



**LANCASTER  
CITY COUNCIL**

*Promoting City, Coast & Countryside*

**INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER AND OFFICER DELEGATED DECISIONS**

**FRIDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2020**

Please find enclosed Decision Notice in connection with the following:

**ICMD6 "COVID-19 SELF-ISOLATION PAYMENTS POLICY 2020/21" (Pages 2 - 40)**

**Queries regarding these documents**

Please contact Liz Bateson, Democratic Services - email [ebateson@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:ebateson@lancaster.gov.uk).

Democratic Services,  
Town Hall,  
Dalton Square,  
Lancaster,  
LA1 1PJ

Published on FRIDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2020



*Promoting City, Coast & Countryside*

**EXECUTIVE DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER  
NOTICE OF DECISION**

<b>TITLE OF DECISION: "COVID-19 SELF-ISOLATION PAYMENTS POLICY 2020/21"</b>			
<b>NAME OF DECISION TAKER:</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR ANNE WHITEHEAD</b>		
<b>POSITION AND RESPONSIBILITY HELD:</b>	<b>CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR FINANCE</b>		
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>ADRIAN ROBINSON HEAD OF SHARED SERVICES</b>		
<b>TELEPHONE:</b>	01772 906023		
<b>E-MAIL:</b>	A.robinson@preston.gov.uk		
<b>Details of Decision:</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The policy detailed under Appendix A is approved in line with Recommendation 1 with immediate effect</li> <li>A waiver has been granted by chair of Overview &amp; Scrutiny in line with Recommendation 2</li> <li>The S151 Officer is authorised to make final amendments to the scheme in the light of evolving guidance, as per Recommendation 3</li> </ul>			
<b>Reasons for the decision:</b>			
<p>The Test and Trace Support Payments Scheme has been introduced by Government to help residents instructed to self-isolate by NHS Test &amp; Trace, who may have previously struggled to fulfill this instruction due to financial constraints. The Council has developed a policy line with government guidance, which incorporates a discretionary element to accommodate those employed individuals who do not meet the set criteria.</p>			
<b>IS THE DECISION URGENT: YES</b>			
<b>THE SCHEME IS DEVELOPED IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND IS AVAILABLE TO ALL INDIVIDUALS WHO MEET THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA ON OR AFTER 28 SEPTEMBER 2020.</b>			
<b>THE COUNCIL IS OBLIGED TO HAVE ARRANGEMENTS IN PLACE BY 12 OCTOBER 2020.</b>			
<b>I CONFIRM THAT I HAVE BEEN CONSULTED ON THE ABOVE DECISION AND THAT IT IS URGENT AND REASONABLE IN ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES. (IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 17 OF THE OVERVIEW &amp; SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES)</b>			
<b>SIGNATURE OF THE OVERVIEW &amp; SCRUTINY CHAIRMAN: CLLR TRICIA HEATH</b>			
<b>I confirm that I have taken account of the options proposed by officers, the various implications set out in the report and the comments of the Monitoring and Section 151 Officers and am authorising the decision as set out above.</b>			
<b>SIGNATURE OF DECISION TAKER:</b>	CLLR ANNE WHITEHEAD		
<b>DATE:</b>	13.10.20		
<i>THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES</i>			<b>REF NO.</b>
<b>DATE DECISION TAKEN:</b>	13.10.20	<b>DATE RECEIVED BY DEMOCRATIC SERVICES:</b>	16.10.20
<b>DATE DECISION PUBLISHED:</b>	16.10.20	<b>IMPLEMENTATION DATE ( publication day + 5 working days):</b>	IMMEDIATE – CALL-IN WAIVED

## Lancaster City Council | Report Cover Sheet

<b>Meeting</b>	Individual Cabinet Member Decision	<b>Date</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> October 2020
<b>Title</b>	Covid -19 Self-Isolation Payments Policy 2020/21		
<b>Report of</b>	Head of Shared Service		
<b>Purpose of the Report</b>			
<p>This report seeks approval to implement a Covid-19 Self-Isolation Payments Policy to cover new grant schemes introduced by Government in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The policy encompasses 2 schemes, sets out the criteria to determine eligibility, and outlines the approach the Council will take in determining whether an award should be paid. The 2 schemes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheme 1 - Test and Trace Support Payments Scheme (Standard Scheme)</li> <li>• Scheme 2 – Test &amp; Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme (Discretionary Scheme)</li> </ul> <p>The Policy is attached at <b>Appendix A</b>.</p>			
<b>Key Decision (Y/N)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Date of Notice</b>	<b>Exempt (Y/N)</b>
			<b>N</b>

### Report Summary

The Test and Trace schemes has been introduced by Government to help residents instructed to self-isolate by NHS Test & Trace, who may have previously struggled to fulfill this instruction due to financial constraints.

Under the schemes, individuals are entitled to a Test and Trace Support Payment, or a Discretionary Support Payment of £500. 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 help stop the onward spread of the virus and avoid further economic and societal restrictions.

The schemes are available to all individuals who meet the eligibility criteria on or after 28 September 2020. At the present time the Government has stated that the schemes will be available till 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021.

Due to the urgency for local authorities to have arrangements in place by 12 October 2020 to process and verify applications, the recommendations within this report include a request to the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee to waive the 5 day call in period.

### Recommendations of Councillor Whitehead:

- (1) That the Covid-19 Self-Isolation Payments Policy 2020/21 be approved, as set out at **Appendix A**, to take immediate effect. (Option 1)
- (2) That the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee be asked to waive the “call in” period in relation to this report.
- (3) That the S151 Officer be authorised to make final amendment to the Policy to accommodate evolving guidance and any technical FAQ’s in relation to these schemes, and to make all other necessary arrangements for its implementation with immediate effect.

### Relationship to Policy Framework

The report is in response to recent government measures introduced to support working individuals on lower incomes who have been instructed to self-isolate, but cannot work from home and have lost income as a result. The policy compliments the Council's own plans to create a local support package to combat the pressure residents may find themselves under during the coronavirus pandemic.

### Conclusion of Impact Assessment(s), where applicable

Climate	Wellbeing & Social Value
Digital	Health & Safety
Equality	Community Safety

The policy demonstrates the commitment to support those working individuals on a low income who unfortunately find themselves unable to work as a result of new self-isolation rules.

Government funding estimates suggest limited applicants (approx. 200) will be eligible for grant awards under this policy, although additional funding is available should numbers exceed initial expectations in relation to the Test and Trace Support Payments Scheme.

### Details of Consultation

There is no formal requirement for consultation as the Council is obliged to follow Government Guidance. However, the policy has been drafted following consultation with other Lancashire authorities and relevant professional bodies (IRRV).

### Legal Implications

From 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020 people have a legal duty to self-isolate when instructed to do so, to ensure compliance and reduce the spread of Covid-19.

In doing so, support is now available through the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment for people on low incomes who are unable to work while self-isolating.

Government guidance confirms local authority responsibility for administering the scheme sets out what needs to be done to enable people in their area to claim the Test and Trace Support Payment, including discretionary payments.

