



**DISCRETIONARY
TEST AND TRACE SUPPORT PAYMENTS
POLICY**

2020/21

1. General

From 28 September 2020, individuals are entitled to apply for a Test and Trace Support Payment (main award) **or** discretionary support payment of £500. This is to support people on low incomes who are unable to work from home if they are told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace and will lose income as a result.

These payments are designed to help ensure people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and their close contacts self-isolate for the required period to stop the onward spread of the virus. They are also designed to encourage individuals who are eligible for this payment to get tested if they have symptoms. This is important to help stop the transmission of COVID-19 and avoid further economic and societal restrictions.

The scheme starts from 28 September 2020, and local authorities should have arrangements in place to administer payments by 12 October 2020. Someone told to self-isolate on or after 28 September will be able to make a backdated claim for payment. The scheme will last until 31 January 2021.

The policy covers the discretionary support payment scheme which facilitates awards to those residents who do not meet the criteria for the main award because they **are not** currently receiving one of the qualifying benefits, and are on a low income and will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work whilst they are self-isolating.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the latest guidance issued by Department of Health of Social Care, The Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme: Implementation Guide for Local Authorities in England.

2. Delegation

The authority to determine applications in the first instance for Test and Trace Support Payments, including Discretionary Payments is delegated to the Director responsible for Revenues and Welfare Support Services.

3. Eligibility for the Test and Trace Support Payment Main Award (For information)

Eligibility for a £500 Test and Trace Support Payment is restricted to individuals 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.

4. Eligibility for a Discretionary payment

Eligibility for a £500 discretionary payment is restricted to individuals who meet the following 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;
- have savings of less than £3,000,
- are on a low income (average gross weekly pay of less than £305.20 per week but more than £95.85 per week), and
- can demonstrate that they will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while they are self-isolating (to include evidence of a reduction in income due to self-isolation of more than 50% of the applicant's gross pay).

5. Assessment Process

All applications will be assessed on a case by case basis. The application form will set out particulars of the evidence that will need to be included with the application for the payment, to include the following:

- National Insurance number
- NHS Test and Trace Account ID
- A recent bank statement

And

- Most recent wage slip, or
- proof of self-employment i.e. most recent self-assessment tax return and Unique Taxpayer Reference Number.

The evidence that the Council may request will not be limited to the above list. This list is intended as a guide only.

Insufficient evidence could result in a claim being delayed or rejected.

There will only be one payment per individual claim for a single period of self-isolation. Separate claims may be made for subsequent periods of self-isolation.

Eligible individuals can make a claim up to 14 days after their period of self-isolation ended. Applications will not be accepted after this point

There will be no right of appeal against a decision not to award a payment.

6. Funding and demand

The Department of Health and Social Care has provided the Council with funding of **£24,255** to support residents under our discretionary scheme. Payments will be made within 3 days of an eligible application being verified.

The drawdown of the funding amount will be kept under constant review and no further payments will be made once the allocation is exhausted unless further funding is provided.

7. Taxation

These payments will be subject to income tax, but they will not be subject to National Insurance Contributions (NICs). This is the case both for Test and Trace Support Payments and discretionary payments made under the scheme. Details of the payment will be shared with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

8. Fraud Prevention

The Government will support the Council to carry out post-event assurance work. Where checks discover that payments have been made in error or have been claimed as a result of fraud, the Council has the right to recoup any payments made.

Applicants to this grant will require to make the following declaration on the application form:

I confirm that the information is true and accurate. I agree to stay at home and self-isolate for the required period. I understand that if I fail to do so, I will be required to pay the funds back and my contact details may be passed on to the police for further action.

9 Changes to Government Guidance

(a) This document is known as the Gedling Borough Council Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Policy.

- (b) When adopting this policy, the Council had regard to the Government's guidance on The Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme: Implementation Guide for Local Authorities in England.
- (c) If the Government makes any alteration to its guidance, the Director for Finance, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Reputation, will have authority to amend this guidance where necessary.

Example Award Assessment

Example 1:

An applicant whose average gross weekly pay for the previous month was £300 and because of self-isolation they will receive SSP of £95.85 a week – this is a drop of income of more than 50% and would be entitled to the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment if demonstrating financial hardship.

Example 2:

An applicant whose average gross weekly pay for the previous month was £160 and because of self-isolation they will receive SSP of £95.85 a week, this is a drop of income of less than 50% and would **not** be entitled to the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment.

For both the Test and Trace Support Payment and discretionary payments, eligible individuals will receive their £500 payment on top of any benefits and Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) that they currently receive.