

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Decision Made: 02 October 2020

**Covid 19 Discretionary Test and Trace Support Scheme -
Officer Decision**

Issue for Decision

The decision sets out the Council's policy for the delivery of the Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme

Decision Made

That the Council's policy for the delivery of the Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme attached as Appendix 1 be approved.

Reasons for Decision

From 28 September 2020, individuals will be entitled to a Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 if they:

- Have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because they have tested positive for coronavirus or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive
- Are employed or self-employed
- Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result
- Are 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.

This payment is designed to support people on low incomes, if they will lose income because of self-isolating, and to encourage them 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 will last until 31 January 2021.

In recognising that there may be circumstances where an individual meets the main qualifying criteria for the Test and Trace Support Payment (i.e. they are a low-income worker who is unable to work because they are self-isolating) but are not in receipt of qualifying benefits and could suffer financial hardship as a result of not being able to work, the Council are

APPENDIX 1

implementing a Discretionary Scheme in accordance with guidance and with funding from Government.

The attached document sets out the Council's policy for the delivery of the Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme, including:

- Factors that should be considered when making a decision to award or refuse payment; and
- Procedure where the applicant is dissatisfied with the Council's decision.

The Powers to implement such a scheme are contained in Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

Part 2.3.1 para 12 of the Constitution enables the Chief Executive to take any action necessary in connection with any civil emergency or disaster including response, recovery and business continuity as may be required from time to time. This decision is urgent as the scheme came into effect on 28 September 2020 and claims for the Support Payment could start immediately. The decision has been taken in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

Whilst introduction of the Scheme is at the discretion of the council and the council could decide not to implement a scheme, this would be to the detriment of residents that are required to self-isolate.

The level of awards will be capped at the amount of funding to be made available for the Scheme by Government.

Background Papers

None

Test and Trace Support Payment

Discretionary Scheme

October 2020

www.maidstone.gov.uk



1. Introduction and Purpose

From 28 September 2020, individuals are entitled to a Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 if they:

1. Have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because they have tested positive for coronavirus or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive
2. Are employed or self-employed
3. Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result, and
4. 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.

This payment is designed to support people on low incomes who are unable to work at home and will lose income because they have been told to self-isolate, to encourage them 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 will last until 31 January 2021.

In recognising that there may be circumstances where an individual meets the main qualifying criteria for the Test and Trace Support Payment (i.e. they are a low-income worker who is unable to work because they are self-isolating) but are not in receipt of qualifying benefits and could suffer financial hardship as a result of not being able to work, the Council is implementing a Discretionary Scheme.

This Policy sets out the criteria and approach of Maidstone Borough Council for the administration of the Discretionary Scheme.

2. Eligibility for payments

Discretionary Scheme Criteria

Individuals will be considered for a Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 if they meet points 1,2 and 3 above and are either:

- Awaiting the outcome of a claim for a qualifying benefit, or
- Awaiting the outcome of an appeal regarding the decision to refuse entitlement to a qualifying benefit or
- Not entitled to a qualifying benefit by virtue of their immigration status and designation that they have no recourse to public funds or

- Suffering exceptional financial hardship

A qualifying benefit for the purpose of the Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment is Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit.

Any claim, appeal or refusal on grounds of immigration status for the purpose of the policy must relate to a period including that immediately before the date the applicant has been advised to self-isolate by the NHS Test and Trace Service.

An applicant will be held to be suffering exceptional financial hardship where the household income is insufficient to meet their reasonable household living costs.

Claim Period

Eligibility for the Test and Trace Discretionary payments will be for people who are told to self-isolate on or after 28 September 2020 and who meet the relevant eligibility criteria.

The Council will not accept applications from people told to self-isolate before 28 September 2020, even if the period of self-isolation continues after 28 September.

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. They will each be given a unique reference number by NHS Test and Trace.

Multiple claims

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.

Discretionary Track and Trace Support Payments are for where an individual meets the main qualifying criteria for the Test and Trace Support Payment (i.e. they are a low-income worker who is unable to work because they are self-isolating) but are not in receipt of qualifying benefits and could suffer financial hardship as a result of not being able to work. Application cannot be for a discretionary payment for any period where there is entitlement to a Test and Trace Support Payment.

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 ended. The Council will not accept applications after this point.

Third-party applications

Applications can be made 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 (so, for example, if someone applied on behalf of a parent, the payment would be made into the parent's bank account).

3. Scheme exclusions

The Discretionary 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 and have been instructed to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

Applicants who are furloughed

The Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment is for people facing a reduction in income because they cannot work while self-isolating. Payment will not therefore be made to applicants whose income is lower than normal because they are furloughed.

Applicants receiving full sick pay.

The Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment is for people facing a reduction in income because they cannot work while self-isolating. Payment will not therefore be made to applicants where they receive full sick pay from their employer.

4. How the Discretionary Support Payment will be provided

Local authorities are responsible for delivering the Discretionary Support Payment Scheme to eligible residents.

Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides all local authorities with the power to make these payments.

The Government will meet associated New Burdens costs and local billing authorities will receive funding from the Government with which to make payments. All awards will be subject to available funding and the Council may suspend or end the scheme in the absence of this. .

5. Application process

There will be an online application process available through the Council's website. Customers unable to access the online application will be supported to make an application by telephone through the Council's contact centre. The scheme will be widely publicised to encourage take up.

APPENDIX 1

Applications on the required form will allow the Council to undertake pre-payment checks to confirm eligibility, with applicants required to provide evidence to support their eligibility as part of the application process.

The period for applications will be 28.09.2020 to 31 .01.2021, subject to available funding.

No applications outside this period will be considered.

6. Decision making

No payment will be paid without an application being made using the form provided by this Council.

In the interests of efficiency, the authority to consider applications and make decisions about eligibility for discretionary Test and Trace Support payments is delegated to the Head of Revenues and Benefits who will ensure that administrative arrangements are in place for decisions to be notified and payment made as soon as is reasonably practical.

Where the decision is made to refuse payment, the applicant may request that the decision is reconsidered and provide any additional information which they believe to be relevant. Reconsideration of the decision will be undertaken by a different officer to that making the original decision and their decision will be final.