### Financial Implications

The Department of Health and Social Care on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 issued operational guidance for the implementation of the Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme. Within that guidance the distribution methodology for the allocation of the funding to local government was set out, under which the Council is set to receive approx. £29.5k for administration costs, together with:

- £64k for Test and Trace Support payments
- £38.6k for Discretionary Support payments

The Government, will, in line with eligibility criteria set out in the policy, re-imburse local authorities that pay grant to eligible claimants, using a grant under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003.

The Test & Trace Support Scheme fund will be reconciled, meaning any money that is overspent or underspent compared to the initial allocation that a local authority receives will be topped up or repaid respectively.

The Discretionary Support Scheme funding has been distributed up front, with no reconciliation process in place for underspends and overspends. In order to mitigate the risk of any overspend on this scheme applications will be on a “first come first served” basis and the scheme will end either on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021, or when the Government funding is exhausted, whichever is earlier. The policy states that the Council reserves the right to change the scheme at any time. This will help to ensure that discretionary payments are available throughout the period to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021 and that funds go to those who face the most financial hardship.

#### **Other Resource or Risk Implications**

The scheme will be implemented within existing resources. Spend will be carefully monitored to mitigate any risk to the Council, with issues flagged up to the Cabinet Member at an early stage should the fund be likely to encounter financial strain.

#### **Section 151 Officer’s Comments**

The S151 Officer has contributed to this report.

#### **Monitoring Officer’s Comments**

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

<b>Contact Officer</b>	Adrian Robinson (Head of Shared Service)
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<b>Tel</b>	01772 906023
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<b>Email</b>	a.robinson@preston.gov.uk
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#### **Links to Background Papers**

## **1 Background**

- 1.1 In response to Coronavirus, Covid-19, the Government announced there would be support for 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.
- 1.2 This support takes the form of two grant funding schemes introduced for the financial year 2020/21, the Test and Trace Support Payment Fund (Scheme 1) and the Discretionary Support Fund (Scheme 2).
- 1.3 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. At present the scheme is set to close on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021.
- 1.4 The Government has provided guidance in terms of the operation and delivery of any policy, to support local authorities in administering their scheme.

1.5 Eligibility for a £500 Test and Trace 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.

1.6 Eligibility for a £500 Discretionary 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; and
- are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result

In addition, the discretionary payment is for people:

- who 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
- who are on low incomes and will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while they are self-isolating.

1.7 Given that funding for the Discretionary Scheme is limited, additional criteria has been built into the scheme in order to determine eligibility. The main elements of that additional criteria are listed below:

- an applicant's gross earnings are no greater than £300 per week (maximum wage)
- an applicant's gross earnings are no less than £80 per week or works for at least 16 hours per week on average (minimum wage - used as a measure of meaningful employment for grant purposes)
- an applicant must not possess capital of £6,000 or more
- university students or those in further or other higher education are excluded from applying for a discretionary grant.
- In all cases, applicants will need to demonstrate that they will suffer financial hardship by having to self-isolate.

1.8 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.

## 2 PROPOSAL DETAILS

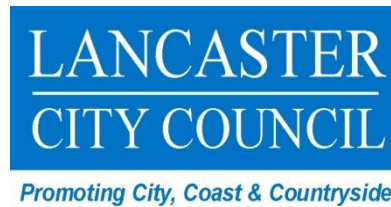
2.1 Drawing on Government Guidance, **Appendix A** sets out a Covid-19 Isolation and Payments Policy to provide much needed support to eligible low income residents in the area that are instructed to self-isolate.

### 3.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

<p><b>Option 1:</b>  <b>To approve the Covid-19 Self-Isolation and Payments Policy as set out in Appendix A</b></p>
<p><b>Advantages:</b>  The policy sets out a formal approach to distributing available funds in line with government guidance and provides a consistent approach for dealing with applications. The approach adopted seeks to maximise use of the grant in an open and equitable way, drawing on government guidance, and therefore risks associated with any challenge are considered small and manageable.</p>
<p><b>Disadvantages:</b>  None identified in following government instructions</p>
<p><b>Risks:</b>  Risk of overspend in relation to the Test and Trace Support Payments Fund (Scheme 1)</p>
<p><b>Option 2:</b>  <b>Suggested amendments to the Covid-19 Self-Isolation and Payments Policy</b></p>
<p><b>Advantages:</b></p>
<p><b>Disadvantages:</b>  Any amendments would need to have regard to government guidance, and the Council must allow extra time for re-consideration of an amended policy.</p>
<p><b>Risks:</b>  A more advantageous scheme would run the financial risk of overspend.</p>

### 4. Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

- 4.1 The officer preferred option is Option (1), enabling a formal approach to decision making, with criteria determined in line with government guidance and the Discretionary Payments scheme developed in consultation with other local authorities and experts from the relevant professional body (IRRV).



**LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL**

**COVID-19 SELF-ISOLATION PAYMENTS  
POLICY 2020/21**

**encompassing**

**TEST & TRACE SUPPORT PAYMENTS SCHEME**

**&**

**TEST & TRACE DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS  
SCHEME**





# Lancaster City Council

## Test and Trace Support Payments Scheme

## Contents

Definitions .....	3
1. Background to Self-Isolation and Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme.....	5
2. An overview of the Test and Trace Payment scheme (the Standard Scheme).....	5
3. Commencement of the scheme and scheme closure .....	6
4. Applying for a Test and Trace Support Payment (the Standard Scheme). .....	6
5. Time limits for making an application for a payment.....	7
6. Multiple claims within the household and from the same applicant.....	7
7. The eligibility criteria and evidence required for the Test and Trace Support Payment (the standard scheme). .....	8
8. How much grant will be paid, methods of payment and timings.....	12
9. Notification of Decisions.....	12
10. Implications for other benefits and reductions.....	12
11. Review of Decisions.....	12
12. Complaints.....	13
13. The Discretionary Test and Trace Payment Scheme and its relationship with the Scheme .....	13
Standard Scheme.....	13
Discretionary Scheme.....	13
Claiming from the schemes .....	13
14. Funding of the scheme .....	14
15. Taxation and provision of information to HMRC.....	14
16. Managing the risk of fraud .....	14
17. Recovery of amounts incorrectly paid.....	14
18. The Council’s duties in relation to self-isolation.....	14
19. Delegated Powers.....	15
20. Data Protection and use of data.....	15

## Definitions

The following definitions are used within this document:

