

Tandridge District Council

Test and Trace Discretionary Payment Policy

1. Background

- 1.1 From 28 September 2020, individuals are entitled to a Test and Trace Support Payment or Discretionary Support Payment of £500. This is to support people on low incomes who are unable to work from home if they are told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace and will lose income as a result.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 On 25 September 2020 the government issued guidance on the administration of the fund. Details can be found here - [link to Government guidance](#).
- 1.4 The Council already has a scheme in place to process Test and Trace Support Payments which meet the standard criteria. For individuals who do not meet the standard criteria, the Council has the discretion to award a Test and Trace Support Payment provided that the criteria at 2.1 (below) are met.
- 1.5 This Policy covers Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payments for residents of the district of Tandridge who are ineligible from receiving a Test and Trace Grant because they are not in receipt of qualifying benefits.

2. Discretionary payment – Government criteria

- 2.1 Local authorities can make a £500 discretionary payment to individuals who meet all of the following criteria:
 - Have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because they have tested positive for coronavirus or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive;
 - Are employed or self-employed; and are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result of self-isolating;
 - Have signed up and completed the test and trace journey. Receiving the initial notification to isolate will not qualify for the grant;
 - 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.
- 2.2 Local authorities can introduce additional criteria to determine eligibility for discretionary payments in their area, as long as these operate in addition to, rather than instead of, the criteria for the Test and Trace Support Payment.

2.3 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 that they currently receive.

3. Discretionary payment – Tandridge additional criteria

3.1 In addition to the government criteria (at 2.1 above), the following additional criteria have been determined by the Council as relevant to the determination of whether a Discretionary Test and Trace Payment will be made:

- Individuals who have made a claim 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 and it is likely that this claim will be successful;
- Individuals from abroad who are excluded from claiming benefits but meet all the other statutory and discretionary criteria;
- Individuals whose gross annual income is less than £20,000 a year (£385 per week), although consideration will be given for higher annual incomes if the Council is provided with a suitable justification that is in the spirit of the grant;
- The individual's employer must confirm that as a result of his/her isolation s/he will lose pay, as a result of the terms of his/her contract;
- If the individual is self-employed, the self-employment must clearly be of the nature where s/he cannot work from home;
- The individual does not have capital exceeding £6,000.

3.2 Individuals can make a claim for Discretionary Test and Trace Payment up to 14 days after their period of self-isolation ended. Applications after this point will not be accepted.

3.3 Individuals 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.

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

3.5 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.

3.6 The Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Policy 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.

3.7 Partially completed applications will be deemed invalid, or applications which do not clearly provide the information required will be deemed invalid.

3.8 The Council reserves the right to reject an application if it does not meet the spirit of the government's grant scheme, or the criteria listed.

4. Taxation

These payments will be subject to income tax, but they will not be subject to National Insurance Contributions. The Council will provide information to Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs in relation to any payments made.

5. Fraud

- 5.1 By accepting a grant payment, the individual confirms that they are eligible for the grant scheme.
- 5.2 The Council and the government will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud - and any individual caught falsifying their records to gain grant money will face prosecution and any funding issued will be subject to claw back, as may any grants paid in error.
- 5.3 The Council will use all available tools to identify potential fraud before and after payment. By submitting an application an individual is giving consent for the Council to share the data on the application form for the purposes of validating the claim with any appropriate organisations. If the individual does not consent to the sharing of the information the claim will be deemed invalid.

6. Funding

- 6.1 The government is only providing limited funding to the scheme, and the individual elements of the scheme will be prepared to maximise the funding to the individuals in Tandridge.
- 6.2 The government have not explicitly stated that additional funding will be available should any Council exceed its allocation. In the event that the Council commits all its allocation of funding, the Discretionary Test and Trace Payment scheme may be closed.
- 6.3 If government funding permits, the scheme implemented by this Policy may be extended or re-opened for additional applications.
- 6.4 The government intends this scheme to run until 31 January 2021.

7. Right of Appeal

- 7.1 There will be no right of appeal.
- 7.2 A challenge to a grant decision can only be made on a point of law through the courts.