

Test and Trace Support Payment and Discretionary Support Payment Scheme

From 28 September 2020 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self-Isolation) (England) Regulations 2020 came into force. From this date eligible individuals are entitled to a Test and Trace Support Payment or Discretionary Test and Trace 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.

The Government has provided funding to Havant Borough Council (the Council) as follows:

- Test and Trace Support Payment (programme costs) - £56,000
- Test and Trace Support Payment discretionary payment - £33,713.15

The programme costs are subject to reconciliation and the Council may be required to return funding if the number of payments made is less than the allocated grant. If the number of payments exceed the grant allocation the Council can apply for a top up payment.

The discretionary payment is a fixed four-month payment that will not be topped up or subject to a reconciliation process.

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 will last until 31 January 2021.

Eligibility

Test and Trace Support Payment

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

Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment

Eligibility for a £500 Discretionary 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; and
- are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result.
- who are not currently receiving but are in the process of applying for Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and 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

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.

Backdating

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

Applicants have 14 days from the end of their self-isolation period in which to claim.

Applications from members of the same household

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

Multiple claims

Some individuals could be asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace more than once. Someone can claim more than once (if they are told to self-isolate multiple times), if they meet the eligibility criteria for each individual claim and their periods of self-isolation do not overlap.

Havant

BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

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

Eligible individuals can make a claim up to 14 days after their period of self-isolation has ended.

Havant Borough Council will not accept applications after this point. For example, a person who is instructed by NHS Test and Trace to self-isolate until 10 October will have until 24 October to make a claim.

Third-party applications

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

Applicants with other support needs

As part of the claim process applicants will be made aware of the additional support that is available to those in need.

Applicants who are self-isolating who haven't been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace

The Council will not consider applications from individuals who do not have a valid notification from NHS Test and Trace telling them to stay at home and self-isolate.

Applicants who are quarantining after returning to the UK

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

Application will be assessed by the Council as follows:

The Council have arrangements in place to process and verify applications, issue payments to successful applicants and prevent and detect fraud.

The application form can be found <https://www.havant.gov.uk/test-and-trace-support-payment>

To apply for the Test and Trace Support Payment and discretionary payment the applicant will complete an online form. If they are digitally excluded, they can call Customer Services Team who will complete the form on their behalf. The applicant will have to provide:

Test and Trace Support Payment

- notification from NHS Test and Trace asking them to self-isolate;
- proof that they are in receipt of Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit;
- a bank statement;
- proof that they are employed or self-employed and that they are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result.

Test and Trace Support Payment discretionary payment

- notification from NHS Test and Trace asking them to self-isolate;
- proof that they have applied for Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit;
- a bank statement;
- proof that they are employed or self-employed and that they are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result.
- Proof that they are on a low income and will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while they are self-isolating.

Examples of evidence

- employed – two wage slips showing the reduction in earnings or a letter from their employer
- self-employed evidence of self-assessment returns, trading income and proof that their business delivers services which cannot be undertaken without social contact
- proof that they are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result.

Applicants will be able to upload their evidence electronically as part of the application process.

There may be some situations in which an applicant struggles to provide evidence, for example, if they do not have internet access and are applying over the telephone. The Council will use its discretion to accept existing evidence they may already possess from the applicant – provided the existing evidence is less than three months old.

Pre-payment checks

Havant

BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Council will carry out three main pre-payment checks. These are to verify that each applicant:

- has been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace;
 - is employed or self-employed and will lose income because they cannot work from home;
- and
- is receiving one of the benefits in the eligibility criteria.

Checking that an applicant has been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace

Only people who have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace can claim the Test and Trace Support Payment or discretionary payment. To check this, the Council will use data provided from the Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS) system.

Where applicants provide a notification from the NHS Isolation Note service rather than NHS Test and Trace, they will be given the opportunity to provide a valid NHS Test and Trace notification if they have one.

Checking that an applicant is employed or self-employed and will lose income because they cannot work from home

The application process will ask applicants if they are employed or self-employed and whether they can work from home. If the applicant can work from home, they will not be eligible for the Test and Trace Support Payment or a discretionary payment.

Applicants who are self-employed will need to provide evidence of self-assessment returns and trading income.

Checking that an applicant will lose income because they cannot work from home

The application process will ask applicants to confirm that they cannot work from home and they will have a reduction in earned income because they are self-isolating.

Where the applicant meets all other eligibility criteria and is losing income because they have been told to self-isolate and cannot work from home, they are eligible for example:

- an applicant with a single job whose employer continues to pay them a full wage while they self-isolate would not be eligible;
- an applicant whose employer pays them a reduced wage while they self-isolate would be eligible (they have lost income);
- an applicant with two part-time jobs who continues to be paid a full wage by one employer, but whose other employer does not pay them while they self-isolate, would be eligible (they have lost income).