- ‘Applicant’**; means the individual making an application for a payment under this scheme;
- ‘Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS)’**; means the web-based system used by Public Health England to contact and trace individuals who are required to self-isolate;
- ‘CTAS Account ID’**; means the unique number provided by Public Health England through the Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS);
- ‘COVID-19’**; means the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus;
- ‘Housing Benefit’**; means the benefit administered by local authorities under either the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 or the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) 2006;
- ‘income-related Employment and Support Allowance’**; means the means-tested Employment and Support Allowance administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Welfare Reform Act 2007;
- ‘income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance’**; means the means-tested Jobseekers Allowance administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Jobseekers Act 1995;
- Income Support’**; means the means-tested Income Support administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987;
- ‘NHS Test and Trace’**; means the service provided to the National Health Service in England, established in May 2020 to track and help prevent the spread of COVID-19;
- ‘Pension Credit’**; means the means-tested Guarantee or Savings Credit administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the State Pension Credit Regulations 2002;
- ‘Qualifying benefit’**; means any of the following benefits: Housing Benefit, Income support, income-based jobseeker’s Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit;
- ‘Self-isolation, Self-isolate’**; means the legal requirement for an individual to self-isolate when told to by NHS Test and Trace or the NHS COVID-19 app and the legal duty to self-isolate under the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self-Isolation) (England) Regulations 2020 which came into force on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020;
- ‘Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme’ (‘Standard Scheme’)**; means the Standard Scheme introduced by Government on 28<sup>th</sup> September and administered by Local Authorities;
- ‘Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme’ (‘Discretionary Scheme’)**; means the Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme which has been agreed by the Council and which may be available for individuals who are unable to access the ‘Standard Scheme’.
- ‘Universal Credit’** means the means-tested Universal Credit administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Universal Credit Regulations 2013;

**'Working Tax Credit'**; means the means-tested benefit administered by Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs under the Working Tax Credit (Entitlement and Maximum Rate) Regulations 2002.

## 1. Background to Self-Isolation and Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme

- 1.1 From 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020, Government has changed the legislation so that certain people will have to self-isolate due to the current COVID-19 crisis.
- 1.2 A package of legislative measures has been introduced both to ensure that those who are required to self-isolate, do so and, that those on a low income, receive a payment to assist their finances and to encourage compliance with the legislation.
- 1.3 The Council, together with Government, recognises that self-isolation is one of the most powerful tools for controlling the transmission of the Covid-19 virus and this scheme document details who will be eligible and how the Test and Trace Support Payment will be made. It also outlines the approach the Council will take in determining whether a payment will be made or not.
- 1.4 This document, which covers the **Standard Scheme**, should be read alongside the Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Support scheme which *may* be available to individuals who do not qualify for a payment under this scheme.

## 2. An overview of the Test and Trace Payment scheme (the standard scheme).

- 2.1 From 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020, individuals will be entitled to a Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 from the Council if they meet the eligibility criteria listed below:
  - (a) Make an application to the Council in the prescribed form and provide all the evidence and verification required;
  - (b) Are a resident within the Council's area;
  - (c) 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;
  - (d) Are employed or self-employed;
  - (e) Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result; and
  - (f) Are currently receiving any of the following 'qualifying benefit's:
    - Universal Credit;
    - Working Tax Credit;
    - income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
    - income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;
    - Income Support;
    - Housing Benefit; or

- Pension Credit.
- 2.2 This particular scheme is designed for those individuals (applicants) who:
- meet the standard conditions 2.1 (a) to (e) above;
  - are in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits listed in 2.1(f); and
  - comply with the self-isolation requirements laid down by Government;
- 2.3 Where individuals meet all the requirements but are **not in receipt of a qualifying benefit (2.1 (f))**, no payment can be made; however, they may be able to apply for a discretionary payment under the Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme which is available on the Council's website [www.lancaster.gov.uk/selfisolate](http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/selfisolate)
- 2.4 Individuals will **not** be entitled to apply for both a payment under the Standard Scheme and under the Council's Discretionary Scheme.

### 3. Commencement of the scheme and scheme closure

#### Commencement

- 3.1 This scheme is available to all individuals who meet the eligibility criteria and who are told to self-isolate **on or after** 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020.
- 3.2 Individuals who are required to self-isolate **before** 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020 will not be eligible for a payment.

#### Scheme closure

- 3.3 At the present time, Government has stated that this Standard Scheme will be available until 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021.

### 4. Applying for a Test and Trace Support Payment (the Standard Scheme).

- 4.1 Individuals who are resident within the Council's area will be entitled to make an application for a Test and Trace Support Payment under this scheme. In all cases, the 'applicant' will be required to answer **all** of the questions asked and provide the information required by the Council in the specified timescale.
- 4.2 In order to receive a payment, all applicants must meet the full eligibility criteria, details of which are shown within Section 6 of this scheme. The applicant will be required to self-verify certain criteria and also confirm that they will comply with the self-isolation requirements set by Government.

- 4.3 Where the applicant fails to meet the eligibility criteria, they will not receive a payment and will be informed of this by the Council, either at the point of application or as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 4.4 Where the applicant is successful, the Council will notify them accordingly and make payment in line with the timings and methods shown in Section 8.
- 4.5 Applications can **only** be accepted from individuals who are resident in the Council's area.
- 4.6 Applications will be accepted from a third party in respect of any individual who meets the eligibility criteria for a payment. However, the following should be noted:
- The person making the application will need to provide evidence of their identity and also the reason why they are applying on behalf of another person; and
  - That any payment **must** only be made by the Council to the person who is self-isolating. No payment will be made to a third party under any circumstance.
- 4.7 All applications shall be made online using the Council's dedicated webpage [www.lancaster.gov.uk/selfisolate](http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/selfisolate). There are no paper or other types of application processes; however, should individuals experience difficulties in making any application, they should contact the Council on 01524 582000.

## 5. Time limits for making an application for a payment

- 5.1 No application for a payment can be made before the 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020 or for any individual who has been required to self-isolate before 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020.
- 5.2 Eligible individuals can apply for a Test and Trace Support Payment at any time up to 14 days after their period of self-isolation ended. The Council will **not** accept any applications after this point.
- 5.3 Where an individual has been required to self-isolate on or after 28<sup>th</sup> September but before the Council's scheme opened on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2020, an application for a backdated payment must be made by 26<sup>th</sup> October 2020 (14 days after commencement of scheme).

## 6. Multiple claims within the household and from the same applicant

- 6.1 Individuals in the same household can each make an application to receive a Test and Trace Support Payment, if they each meet the eligibility criteria in full.
- 6.2 An individual may make an application more than once but only:
- If the individual is told to self-isolate multiple times; **and**
  - they meet the eligibility criteria for each individual application; **and**
  - the periods of self-isolation do not overlap.

6.3 The Council is mindful that this can be confusing for applicants and it will be essential, where multiple applications are made by an individual, to ensure correct eligibility. Therefore, a new application will need to be made for each distinct period of self-isolation.

## 7. The eligibility criteria and evidence required for the Test and Trace Support Payment (the Standard Scheme).

7.1 For payment to be made under this scheme, all of the criteria **must** be met. As with the application form itself, all evidence will need to be provided electronically. The Council provides facilities for all applicants to upload documents, evidence and photographs.

7.2 Where documentation is only held in 'hard copy' or paper form, the Council will accept digital images or photographs provided they show all the relevant information.

7.3 The Council will keep all information supplied by applicants, secure and in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

An individual must make a valid application to the Council in the prescribed form and provide the all evidence and verification required

7.4 As mentioned in Section 4, a valid application must be made via the Council's website 01524 582000. All applicants will be required to provide details sufficient to identify themselves, their address and to allow the Council to contact them including:

- Full name;
- Address;
- National Insurance Number;
- Telephone number; and
- Email address.

