

## **Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme**

### **1. Background**

With effect from 28 September 2020 there is a new legal obligation for individuals who test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) or who have been identified as a contact by NHS Test and Trace to self-isolate.

In order to support those on a low income who are affected a new Test and Trace Support Payment (TTSP) is being introduced. This is a £500 payment that is made to the individual who has to self-isolate. It can be claimed multiple times where there is more than one period of self-isolation.

Where multiple household members make an application at the same address, each application will be considered separately.

### **2. Commencement and Review Date for this Policy**

The West of England unitary authorities (Bath & North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, South Gloucestershire Council) and North Somerset Council have developed a regional policy to provide some consistency in the additional support that will be available to individuals under these prevailing conditions across the wider region.

The policy came into force with effect from 28 September 2020 and will be reviewed on 31 January 2021.

### **3. Eligibility**

The individual must:-

- 3.1 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
- 3.2 Be employed or self-employed
- 3.3 Be unable to work from home and will lose income as a result
- 3.4 Must also be in receipt of at least one of the following benefits or tax credits
  - Universal Credit
  - Working Tax Credit

- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income Support
- Housing Benefit
- Pension Credit

#### **4. Discretionary Awards**

Provision is made for a discretionary award for individuals who satisfy the eligibility criterion 3.1- 3.3 above (excluding being in receipt of a qualifying benefit or tax credits) who also satisfy one of the following conditions:

- 4.1 On a low income defined as eligible for Council Tax Reduction (CTR) in your local authority area; or your income is low enough to potentially qualify for this or other benefits.
- 4.2 Suffering financial hardship as a result of being instructed to self-isolate. Hardship will be determined by comparing the individual's income prior to self-isolation and will be for the period of self-isolation. The loss of income must be sufficient to cause financial hardship.

If the declared low income is at a level that would result in possible benefit entitlement, but a claim hasn't been made or has been refused due to immigration status, we will advise individuals to claim for an appropriate qualifying benefit.

In some cases it may be more appropriate to direct applicants to other assistance funds. Where this is the case we will direct those where necessary, e.g. university and college funds.

Applications for a discretionary award will be made using the same application process and a decision made by considering eligibility for both a standard TTSP and discretionary award.

#### **5. Applications and Evidence**

Individuals should apply to their own local authority using the online application form (which will include the ability to upload documents at point of application). If an individual cannot apply online, a telephone application can be made by contacting the local authority's published number.

The following evidence requirements are examples of support for an individual's application for a TTSP:-

### **Current Employment**

- Most recent payslip if the individual is employed, or;
- Contract of employment and bank account showing payment of wages, or;
- Most recent trading accounts or tax return if the applicant is self-employed.

### **Loss of Income from Employment**

- Payslip(s) showing reduction in income as a result of self-isolation, or;
- A letter/email from employer to confirm that income will be reduced as a result of self-isolating, or;
- Trading accounts for period of self-isolation if self-employed; or
- In absence of any of the above a self-declaration.

The council will be unable to make a payment until loss of income as a result of self-isolating is confirmed. This can be provided to the council separately to the initial application to the TTSP scheme.

### **Self-isolation**

- Notification from NHS Test and Trace asking the individual to self-isolate (including eight digit NHS Test and Trace Unique Identification Number)
- Currently, we're not able to accept applications from people with a notification from the NHS COVID app. This is because app users are anonymous and there is no way to verify an applicant who has been asked to self-isolate, unlike those who are asked to isolate directly by the Test and Trace Service.

### **Payment**

- Bank statement for the account which the Test and Trace Support Payment will be paid into (this account must be in the name of the person applying for the Test and Trace Support Payment).

### **Providing Evidence**

Supporting evidence is to be provided electronically via the council's website or sent to the local authority's published e-mail address. We will consider alternative ways of submitting evidence on a case by case basis and in a way that does not result in affecting the self-isolation of the individual.

An application can be made on behalf of somebody else. In this case, the payment must still be paid into a bank account in the name of the applicant receiving the payment. Checks will be undertaken to ensure that the individual who is receiving the payment is eligible and that payment is made directly to them.

## **6. Decisions**

Decisions on eligibility will be made by the benefits service or other local authority representative with delegated authority and will be based on the information provided in the application form, evidence provided by the applicant and data made available to the council by the following government departments:-

- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
- Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC)
- NHS Test and Trace

It is not expected that information and evidence in addition to the above will be required. However, wherever further information is needed contact will be made with the applicant via e-mail or telephone.

## **7. Delayed Applications**

Eligible individuals can apply for a TTSP up to 14 days after they are no longer required to self-isolate. We cannot accept applications delayed after that period. We will consider applications that are delayed as a result of any delays in the council implementing the scheme or where there is a delay between the application being submitted and relevant evidence being provided.

## **8. Method of Payment**

Payment will be made as a £500 lump sum to the bank account nominated by the individual applying for the TTSP. This should be paid within three days of an eligible application and supporting evidence being received. We will consider how payments are made to individuals who do not have a bank account on a case by case basis.

## **9. Notification of Decisions**

The applicant will be notified of whether their application has been successful or not. This will be via 'send secure' e-mail wherever possible.

If a decision cannot be notified electronically a letter will be sent to the individual's address.

## **10. Appeals**

There is no formal appeal process for the TTSP scheme. The local authority decision will be final and no separate dispute resolution is in place with this scheme. The dispute resolution process under the constitution of the relevant council will apply.

## **11. Overpayments**

In the event that a payment is made to an individual who is not eligible, the council may take action to recover the payment.

## **12. Fraud**

The council has the right to recover costs from individuals who claim the payment fraudulently and may take further action against individuals as required.

## **13. Review**

The policy may be reviewed at a date earlier than schemes current end date of the 31 January 2021 and if there is a change in the government's approach to funding or an ongoing requirement for local authorities to provide the scheme for a further period. In addition we reserve the right to dis-apply the policy once central government funding has been exhausted.