

**TO: THE MONITORING OFFICER
(TOM CLARK, SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL)**

**RECORD OF ACTION TAKEN BY A CABINET MEMBER
UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

Subject: To seek approval for the Council's updated Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Guidelines to local qualifying people.	
Cabinet Member: Councillor Ruth De Mierre	
Has the Cabinet Member received a report prior to making the decision?	Yes
In the case of a key decision where the Cabinet Member has received a report, please state the date a copy of the report was made available to the Chair of the relevant Scrutiny Committee and placed in the public domain:	N/A
Record of decision taken: It is recommended to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) To receive and note the report;(ii) Approve the Mid Sussex District Council updated Test and Trace Discretionary Support Payment Policy and extend it to the 31st March 2021.	
Date of decision: 14 th January 2021	
Statement of reasons for making the decision: On 20 th September 2020 the Government announced that Councils will need to administer a new Test and Trace Payment scheme starting on 28 th September 2020. A previous report was brought on the 15 th October 2020 seeking approval for the Test and Trace Discretionary Support Payment Policy. The final version of the Government guidance was released on 13 th October 2020. As well as administering the standard Government scheme each Council must also administer a limited discretionary scheme. This report is seeking to extend the discretionary scheme to the 31 st March 2021 but also approve updated guidelines for the Mid Sussex District Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Scheme that has been active since the 12 th October 2020 utilising the set funding from Central Government.	
Alternative options considered and rejected: The options considered in this report are the only ones available (and based on Government advice) to the Council as the Council seeks to become more transparent in the use of its discretionary financial assistance to local qualifying people during the current COVID19 outbreak.	
Code of Conduct Interest of Cabinet Members? If yes, please advise on the nature and whether dispensation in place. No	

Is the decision to be protected from call-in? (i.e if any delay would seriously prejudice the Council's or the public's interest) - see Scrutiny Procedure Rule 14 (M)	Yes
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If so, please state: In the current pandemic we are trying to protect local residents from COVID19 by providing a payment for anyone on a qualifying low income to encourage them to self isolate from work and take a test and trace process. We are also under pressure to continue to make these £500 payments by the Government.

Signed:

Cabinet Member – Customer Services

This record must be forwarded immediately to the Monitoring Officer (TC) and copied to the relevant Cabinet Member.

For Monitoring Officer

Date of publication of Member Information Service Bulletin	20 January 2021
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Date of decision can be implemented (on the Thursday after publication of the Member Information Service Bulletin, unless already protected from call-in)	14 th January 2021
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REPORT TO CABINET MEMBER FOR CUSTOMER SERVICES

TEST AND TRACE DISCRETIONARY SUPPORT PAYMENT GUIDELINES

REPORT OF: HEAD OF CORPORATE RESOURCES
Contact Officer: Kevin Stewart – Business Unit Leader Revenues and Benefits
Email: kevin.stewart@midsussex.gov.uk Tel: 01444 477229
Wards Affected: All
Key Decision: No
Report to: Cabinet Member for Customer Services
Date: 14th January 2021

Purpose of Report

1. To consider and approve the updated Test and Trace Discretionary Support Payment Guidelines for residents that fall outside of the standardised Government scheme and extend it to the 31st March 2021.

Summary

2. On 20th September 2020 the Government announced that Councils will need to administer a new Test and Trace Payment scheme starting on 28th September 2020. A previous report was brought on the 15th October 2020 seeking approval for the Test and Trace Discretionary Support Payment Policy. The final version of the Government guidance was released on 13th October 2020. As well as administering the standard Government scheme each Council must also administer a limited discretionary scheme. This report is seeking to extend the discretionary scheme to the 31st March 2021 but also approve updated guidelines for the Mid Sussex District Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Scheme that has been active since the 12th October 2020 utilising the set funding from Central Government.

Recommendations

3. **The Cabinet Member for Customer Services is recommended to:**
 - (i) **To receive and note the report;**
 - (ii) **Approve the Mid Sussex District Council updated Test and Trace Discretionary Support Payment Guidelines and extend it to the 31st March 2021.**
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Background

4. As of Monday 28th September 2020, residents have a legal duty to self-isolate if they test positive for COVID-19 or are contacted by NHS Test and Trace. This was laid in legislation: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2020/1045/contents/made>
5. On 20th September 2020 Government announced that those on lower incomes who cannot work from home and have lost income as a result of this self-isolation will be eligible for a new £500 NHS Test and Trace Support Payment.
6. The standard Government scheme started from 28th September 2020 with Government giving Local Authorities until 12th October 2020 to prepare and finalise policies and procedures to administer the standard scheme and a locally defined discretionary scheme.