7.5 In addition to the above, all applicants will be required to submit a copy of their current bank statement(s) in order to:

- Verify that their income has reduced due to having to self-isolate (see later); and
- Provide details of the bank account number and sort code of the account into which a payment would be made.

That they are a resident within the Council's area

7.6 The applicant will be required to verify that they have their sole or main residence in the Council's area. The Council will check other records held (and make other enquiries where appropriate) to determine this.



- 7.7 Where necessary, the Council will ask the applicant to provide additional evidence of residence.

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

- 7.8 A key requirement of the scheme is that the applicant has been instructed by the NHS Test and Trace to stay at home and self-isolate either because:
- they have tested positive for COVID-19 (coronavirus); or
  - have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive.
- 7.9 All applicants will be required to provide the 8-digit unique ID number which has been provided to them by NHS Test and Trace.
- 7.10 For information, the NHS Test and Trace service uses the Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS) to record information about people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and their contacts. The CTAS Account ID is an 8-digit identifier unique to each case (e.g. 3b1a3015c). Most individuals who test positive for COVID-19 or are a contact of someone who has had a positive test, will receive a digital invitation from the CTAS system to undertake the contact tracing journey.
- 7.11 All cases and contacts who have completed the contact tracing journey (including those who were ineligible for the digital invitation such as children or individuals with a landline number only) will receive a citizen advice message upon completion of the NHS Test and Trace questionnaire. The citizen message (sent either via a text message/email or postal service for people with no access to mobile phone or email) contains the 8-character Account ID.
- 7.12 The Council will check that the applicant has a valid Account ID produced by the Contact Tracing and Advice Service. Only this number will allow an application to be processed.
- 7.13 The Council will not make payment to anyone who does not have a valid notification (Account ID) from NHS Test and Trace. It should be noted that there is a legal duty to self-isolate which only applies to people who have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.
- 7.14 The Council will not accept a notification from the NHS Isolation Note service. Where the applicant has provided this only, they will be given an opportunity to provide a valid NHS Test and Trace notification if they have one.

- 7.15 This scheme does not cover people who are self-isolating after returning to the UK from abroad, unless they have tested positive for COVID-19 (coronavirus) or have been instructed to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

**All applicants must be currently employed or self-employed**

- 7.16 Only those applicants who are currently employed or currently self-employed will be entitled to claim a Test and Trace Support Payment. For the sake of clarity, this scheme requires all applicants to provide sufficient evidence of their current employment or self-employment status. In the case of employed applicants, full details of their employer must be given on the application form including contact numbers.

- 7.17 The Council will also require applicants to provide proof such as listed below:

**Employed**

- Current wages or salary slips;
- Employment contract; or
- Letter from the employer confirming current employment.

**Self Employed**

- Self-assessment form;
- Details of HMRC registration as self-employed;
- Current accounts; or
- Current accounts and trading statements

- 7.18 The above list is not exhaustive.

- 7.19 As this is an essential requirement in order for a Test and Trace Support Payment to be made, the applicant must satisfy the Council that they meet this criterion.

**Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result**

- 7.20 All applicants will have to certify on the application form that they are:

- Unable to work from home; and
- Will lose income as a result.

- 7.21 The Council will need to be satisfied that any applicants meet these conditions in full.

**Unable to work from home**

- 7.22 The Council will require applicants to give details about the nature of their work and whether they can undertake this work from home.

- 7.23 Only those applicants that cannot work from home whilst self-isolating will meet the criteria and therefore, each applicant will not only be required to verify the fact, but also provide details of the reasons why this is the case, together with details of the type of work that they would normally undertake.
- 7.24 This criterion applies whether an applicant is either employed or self-employed and Government has provided a number of examples as follows:
- An applicant with a single job whose employer continued to pay them a full wage while they self-isolated would not meet the criteria;
  - An applicant whose employer paid them a reduced wage while they self-isolated would meet the criteria (as they have lost income); and
  - An applicant with two part-time jobs who continued to be paid a full wage by one employer, but whose other employer did not pay them while self-isolating, would be eligible.

Are currently receiving any of the qualifying benefits.

- 7.25 The final criterion is that the applicant **must be in receipt** of one of the following qualifying benefits:
- Universal Credit;
  - Working Tax Credit;
  - income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
  - income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;
  - Income Support;
  - Housing Benefit; or
  - Pension Credit.
- 7.26 Applicants must be **actually** in receipt of the listed benefits. Each applicant will be required to verify that they are in receipt of one of the benefits and provide evidence of that to the Council. Evidence will need to be provided electronically but typically could be copies of bank statements showing the payments, confirmation of benefit entitlement or award /payment summaries (as in the case of Universal Credit). The Council will accept 'screenshots' of any online benefit account.
- 7.27 Where an applicant has yet to apply for a qualifying benefit; is awaiting a decision on a benefit; is currently appealing a negative decision; or is unable to apply for a qualifying benefit, they will not be entitled to a payment under the Standard Scheme and will be directed to apply for a payment under the Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Payment Scheme.
- 7.28 The Council will verify the current receipt of a qualifying benefit with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC) as appropriate.

## 8. How much grant will be paid, methods of payment and timings.

- 8.1 Where an applicant meets all of the eligibility criteria, a single payment of £500 shall be paid for each period of self-isolation. Payments will be made direct to the applicant's bank account within 3 working days, starting with the date of application.
- 8.2 Where further information or evidence is required from the applicant, the Council will look to make payment within 3 working days starting with the date when all of the required information is received.
- 8.3 Full details of the applicant's bank account must be supplied on the application form and this will be cross checked with the copies of the bank statements provided as part of the verification process.
- 8.4 As required by Government, payments can only be made to the applicant's bank account. No payments can be made to third parties whatsoever.
- 8.5 The Council is aware that in some cases, applicants may be overdrawn and may not be able to gain access to the payment. In these cases, the applicant may apply for protection. This protection is called a 'first right of appropriation of funds order'. More details of this can be obtained from the Councils website [www.lancaster.gov.uk/selfisolate](http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/selfisolate) or contact Customer Services on 01524 582000 or from Citizens Advice.

## 9. Notification of Decisions

- 9.1 Applications will be considered by officers of the Council and all decisions made by the Council shall be notified to the applicant either in writing or by email.

## 10. Implications for other benefits and reductions

- 10.1 The Council has been advised by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) that the Test and Trace Support Payment will be disregarded for the purposes of all means-tested benefits.
- 10.2 The Council has decided that any payment made under this scheme shall not affect entitlement to Council Tax Reduction.

## 11. Review of Decisions

- 11.1 Whilst there is no statutory appeal process, the Council will operate an internal review process and will accept an applicant's request for an appeal of its decision by a senior officer.
- 11.2 All such requests must be made in writing to the Council, within 3 days of the Council's decision, and should state the reasons why the applicant is aggrieved with the decision

of the Council. New information may be submitted at this stage to support the applicant's appeal. The application will be reconsidered as soon as practicable, and the applicant informed in writing or by email of the decision.

