



WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

TEST AND TRACE SELF ISOLATION

(DISCRETIONARY SUPPORT PAYMENT POLICY)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Policy has been amended in line with the recently published guidance from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).
- 1.2 From 28 September 2020 in England, there is a legal duty on all UK residents who test positive for COVID-19 or are identified by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact, to self-isolate. Failure to comply will be an offence carrying a fine of at least £1,000 and up to £10,000 for multiple breaches.
- 1.3 To support this, the government has introduced a scheme for those having to self-isolate who are financially impacted because of this. This scheme will run until 30 April 2021, or longer if directed to do so and sufficient funding is made available by the DHSC.

2. Test and Trace Support Payments

- 2.1 From 28 September 2020, individuals are entitled to a Test and Trace Support Payment of £500, however, **eligibility 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 else 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 Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit.

3. Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payments

3.1 To ensure that those individuals who are not in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits and who are on a low income and may suffer financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while they are self-isolating the Government has created a 'discretionary support payment'. Payments will be £500 and the eligibility is as follows:

- 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 else who has tested positive;
- Are employed or self-employed;
- Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result;
- Who **are not** currently receiving Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment 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.
- Are not a student enrolled in a full time course;
- Do not have capital/savings in excess of £6,000

3.2 The Council will accept an application from an individual who has been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace; or an individual who is acting on behalf of the individual who is self-isolating. Payments will only be made into the bank account of the person who is self-isolating.

3.3 Individuals can make a claim up to 42 days after their period of self-isolation has ended. Applications made after this point will not be accepted.

3.4 Awards will only be considered for individuals who meet the eligibility criteria above.

3.5 Individuals can claim a discretionary payment more than once if they are told by NHS Test and Trace that they must self-isolate multiple times, as long as they meet the criteria and the periods of self-isolation do not overlap.

3.6 On completion of the application individuals will need to provide the necessary documentation to support their claim for a discretionary payment.

3.7 The documents required will be:

- The 8-character NHS Test and Trace Account identification
- Evidence to show that they or were are unable to work from home (this could be a letter from their employer, or a wage slip showing a reduction in pay due to loss of earnings as a result of self-isolation)
- If self-employed, evidence to show a significant loss in earnings due to self-isolation.
- Their most recent bank statements and evidence of any savings/capital held
- Their National Insurance Number
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3.8 Applicants will also be required to complete an income and expenditure form whilst providing additional information in respect of their ongoing liabilities. The Council will ensure that support is provided to help individuals complete their applications if requested.

3.9 From 8 March 2021 the DHSC has extended eligibility for both the mandatory and discretionary scheme to include parents and guardians whose child has been asked to self-isolate on or after 8 March.

3.10 To be eligible for discretionary payment applicants must meet all the following criteria:

- They are the parent or guardian of a child or young person in the same household and need to take time off work to care for them whilst they self-isolate. (this is limited to one parent or guardian per household for the child or young person's self-isolation period)
- They are employed or self-employed
- They cannot work from home whilst undertaking caring responsibilities and will lose income as a result
- Who are not currently receiving Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit
- Who are on low incomes and will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while they are self-isolating
- Are not a student enrolled in a full time course;
- Do not have capital/savings in excess of £6,000

4. Decisions

4.1 Each support payment application will be assessed on an individual, case by case basis taking into consideration an individual's income and savings against the household expenditure.

4.2 Decisions on successful and unsuccessful claims are delegated to the Group Manager for Resident Services.

5. Appeals

5.1 The Council will not be required to provide a right of appeal against any decision not to award a discretionary payment. Individuals will not be eligible if they do not meet the criteria.

6. Fraud

6.1 The Council is committed to the prevention and detection of fraud and the protection of public funds. Cases of suspected fraud will be referred to the Counter Fraud Unit (CFU) for investigation which may result in clawback of payments made and/or further action being taken against an individual.