Criteria for Test and Trace Payments

7. Government have set certain criteria to ascertain who can make a successful claim for this payment. A resident will be entitled to a Test and Trace payment of £500 providing they meet all the following criteria:
 - Comply with the notification from NHS Test and Trace to self-isolate;
 - Are employed or self-employed;
 - Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result;
 - Are in receipt of one of the following benefits:
 - o Universal Credit
 - o Working Tax Credit
 - o Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
 - o Housing Benefit
 - o Income Support
 - o Income based Job Seeker's Allowance
 - o Pension Credit
8. This is applicable if anyone has been told to self-isolate on or after 28th September 2020.
9. This payment is designed to support people on low incomes, if they will lose income as a result of self-isolating, and to encourage them to get tested if they have symptoms. People in the same household can each make an individual application to receive the payment, if they each meet the eligibility criteria.
10. A resident will not be eligible if they:
 - Are quarantining after travelling abroad (unless you test positive during the 14-day quarantine period).
 - Continue to receive full wages while you self-isolate.
 - Can work from home during a period of self-isolation.
 - Are no longer required to self-isolate i.e. your period of self-isolation ended before the Test and Trace Payment Scheme launched (28th September 2020)
 - Have not received a notification or code from NHS Test and Trace telling you to self-isolate.
11. Any application for the £500 must be made within 28 days of when the self-isolation period began for the applicant or during that self-isolation period.
12. The scheme will run from 28th September 2020 until the newly extended date of the 31st March 2021.

Recommendations for Discretionary Test and Trace Payment Guidelines

13. Government guidance states that Council's must also operate a discretionary scheme to support residents that have been instructed to self-isolate but fall outside of the standard criteria.

14. Certain criteria must still be met, these are listed below:

- Have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace (receiving a Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS) account number in the process), 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

This criteria maintains the philosophy that the scheme will support people on low incomes if they will lose income as a result of self-isolating.

15. Guidance states that 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.

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 set out above.

16. Recommendations on a local discretionary scheme are detailed below. These are similar to other local authorities and based upon feedback from pilot authorities. To consider applications from residents that are not applicable from the main scheme but fall into the below categories:

- Individuals that meet all the criteria for the test and trace payments with the exception of one of the qualifying benefits (eg 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) will be considered for a £500 discretionary payment if they are determined to be in 'financial hardship'.

17. Financial hardship is; determined by factors such as the individual:-

- is experiencing *significant* debt issues - for the purposes of core living expenses - as a direct result of requirement to self-isolate; and
- is unable to afford the core living expenses for living during the period of isolation; and
- has no access to savings or other financial help to assist during this period.

18. Core living expenses are considered to be priority expenses which would put the individual in a vulnerable position if left unpaid. Examples of these include rent, mortgage or loan secured against your home, council tax, court fines. Failure to keep up with these payments can put an individual at risk of court action or at risk of losing their home, which is why they are considered priority debts.
19. Priority debts are those that carry the most serious consequences if you do not pay them. These do not have to be the largest or debts with the most expensive interest rates, but if you do not pay them it could lead to serious problems.
20. Mid Sussex District Council will therefore only consider applications made under the Discretionary scheme where one of the following applies:
 - The individual has a rental liability based on a commercial tenancy. This means that the individual holds a valid tenancy agreement in which they pay rent in exchange for occupancy of a property, or part of a property for a period of time, and where the penalty of non-payment of their rental liability will result in their eviction from the property. This does not include informal, casual or familial arrangements; **or**
 - The individual has a mortgage, or other such similar loan taken out against their home; **or**
 - The individual has a current Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA).
21. In light of the recent surge of applications, our officers are struggling to keep up with the demand in applications, and other essential work has already been delayed and put on hold since October 2021 when the scheme went live, and stands to continue to be disregarded while the officers try to manage the volume of applications and the necessary work that goes with them. We, therefore, propose the following set criteria to be inserted into the discretionary scheme:
 - A capital/savings limit of £4,000; and
 - The income lost must exceed £100 in total
22. Please note that any loss of income or risk of financial hardship will be considered directly in relation to the period in which the individual has been instructed to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace. Any loss of income or financial hardships resulting due to external or pre-existing factors, or due to the wider effects of Covid-19 (for example a reduction in business during the past year), will not be taken into account. The aim of the scheme is to provide financial support, where required, to those who may otherwise choose not to self-isolate due to the financial repercussions of not being able to attend work.
23. The reason behind the proposed changes is in part because the highest proportion of applications we are receiving are from those between the ages of 17 and 25. We are finding that applicants in this age range as a general rule tend live at home with their parents and do not have rental liabilities or other significant expenses. We therefore do not consider them to meet the 'at risk of financial hardship' criteria. In many cases the evidence has shown that they are in fact being actively financially supported by their parents, despite having no significant or priority expenses. We are therefore turning down a significant number of applications on this basis.
24. Any applications that do not meet the above criteria will be turned down.