## 12. Complaints

- 12.1 The Council's 'Complaints Procedure' (available on the Councils website) will be applied in the event of any complaint received about this scheme.

## 13. The Discretionary Test and Trace Payment Scheme and its relationship with the Standard Scheme

### Standard Scheme

- 13.1 This 'Standard' Scheme has been determined by criteria set down by Government and is primarily aimed at all applicants who are working or self-employed; are unable to work from home and will therefore have a reduction in income and are in receipt of certain qualifying benefits (Universal Credit; Working Tax Credit; Income-based Employment and Support Allowance; income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; Income Support; Housing Benefit; or Pension Credit).

- 13.2 The receipt of one of those benefits is essential in order for a payment to be made.

### Discretionary Scheme

- 13.3 The Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme is for any individual who meets all the required criteria **except** that they are not currently in receipt of a qualifying benefit. The reason for this could be, for example, that a claim for a benefit has not yet been made or that the individual, whilst normally resident in the UK, is unable to gain access to public funds.

- 13.4 Details of the Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Payment Scheme can be found at [www.lancaster.gov.uk/selfisolate](http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/selfisolate)

### Claiming from the schemes

- 13.5 Individuals who are entitled to a payment from the Standard Scheme are unable to make a claim from the Council's discretionary scheme.

- 13.6 However, an applicant who is refused a 'Standard Scheme' payment on the basis that they meet all the criteria **except** that they are not in receipt of a qualifying benefit, will be directed to make an application for a discretionary payment.

## 14. Funding of the scheme

- 14.1 Government has confirmed that it will reimburse the Council for all payments correctly made under this scheme.

## 15. Taxation and provision of information to HMRC

- 15.1 The Council has been informed by Government that all payments under this scheme are taxable. However, the payments will not be subject to National Insurance contributions.
- 15.2 The Council does not accept any responsibility in relation to an applicant's tax liabilities and all applicants should make their own enquiries to establish any tax position.
- 15.3 All applicants should note that the Council is required to inform Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) of all payments made to individuals.

## 16. Managing the risk of fraud

- 16.1 Neither the Council, nor Government will accept deliberate manipulation of the scheme and fraud. Any applicant caught falsifying information to gain payments will face prosecution and any payment issued will be recovered from them and this may also include other recovery costs.
- 16.2 Applicants should note that, where a Test and Trace Support Payment is paid by the Council, details of each individual applicant will be passed to Government. Applicants should also note that the Council utilises a number of databases and Government systems to verify information in connection with any applications submitted.

## 17. Recovery of amounts incorrectly paid

- 17.1 If it is established that any Test and Trace Support Payment has been made incorrectly due to incorrect information provided to the Council by an applicant or their representative(s), the Council will look to recover the amount in full.

## 18. The Council's duties in relation to self-isolation

- 18.1 The duty to self-isolate is an important one. Ensuring infected individuals and their close contacts isolate is one of our most powerful tools for controlling transmission.
- 18.2 We know that someone with the virus can remain infectious to other people for up to 10 days after developing symptoms. It can take up to 14 days for individuals to develop coronavirus symptoms after they catch the virus, and in this time, they can unknowingly pass it on to others, even if they don't have symptoms.

- 18.3 Self-isolating helps prevent family, friends and the community from contracting coronavirus, as well as helping to protect the health and care system.
- 18.4 The changes announced by Government on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and brought into force on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020 (as well as providing for the Test and Trace Support payments scheme):
- introduce a new legal duty on individuals to self-isolate if someone tests positive or is identified as a contact by NHS Test and Trace;
  - introduce penalties for those breaking the rules, including fines of at least £1,000 and up to a maximum of £10,000 for repeated or very serious offences; and
  - place a new legal obligation on employers that they must not knowingly enable or encourage their employees to break the law on self-isolation.
- 18.5 As part of this, the Council has a duty If it becomes aware, either through post-payment verification checks or through other means, that someone has not self-isolated, to refer the case to the police.
- 18.6 The Council has been informed by Government that, in order to ensure compliance with the new legislation NHS Test and Trace call handlers will be increasing contact with those self-isolating. Police resources will be used to check compliance in highest incidence areas and in high-risk groups, based on local intelligence including acting on instances where third parties have identified others who have tested positive, but are not self-isolating.
- 18.7 The Council will continue to focus on the principle of encouraging, educating and supporting self-compliance.

## 19. Delegated Powers

- 19.1 The Council has implemented this scheme in line with Government requirements and guidance.
- 19.2 Officers of the Council will administer the scheme and the Section 151 Officer is authorised to make technical scheme amendments to ensure it continues to meet the criteria set by the Council and, in line with Central Government guidance.

## 20. Data Protection and use of data

- 20.1 All information and data provided by businesses shall be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Data Protection policy and Privacy Notices which are available on the Council's website.



# Lancaster City Council

## Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme



## Contents

Definitions .....	3
1. Background to Self-Isolation and the Test and Trace Payments .....	5
2. An overview of the Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme (the Discretionary Scheme).....	5
3. Commencement of the scheme and scheme closure .....	6
4. Applying for a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment (the Discretionary Scheme). .....	7
5. Time limits for making an application for a payment.....	7
6. Multiple claims within the household and from the same applicant.....	8
7. The eligibility criteria and evidence required for a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment. ....	8
8. How much discretionary payment will be paid, methods of payment and timings.....	13
9. Notification of Decisions.....	13
10. Implications for other benefits and reductions.....	13
11. Review of Decisions.....	13
12. Complaints.....	14
13. The Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme and its relationship with the Standard Scheme.....	14
Standard Scheme.....	14
Discretionary Scheme.....	14
Claiming from the schemes .....	14
14. Funding of the Discretionary Scheme.....	15
15. Taxation and provision of information to HMRC.....	15
16. Managing the risk of fraud .....	15
17. Recovery of amounts incorrectly paid.....	16
18. The Council’s duties in relation to self-isolation.....	16
19. Delegated Powers.....	17
20. Data Protection and use of data.....	17

## Definitions

The following definitions are used within this document:

**‘Additional Eligibility Criteria’**; means the additional criteria decided by the Council that need to be met, in order to receive a payment under the Council’s Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme. These will be in addition to the standard criteria and are allowable under Government guidance;

**‘Applicant’**; means the individual making an application for a payment under this scheme;

**‘Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS)’**; means the web-based system used by Public Health England to contact and trace individuals who are required to self-isolate;

**‘CTAS Account ID’**; means the unique number provided by Public Health England through the Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS);

**‘COVID-19’**; means the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus;

**‘face financial hardship’**; a key criterion of the Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme is that all applicants will, if not for the payment, face financial hardship solely due to their need to self-isolate;

**‘Housing Benefit’**; means the benefit administered by local authorities under either the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 or the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) 2006;

**‘income-related Employment and Support Allowance’**; means the means-tested Employment and Support Allowance administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Welfare Reform Act 2007;

**‘income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance’**; means the means-tested Jobseekers Allowance administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Jobseekers Act 1995;

**Income Support’**; means the means-tested Income Support administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987;

**‘NHS Test and Trace’**; means the service provided to the National Health Service in England, established in May 2020 to track and help prevent the spread of COVID-19;

**‘Pension Credit’**; means the means-tested Guarantee or Savings Credit administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the State Pension Credit Regulations 2002;

**‘Qualifying benefit’**; means any of the following benefits: Housing Benefit, Income support, income-based jobseeker’s Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit;

**‘Self-isolation, Self-isolate’**; means the legal requirement for an individual to self-isolate when told to by NHS Test and Trace or the NHS COVID-19 app and the legal duty to self-isolate under the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self-Isolation) (England) Regulations 2020 which came into force on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020;

**‘Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme’ (‘Standard Scheme’)**; means the Standard Scheme introduced by Government on 28<sup>th</sup> September and administered by Local Authorities;

**'Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme' ('Discretionary Scheme');** means the Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme which has been agreed by the Council and which *may* be available for individuals who are unable to access the 'Standard Scheme'.

