are not legally required to self-isolate can make one application per household for the child or young person's self-isolation period.

People in the same household who are applying because they are legally required to self-isolate can make an individual application to receive the main scheme payment, if they each meet the eligibility criteria.

Applications that overlap with another period of self-isolation

We are extending eligibility to one parent or guardian per household for the child or young person's self-isolation period. This means a parent or guardian can claim more than once, provided their child or young person's self-isolation periods do not overlap. This applies irrespective of whether the parent or guardian is claiming twice for the same child, or for two different children.

So for example, in a household with two children (Child A and Child B), the parents or guardians can claim twice (either twice from the same parent or one claim per parent) if Child A's first day of self-isolation is on 8 March and Child B's first day of self-isolation is on 21 March. This is because Child B's first day of self-isolation is after Child A's ten-day self-isolation period. However, if Child B's first day of self-isolation is 15 March, the two children's self-isolation periods overlap; their household can only make a single TTSP claim.

General

Applications made after someone's period of self-isolation has ended

Eligible individuals can make a claim up to 42 days after their period of self-isolation ended, applications will not be accepted after this point.

Third-party applications

Applicants can apply on behalf of someone else; however, the £500 must be paid into a bank account in the name of the person for whom the application is being made. For example, if someone applied on behalf of a parent, the payment would be made into the parent's bank account.

Applicants who are quarantining after returning to the UK

The Test and Trace Support Payment scheme does not cover people who are self-isolating after returning to the UK from abroad, unless they have tested positive for coronavirus or have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

Application Process

Applications must be made online via the council's website and will include agreement that the applicant consents to all stipulated declarations. All applications must be supported by enough evidence to confirm that they meet the relevant criteria.

Applicants for the main scheme will have to provide:

- their name, address, date of birth and national insurance number and contact details;
- a notification from NHS Test and Trace asking them to self-isolate;
- proof of receipt of one of the qualifying benefits;
- a bank statement (as a basic up-front fraud check); and
- proof of employment or, if they are self-employed, evidence of self-assessment returns, trading income and proof that their business delivers services which cannot be undertaken without social contact.

Applicants for the extended scheme will have to provide:

- their name, address, date of birth and national insurance number and contact details;
- proof of receipt of one of the qualifying benefits;
- a bank statement (as a basic up-front fraud check);
- proof of employment or, if they are self-employed, evidence of self-assessment returns, trading income and proof that their business delivers services which cannot be undertaken without social contact;
- the name and age of the child who is self-isolating;
- the child's education or care setting and year group including an email or phone number for the setting;
- and either:
 - the child's eight-digit NHS Test and Trace ID number. This is for parents and guardians of children or young people who have received a notification directly from NHS Test and Trace telling them to self-isolate, or
 - a communication from the child or young person's education or childcare setting confirming that they have to self-isolate. This is for parents and guardians of children or young people who have been told to self-isolate by their education or childcare setting because they have been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive, or
 - a screenshot of a young person's NHS COVID-19 App notification telling them to self-isolate **AND** evidence that the young person has an Education, Health and Care Plan. This is for parents or guardians of young people aged 16-25 who have additional support needs and who have been notified to self-isolate by the NHS COVID-19 App.

All applicants will be required to make a declaration that they cannot work from home and have seen a reduction in income because of self-isolation. Applicants who are applying for the extended scheme will have to provide consent to their child or young person's school or childcare setting being contacted to verify the requirement to self-isolate.

Payments will only be paid when all eligibility criteria have been suitably evidenced.

Determination of applications

Applications will be considered by a dedicated review team, overseen by The Exchequer Team.

Appeals

There will be no right of appeal against a decision not to award a payment, either for the main scheme or the discretionary scheme. Applicants who are turned down will not be eligible because they do not meet the criteria.

Barnet will work with applicants to make sure they provide the necessary evidence to support a successful application. For instance, someone who is self-employed may have forgotten to provide their self-assessment return in the first instance will be given a single opportunity to provide the missing evidence.

Policy review

To ensure that the Discretionary Support Payment reaches those individuals most in need, this policy may be reviewed by the Director of Resources, following which the council reserves the right to modify eligibility criteria.

Combatting fraud

In order to ensure that Test and Trace Support Payments are not subject to potential abuse, all submitted applications will require a statutory declaration of truth, a statement regarding data processing and a recovery of funds statement. This declaration allows for the council, through the Corporate Anti-Fraud Team, to carry out post-payment checks in order to give greater assurance that the funds were claimed correctly. Furthermore, the declaration carries warnings which further allow the Council to consider taking criminal action against persons who have been found to have deliberately made false applications for the funding. It also allows for the recovery of funds which have been paid which should not have been.

The Award

It is intended that all applications will be processed within two working days of receipt of all required evidence and payments will be made via BACS only. Successful applications should expect to receive the funds in their accounts within 5 working days of the fully completed application.

As funding is limited, any discretionary award will be on a first-come-first-served basis. The council cannot commit to funding further discretionary applications once all available government funding has been allocated.

Taxation

These payments will be subject to income tax, but they will not be subject to National Insurance Contributions.