25. If this is determined officers will also need as part of this process check to see if they are entitled to any of the qualifying benefits if they apply for a discretionary test and trace payment. The individual applying would also need to agree to be referred by the Council to undertake free independent debt advice.
26. Each case would not receive an automatic award and would be assessed on its own merits as part of the discretionary decision making process by officers.
27. Applications would be made on the same form in the same process as for the standard scheme. This requires certain evidence to be provided that would enable the officer to make a decision.
28. To mirror the standard scheme each award must be for a flat rate of £500 per successful claim. Payments will be made until funding from the Government has been fully utilised or the Government has closed the scheme.

Financial Implications

29. Government will provide funding to support local authorities in implementing the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. This includes both administrative costs (set-up costs and running costs) and the costs of the payments made under the scheme.
30. Mid Sussex District Council have received two streams of funding that form the award elements of the scheme. They have also received costs for the administration of the scheme.
31. Funding for the standard scheme is £40,500. This equates to 81 awards up the end of January 2021. This is a 'down-payment' based upon expected programme costs. This will be subject to reconciliation which could mean that funding may be returned if the number of payments made is less than the allocation.
32. Funding for the discretionary scheme is £24,331.57 plus a top up for the months of February and March 2021 of £8,168.43. This is a total of £32,500.00. This equates to 65 awards up to the end of March 2021. This is a fixed six month envelope that will not be topped up or subject to a reconciliation process.
33. There is an administration income that has been paid by the Government to administer the scheme. Mid Sussex District Council has been paid £26,026.40 for this for the period up to the 31st March 2021.

Risk Management Implications

34. There is a potential risk to the Council's reputation should any awards of Discretionary Grants payments be applied inconsistently or unfairly. However, this risk will be managed by the drafting of robust guidelines for Mid Sussex that will provide clear guidelines to staff making such decisions on a case by case basis and allow an element of discretion in exceptional circumstances.

Equality and Customer Service Implications

35. These guidelines do not have a negative effect on any group and has been developed to help support those people most disadvantaged by COVID19 that have not already received or unlike to receive other Government assistance. An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken as we will only help customers who apply for test and trace and fully meet the criteria and we follow clear guidelines issued by DHCS and Mid Sussex District Council.

Other Material Implications

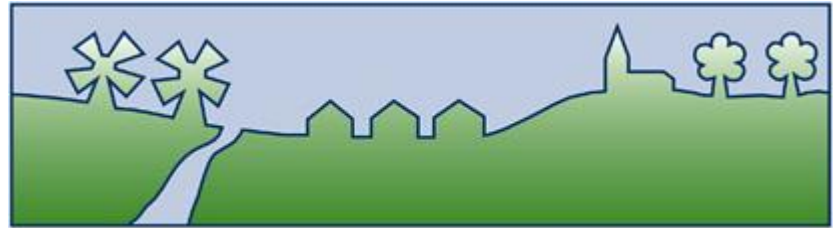
36. This is a Cabinet Portfolio Holder function.
37. There are no other material implications.

Background Papers

- Appendix 1 - Mid Sussex Discretionary Grants Guidelines



Department
of Health &
Social Care



MID SUSSEX
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Test and Trace Support Payments: Discretionary Scheme Guidelines for Mid Sussex DC

1. Purpose of this document

This guidance sets out the guidelines for Mid Sussex District Council on helping people in their area to claim the discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment.

2. Test and Trace Payments: an overview

From 28th September 2020, individuals may be entitled to a Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 if they 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.
- Been given an account number by Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS) when informed to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace to quote on your application.

- Have responded to messages received from NHS Test and Trace (which will have been received via a combination of email, text, letter or phone call) in which they provided their contact details and where they have tested positive, the details of their contacts.
- Are employed or self-employed
- Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result
- Will face financial hardship as a direct result of self-isolating.

Test and Trace Discretionary Support Payments

Individuals that meet all the criteria for the test and trace payments with the exception of one of the qualifying benefits (e.g. who are not currently receiving Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit) will be considered for a £500 discretionary payment if they are determined to be in 'financial hardship'.

Financial Hardship

Financial hardship is determined by factors such as the individual:-

- is experiencing *significant* debt issues - for the purposes of core living expenses - as a direct result of requirement to self-isolate; and
- is unable to afford the essentials for living during the period of isolation; and
- has no access to savings or other financial help to assist during this period.

Core living expenses are considered to be priority expenses which would put the individual in a vulnerable position if left unpaid. Examples of these include rent, mortgage, council tax and court fines. Failure to keep up with these payments can put an individual at risk of court action or at risk of losing their home, which is why they are considered priority debts.

Priority debts are those that carry the most serious consequences if you do not pay them. They are not necessarily the largest debts, or debts with the most expensive interest rates, but non-payment can lead to serious problems.