**'Universal Credit'** means the means-tested Universal Credit administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Universal Credit Regulations 2013;

**'Working Tax Credit';** means the means-tested benefit administered by Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs under the Working Tax Credit (Entitlement and Maximum Rate) Regulations 2002.

## 1. Background to Self-Isolation and the Test and Trace Payments

- 1.1 From 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020, Government has changed the legislation so that certain people will have to self-isolate due to the current COVID-19 crisis.
- 1.2 A package of legislative measures has been introduced to ensure that those who are required to self-isolate, do so and that those on a low income receive a payment to assist their finances and to encourage compliance with the legislation.
- 1.3 The Council, together with Government, recognises that self-isolation is one of the most powerful tools for controlling the transmission of the Covid-19 virus. The Government has set down the requirements for two payment schemes to be set up by the Council as follows:
  - (a) The **Test and Trace Support Payments Scheme** (the **Standard Scheme**) for those eligible applicants who are in receipt of Housing Benefit, Pension Credit, Income support, income-based jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit (the qualifying benefits); and
  - (b) The **Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme** (the **Discretionary Scheme**) for those applicants who are **not** in receipt of any of the qualifying benefits but who are on a low income and will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while they are self-isolating.
- 1.4 This document details who will be eligible for a payment under the **Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme**.
- 1.5 Any applicant who is in receipt of a qualifying benefit, should apply for a payment under the standard scheme details of which are available at [www.lancaster.gov.uk/selfisolate](http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/selfisolate)

## 2. An overview of the Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme (the Discretionary Scheme).

- 2.1 From 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020, individuals will be entitled to a payment of £500 from the Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme if they meet the eligibility criteria listed below:
  - (a) Make an application to the Council in the prescribed form and provide all the evidence and verification required;
  - (b) Are a resident within the Council's area;
  - (c) 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;

- (d) Are employed or self-employed;
- (e) Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result;
- (f) Are **NOT** currently receiving any of the following benefits:
  - Universal Credit;
  - Working Tax Credit;
  - income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
  - income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;
  - Income Support;
  - Housing Benefit; or
  - Pension Credit; **and**
- (g) Meet the Council's addition criteria for a discretionary payment.

- 2.2 This particular scheme is designed for those individuals (applicants) who:
  - meet the standard conditions 2.1 (a) to (g) above;
  - are **not** receiving a benefit listed in 2.1(f); and
  - comply with the self-isolation requirements laid down by Government;
- 2.3 Where individuals meet all the requirements but **are in receipt of a benefit stated in 2.1 (f)**, no payment can be made under the Discretionary Scheme; however, they may be able to apply for payment under the Standard Scheme which is available on the Council's website [www.lancaster.gov.uk/selfisolate](http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/selfisolate)
- 2.4 Individuals will **NOT** be entitled to apply for both a payment under the Standard Scheme and under the Council's Discretionary Scheme.

### 3. Commencement of the scheme and scheme closure

#### Commencement

- 3.1 This scheme is available to all individuals who meet the eligibility criteria for a discretionary payment and who are told to self-isolate **on or after** 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020.
- 3.2 Individuals who are required to self-isolate **before** 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020 will not be eligible for a payment.

#### Scheme closure

- 3.3 At the present time, Government has stated that this Discretionary Scheme (and the Standard Scheme) will be available until 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021.

## 4. Applying for a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment (the Discretionary Scheme).

- 4.1 Individuals who are resident within the Council's area *may* make an application for a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment under this scheme. In all cases, the 'applicant' will be required to answer **all** of the questions asked and provide the information required by the Council in the specified timescale.
- 4.2 In order to receive a payment, all applicants must meet the full eligibility criteria, details of which are shown within Section 6 of this scheme. The applicant will be required to self-verify certain criteria and also confirm that they will comply with the self-isolation requirements set by Government.
- 4.3 Where the applicant fails to meet the eligibility criteria, they will not receive a payment and will be informed of this by the Council, either at the point of application or as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 4.4 Where the applicant is successful, the Council will notify them accordingly and make payment in line with the timings and methods shown in Section 8.
- 4.5 Applications can **only** be accepted from individuals who are resident in the Council's area.
- 4.6 Applications will be accepted from a third party in respect of any individual who meets all the eligibility criteria for a payment. However, the following should be noted:
- The person making the application will need to provide evidence of their identity and also the reason why they are applying on behalf of another person; and
  - That any payment **must** only be made by the Council to the person who is self-isolating. No payment will be made to a third party under any circumstance.
- 4.7 All applications shall be made online using the Council's dedicated webpage [www.lancaster.gov.uk/selfisolate](http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/selfisolate). There are no paper or other types of application processes; however, should individuals experience difficulties in making any application, they should contact the Council on 01524 582000.

## 5. Time limits for making an application for a payment

- 5.1 No application for a discretionary payment can be made before the 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020 or for any individual who has been required to self-isolate before 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020.
- 5.2 Eligible individuals can apply for a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment at any time up to 14 days after their period of self-isolation ended. The Council will **not** accept any applications after this point.

- 5.3 Where an individual has been required to self-isolate on or after 28<sup>th</sup> September but before the Council's scheme opened on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2020, an application for a backdated payment must be made by 26<sup>th</sup> October 2020 (14 days after commencement of scheme).

## **6. Multiple claims within the household and from the same applicant**

- 6.1 Individuals in the same household can each make an application to receive a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment, if they each meet all the eligibility criteria in full.
- 6.2 An individual may make an application more than once but only:
- If the individual is told to self-isolate multiple times; **and**
  - they meet the eligibility criteria for each individual application; **and**
  - the periods of self-isolation do not overlap.
- 6.3 The Council is mindful that this can be confusing for applicants and it will be essential, where multiple applications are made by an individual, to ensure correct eligibility. Therefore, a new application will need to be made for each distinct period of self-isolation.

## **7. The eligibility criteria and evidence required for a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment.**

- 7.1 For payment to be made under this Discretionary Scheme, all of the criteria **must** be met. As with the application form itself, all evidence will need to be provided electronically. The Council provides facilities for all applicants to upload documents, evidence and photographs.
- 7.2 Where documentation is only held in 'hard copy' or paper form, the Council will accept digital images or photographs provided they show all the relevant information.
- 7.3 The Council will keep all information supplied by applicants, secure and in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

**An individual must make a valid application to the Council in the prescribed form and provide all the evidence and verification required**

- 7.4 As mentioned in Section 4, a valid application must be made via the Council's website 01524 582000. All applicants will be required to provide details sufficient to identify themselves, their address and to allow the Council to contact them including:
- Full name;
  - Address;
  - National Insurance Number;

- Telephone number; and
- Email address.