Checking that an applicant is receiving one of the qualifying benefits

The Council will use the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) system, Searchlight, to check that each applicant is receiving one of the qualifying benefits. It has been agreed with HMRC that Searchlight can also be used to confirm whether an applicant is currently in receipt of Tax Credits for the purpose of administering the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. This is permissible because the scheme falls under the definition of Local Welfare Provision.

When using Searchlight, the Council accept all terms and conditions set out in the current DWP/LA Data Sharing Memorandum of Understanding, and remain accountable for:

Standards that govern the secure transfer, processing and storage of data; and Regulation 5 of Social Security (Information-sharing in relation to Welfare Services etc.) Regulations 2012/1483 made under S131(1) of the Welfare Reform Act 2012, make provision that information can be supplied by DWP to local authorities for the purposes of “local welfare provision”.

“Local welfare provision” means occasional financial or other assistance given by a local authority, Scottish Ministers or Welsh Ministers, or a person authorised to exercise any function of theirs or providing a service to them, to or in respect of individuals for the purpose of—

- (a) meeting, or helping to meet, an immediate short-term need—
 - (i) arising out of an exceptional event or exceptional circumstances; and
 - (ii) that requires to be met in order to avoid a risk to the well-being of an individual; or
- (b) enabling individuals to establish or maintain a settled home, where those individuals have been or, without the assistance, might otherwise be—
 - (i) in prison, hospital, a residential care establishment or other institution; or
 - (ii) homeless or otherwise living an unsettled way of life

This information is also detailed in Annex C of the existing DWP/LA Memorandum of Understanding.

- Security standards in respect of action required for security incidents and disciplinary action

Checking if an applicant has already received a payment

The Council will keep a record of all payments made under the scheme (both Test and Trace Support Payments and discretionary payments). The Council will use these records to see if an individual has already received a payment and the isolation period to which it relates as part of the process of confirming an applicant’s eligibility.

Obtaining and verifying an NHS Test and Trace Account ID

NHS Test and Trace uses a web-based tool called the Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS) to record information about people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and their contacts. This system allocates individuals an Account ID is an 8-character identifier unique to each record on the web tool (e.g. 4a2c204a).

How applicants obtain an NHS Test and Trace Account ID

Most people 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 web tool to undertake the contact tracing journey. The invitation message (sent via a text message or email) contains the 8-character Account ID.

Everyone who has 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 message upon completion of the NHS Test and Trace questionnaire. The 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.

Using the Eligibility Checker

The Council will be able to use the web-based Eligibility Checker to check whether an applicant has an NHS Test and Trace Account ID.

The Council will only receive a positive output if both the following items, which can be seen on the applicant's form, are correct:

- NHS Test and Trace Account ID; and
- first part of the home address postcode or date of birth (added to support validation and protect identity).

If this is correct, the Council will receive the following information about the applicant:

- confirmation that their NHS Test and Trace Account ID is valid;
- the start date of their isolation period;
- their postcode*;
- the history of their interaction with NHS Test and Trace*; and
- if the NHS Test and Trace Account ID has been given a payment, which is to avoid multiple claims.

The Eligibility Checker will be updated daily. This means that if an individual receives an Account ID on Monday 5 October, their information will be visible to the Council on Tuesday 6 October.

Making payments

Havant

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Once all evidence has been verified, the Council will pay the applicant £500. If the applicant meets all the criteria for the Test and Trace Support Payment, they will be paid from the main fund (programme costs).

If the applicant does not receive any of the qualifying benefits but meets all the other criteria as detailed above for a Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment and will face hardship because they cannot work while self-isolating, the Council will make a £500 Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment from the discretionary fund.

The discretionary payment is a fixed four-month payment that will not be topped up once the fund has been used there will be no additional Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payments paid.

The Council will endeavour to make all Test and Trace Support Payments and discretionary payments within three days of the Council receiving an eligible application.

All payments will be made via BACS (as soon as practicable) and the applicant must provide bank details for payment, including a bank statement.

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.

Eligibility for other benefits

These payments will be disregarded when calculating eligibility for other benefits. This includes calculating entitlement to Universal Credit.

Post-payment checks

The Council will carry out post-payment checks to prevent fraud. This will be done by undertaking monthly spot checks on ten percent of payments made, to identify whether a recipient continued to receive an income from their employer. This will be reviewed by DHSC.

If checks lead the Council to suspect that someone has continued to receive full pay from their employer while self-isolating – and therefore should not have received a £500 payment – the Council will recover the money.

Any payment made as a result of fraud may be subject to claw back, as may any support payments paid in error.

Fraud

Havant

BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Council will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud – An applicant may face prosecution if found to have manipulated or falsified their position in order to obtain these payments, including failure to self-isolate which puts others at risk. Any payment made as a result of fraud may be subject to claw back.

Appeals

There are no further appeals rights for the grant, the Council's decision is final.

Support

If you require support or advice in relation to the Test & Trace Support Payment and discretionary payment, please telephone: 023 9244 6019