- 7.5 In addition to the above, all applicants will be required to submit a copy of their current bank statement(s) in order to:
- Verify that their income has reduced due to having to self-isolate (see later); and
  - Provide details of the bank account number and sort code of the account into which a payment would be made.

**That they are a resident within the Council's area**

- 7.6 The applicant will be required to verify that they have their sole or main residence in the Council's area. The Council will check other records held (and make other enquiries where appropriate) to determine this.
- 7.7 Where necessary, the Council will ask the applicant to provide additional evidence of residence.

**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**

- 7.8 A key requirement of the scheme is that the applicant has been instructed by the NHS Test and Trace to stay at home and self-isolate either because:
- they have tested positive for COVID-19 (coronavirus); or
  - have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive.
- 7.9 All applicants will be required to provide the 8-digit unique ID number which has been provided to them by NHS Test and Trace.
- 7.10 For information, the NHS Test and Trace service uses the Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS) to record information about people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and their contacts. The CTAS Account ID is an 8-character identifier unique to each case (e.g. 3b1a3015c). Most individuals who test positive for COVID-19 or are a contact of someone who has had a positive test, will receive a digital invitation from the CTAS system to undertake the contact tracing journey.
- 7.11 All cases and contacts who have completed the contact tracing journey (including those who were ineligible for the digital invitation such as children or individuals with a landline number only) will receive a citizen advice message upon completion of the NHS Test and Trace questionnaire. The citizen message (sent either via a text message/email or postal service for people with no access to mobile phone or email) contains the 8-character Account ID.



- 7.12 The Council will check that the applicant has a valid Account ID produced by the Contact Tracing and Advice Service. Only this number will allow an application to be processed.
- 7.13 The Council will not make payment to anyone who does not have a valid notification (Account ID) from NHS Test and Trace. It should be noted that there is a legal duty to self-isolate which only applies to people who have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.
- 7.14 The Council will not accept a notification from the NHS Isolation Note service. Where the applicant has provided this only, they will be given an opportunity to provide a valid NHS Test and Trace notification if they have one.
- 7.15 This scheme does not cover people who are self-isolating after returning to the UK from abroad, unless they have tested positive for COVID-19 (coronavirus) or have been instructed to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

**All applicants must be currently employed or self-employed**

7.16 Only those applicants who are currently employed or currently self-employed will be entitled to claim a Test and Trace Support Payment. For the sake of clarity, this scheme requires all applicants to provide sufficient evidence of their current employment or self-employment status. In the case of employed applicants, full details of their employer must be given on the application form including contact numbers.

7.17 The Council will also require applicants to provide proof such as listed below:

**Employed**

- Current wages or salary slips;
- Employment contract; or
- Letter from the employer confirming current employment.

**Self Employed**

- Self-assessment form;
- Details of HMRC registration as self-employed;
- Current accounts; or
- Current accounts and trading statements

7.18 The above list is not exhaustive.

7.19 As this is an essential requirement in order for a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment to be made, the applicant must satisfy the Council that they meet this criterion.

**Are NOT currently receiving any of the following benefits.**

- 7.20 To receive a discretionary payment the applicant **must not be in receipt** of one of the following benefits:
- Universal Credit;
  - Working Tax Credit;
  - income-based Employment and Support Allowance;
  - income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;
  - Income Support;
  - Housing Benefit; or
  - Pension Credit.
- 7.21 Where applicants are in receipt of any of the above benefits, then payments can **ONLY** be made through the Standard Scheme. The Council has designed the application process so that the same form can be used to claim either payment (Standard Scheme or Discretionary Scheme) and applicants who fail to qualify for a Standard Scheme payment because they are in receipt of one of those benefits, will automatically be directed to the Discretionary Scheme.
- 7.22 Where an applicant has yet to apply for one of the benefits listed; is awaiting a decision on a benefit; is currently appealing a negative decision; or is unable to apply for a qualifying benefit, they *may* make an application under this Discretionary Scheme.

**Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result and will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while they are self-isolating**

- 7.23 All applicants will have to certify on the application form that they are:
- Unable to work from home;
  - Will lose income as a result; **and**
  - Will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while they are self-isolating
- 7.24 The Council will need to be satisfied that any applicants meet these conditions in full.
- 7.25 The Council will require applicants to give details about the nature of their work and whether they can undertake this work from home.
- 7.26 Only those applicants that cannot work from home whilst self-isolating will meet the criteria and therefore, each applicant will not only be required to verify the fact, but also provide details of the reasons why this is the case, together with details of the type of work that they would normally undertake.

- 7.27 The Council will also require all applicants making an application for a discretionary payment to provide evidence of financial hardship. All applicants will be required to demonstrate that the financial hardship is **solely** due to having to self-isolate.

<p><b>Meet the Council's additional criteria for discretionary payments</b></p>
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- 7.28 Given that the funding for the Discretionary Scheme is limited (see Section 14), Government has stated that it will be up to each Council to determine additional criteria that have to be met if a payment is to be made. The additional criteria are shown in 7.29 below.

- 7.29 The additional criteria are as follows:

- (a) **An applicant's gross earnings are no greater than £300 per week.** This figure is before any deductions for tax, national insurance, pension or other non-statutory items. This is the amount that the applicant would normally earn prior to self-isolation.

Where an applicant has earnings above this level then they would not normally be eligible unless there was an exceptional circumstance;

- (b) **An applicant's gross earnings are no less than £80 per week or works for at least 16 hours per week or more on average.** This figure for earnings is before any deductions for tax, national insurance, pension or other non-statutory items;

- (c) **An applicant must not possess capital of £6,000 or more.** Any applicant with capital above that level would not be eligible. For the sake of clarity, capital will be calculated in accordance with the rules for Housing Benefit;

- (d) **University students or those in further or other higher education are excluded from applying for a discretionary grant;**

- (e) **Individuals who have applied for a qualifying benefit but have not yet received a decision or have appealed** against a decision not to award a qualifying benefit and are awaiting the outcome of the appeal will be eligible to claim provided they meet **all** other criteria within this section;

- (f) **Applicants who are excluded from qualifying benefits by the "Persons from Abroad" provisions within the welfare benefit schemes** will be eligible to claim provided they meet **all** other criteria within this section; and

- (g) **In all cases applicants will need to demonstrate that they will suffer financial hardship by having to self-isolate.**

- 7.30 Due to the limited funds available applications will be on a 'first come, first serve' basis and the scheme will end either on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021 or when Government provided funds are exhausted whichever is the earlier

## **8. How much discretionary payment will be paid, methods of payment and timings.**

- 8.1 Where an applicant meets all of the eligibility criteria for a discretionary payment, a single payment of £500 shall be paid for each period of self-isolation. Payments will be made direct to the applicant's bank account within 3 working days, starting with the date of application.
- 8.2 Where further information or evidence is required from the applicant, the Council will look to make payment within 3 working days starting with the date when all of the required information is received.
- 8.3 Full details of the applicant's bank account must be supplied on the application form and this will be cross checked with the copies of the bank statements provided as part of the verification process.
- 8.4 As required by Government, payments can only be made to the applicant's bank account. No payments can be made to third parties whatsoever.
- 8.5 The Council is aware that in some cases, applicants may be overdrawn and may not be able to gain access to the payment. In these cases, the applicant may apply for protection. This protection is called a 'first right of appropriation of funds order'. More details of this can be obtained from the Councils website [www.lancaster.gov.uk/selfisolate](http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/selfisolate) or contact Customer Services on 01524 582000 or from Citizens Advice.

## **9. Notification of Decisions**

- 9.1 Applications for discretionary payments will be considered by officers of the Council and all decisions made by the Council shall be notified to the applicant either in writing or by email.

## **10. Implications for other benefits and reductions**

- 10.1 The Council has been advised by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) that all Test and Trace Support Payments (of any type) will be disregarded for the purposes of all means-tested benefits.
- 10.2 The Council has decided that any payment made under this scheme shall not affect entitlement to Council Tax Reduction.

## **11. Review of Decisions**

- 11.1 Whilst there is no statutory appeal process, the Council will operate an internal review process and will accept an applicant's request for an appeal of its decision by a senior officer.

- 11.2 All such requests must be made in writing to the Council, within 3 days of the Council's decision, and should state the reasons why the applicant is aggrieved with the decision of the Council. New information may be submitted at this stage to support the applicant's appeal. The application will be reconsidered as soon as practicable, and the applicant informed in writing or by email of the decision.

## 12. Complaints

- 12.1 The Council's 'Complaints Procedure' (available on the Councils website) will be applied in the event of any complaint received about this scheme.

## 13. The Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme and its relationship with the Standard Scheme

### Standard Scheme

- 13.1 This 'Standard Scheme' has been determined by criteria set down by Government and is primarily aimed at all applicants who are working or self-employed; are unable to work from home and will therefore have a reduction in income and are in receipt of certain qualifying benefits (Universal Credit; Working Tax Credit; Income-based Employment and Support Allowance; income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; Income Support; Housing Benefit; or Pension Credit).
- 13.2 The receipt of one of those benefits is essential in order for a payment to be made.
- 13.3 Details of the Standard Scheme can be found at [www.lancaster.gov.uk/selfisolate](http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/selfisolate)

### Discretionary Scheme

- 13.4 The Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme is for any individual who meets all the required criteria (including the Council's additional criteria) **except** that they are not currently in receipt of a qualifying benefit and they would face financial hardship due to self-isolation. The reason for this could be, for example, that a claim for a benefit has not yet been made or that the individual, whilst normally resident in the UK, is unable to gain access to public funds.

### Claiming from the schemes

- 13.5 Individuals who are entitled to a payment from the Standard Scheme are unable to make a claim from the Council's Discretionary Scheme.
- 13.6 However, an applicant who is refused a 'Standard Scheme' payment on the basis that they meet all the criteria **except** that they are not in receipt of a qualifying benefit, will be directed to make an application for a discretionary payment. It should be

noted that in all cases, where an individual applies for a discretionary payment, they will have to satisfy not only the basic criteria laid down by Government but also the additional criteria set by the Council.

## **14. Funding of the Discretionary Scheme**

- 14.1 The Council will receive a fixed amount of funding from Government which will be for the four months that the Discretionary Scheme is intended to last. Government has confirmed that **no** additional monies will be given to the Council.
- 14.2 In view of this, and to ensure that discretionary payments are available throughout the period to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021, the Council reserves the right to change the Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme at any time to ensure funds go to those who face the most financial hardship.

## **15. Taxation and provision of information to HMRC**

- 15.1 The Council has been informed by Government that all payments under this scheme are taxable. However, the payments will not be subject to National Insurance contributions.
- 15.2 The Council does not accept any responsibility in relation to an applicant's tax liabilities and all applicants should make their own enquiries to establish any tax position.
- 15.3 All applicants should note that the Council is required to inform Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) of all payments made to individuals.

## **16. Managing the risk of fraud**

- 16.1 Neither the Council, nor Government will accept deliberate manipulation of the scheme and fraud. Any applicant caught falsifying information to gain payments will face prosecution and any payment issued will be recovered from them and this may also include other recovery costs.
- 16.2 Applicants should note that, where a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment is paid by the Council, details of each individual applicant will be passed to Government. Applicants should also note that the Council utilises a number of databases and Government systems to verify information in connection with any application submitted.

## **17. Recovery of amounts incorrectly paid**

- 17.1 If it is established that any Test and Trace Discretionary Support Payment has been made incorrectly due to misrepresentation or incorrect information provided to the Council by an applicant or their representative(s), the Council will look to recover the amount in full.

## **18. The Council's duties in relation to self-isolation**

- 18.1 The duty to self-isolate is an important one. Ensuring infected individuals and their close contacts isolate is one of our most powerful tools for controlling transmission.
- 18.2 We know that someone with the virus can remain infectious to other people for up to 10 days after developing symptoms. It can take up to 14 days for individuals to develop coronavirus symptoms after they catch the virus, and in this time, they can unknowingly pass it on to others, even if they don't have symptoms.
- 18.3 Self-isolating helps prevent family, friends and the community from contracting coronavirus, as well as helping to protect the health and care system.
- 18.4 The changes announced by Government on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and brought into force on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020 (as well as providing for the Test and Trace Support Payments Schemes):
- introduce a new legal duty on individuals to self-isolate if someone tests positive or is identified as a contact by NHS Test and Trace;
  - introduce penalties for those breaking the rules, including fines of at least £1,000 and up to a maximum of £10,000 for repeated or very serious offences; and
  - place a new legal obligation on employers that they must not knowingly enable or encourage their employees to break the law on self-isolation.
- 18.5 As part of this, the Council has a duty If it becomes aware, either through post-payment verification checks or through other means, that someone has not self-isolated, to refer the case to the police.
- 18.6 The Council has been informed by Government that, in order to ensure compliance with the new legislation NHS Test and Trace call handlers will be increasing contact with those self-isolating. Police resources will be used to check compliance in highest incidence areas and in high-risk groups, based on local intelligence including acting on instances where third parties have identified others who have tested positive, but are not self-isolating.
- 18.7 The Council will continue to focus on the principle of encouraging, educating and supporting self-compliance.

## **19. Delegated Powers**

- 19.1 The Council has implemented this Discretionary Scheme in line with Government requirements and guidance.
- 19.2 Officers of the Council will administer the scheme and the Section 151 Officer is authorised to make technical scheme amendments to ensure it continues to meet the criteria set by the Council and, in line with Central Government guidance.

## **20. Data Protection and use of data**

- 20.1 All information and data provided by applicants shall be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Data Protection policy and Privacy Notices which are available on the Council's website.