Mid Sussex District Council will therefore only consider applications made under the Discretionary scheme where one of the following applies:

- The individual has a rental liability based on a commercial tenancy. This means that the individual holds a valid tenancy agreement in which they pay rent in exchange for occupancy of a property for a period of time, and where the penalty of non-payment of their rental liability will result in their eviction from the property. This does not include informal, casual or familial arrangements; **or**

- The individual has a mortgage, or other such similar loan taken out against their home;
or
- The individual has a current Individual Voluntary Arrangement (IVA).

Any applications that do not meet at least one of these criteria will be turned down.

Please note that in each of the above cases the individual who wishes to make an application must personally have the liability against their name; these criteria do not apply where the individual is the partner or relative of the individual who holds the liability.

In view of the limited pot and the recent surge of applications we will also apply the following criteria to any discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment:-

- A capital/savings limit of £4,000; and
- The income lost must exceed £100 in total

Please note that any loss of income or risk of financial hardship will be considered directly in relation to the period in which the individual has been instructed to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace. Any loss of income or financial hardships resulting due to external or pre-existing factors, or due to the wider effects of Covid-19 (for example a reduction in business during the past year), will not be taken into account. The aim of the scheme is to provide financial support, where required, to those who may otherwise choose not to self-isolate due to the financial repercussions of not being able to attend work.

If financial hardship has been determined, as a part of the process officers will also need to check to see if they are entitled to any qualifying benefits if they apply for a discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment. The individual applying would also need to agree to be referred by the Council to undertake free independent debt advice.

Scheme Outline

This discretionary payment is designed to support people on low incomes who are not in receipt of the listed benefits, who will lose income as a result of self-isolating, and to encourage them to get tested if they have symptoms. This is important to help stop the transmission of COVID19 and avoid further economic and societal restrictions.

These discretionary payments will be made available from 28th September 2020, and Mid Sussex District Council has arrangements in place to administer them from the 12th October 2020. Someone told to self-isolate on or after 28th September 2020 (but before the scheme is operational in their local authority) will need to be able to make a backdated claim for payment.

When the scheme was first introduced the original closing date was 31st January 2021. The government have since extended the scheme so that it will now end on 31st March 2021. No further applications will be accepted after 31st March 2021.

To mirror the National scheme, each award will be for a flat rate of £500 per successful claim. Payments will be made until funding from the Government has been fully utilised or the Government has closed the scheme. The current closing date is 31st March 2021.

3. Eligibility for payments

Backdating

Eligibility for the Test and Trace Support Payment, will be for people who are told to self-isolate on or after 28th September 2020 and who meet the relevant eligibility criteria, as detailed above.

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

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

Individuals can claim more than once (if they are told to self-isolate multiple times), as long as they meet the eligibility criteria for each individual claim and their periods of self-isolation do not overlap.

For example, if someone claims for a period of self-isolation lasting from 1st October 2020 to 14th October 2020 and then claims again for a second period of self-isolation beginning on 10th October 2020, 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 14th October 2020.

Mid Sussex District Council will keep a record of individuals who make multiple claims to guard against potential fraud.

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

Eligible individuals can make a claim up to 28 days from the start of their period of self-isolation or whilst they are in self-isolation. Mid Sussex District Council is not allowed to accept applications after this point.

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 (so, 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 information available on the online application form and in the design process, Mid Sussex District Council will reference applicants to any other local support that is available for people who have been instructed to self-isolate, such as food packages, welfare benefits and other financial assistance.

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

Mid Sussex District Council is not allowed to approve applications for anyone who does not have a valid notification from NHS Test and Trace instructing them to self-isolate. The legal duty to self-isolate that comes into force on 28th September 2020 applies only to people who have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace and have received a CTAS account number. This means it is important that people who have tested positive share accurate information about their recent contacts with NHS Test and Trace.

The NHS Covid-19 App

Up until 10th December 2020, to be eligible for the scheme a person must have been contacted by a human tester working for NHS Test and Trace, either because they had tested positive or they had been in close contact with someone who had, and that contact had provided their details directly to NHS Test and Trace. This meant that anyone advised to self-isolate by the NHS Covid-19 App would not meet the requirements for the Test and Trace Support Payment.

From 10 December 2020, the NHS Test and Trace Support Payment will be extended to include NHS COVID-19 App users who live in England and have been notified only via the app that they have been in close contact with a positive case of coronavirus. An App user will need to follow some steps to request a CTAS 8-digit NHS Test and Trace Account ID, and because app users are anonymous, they will need to leave the App to do this. They will need to register with NHS Test and Trace by following a link in the App.

The user must do this while they are in their self-isolation period. They will be unable to request an Account ID after they've finished self-isolating.

To start the process on the App, the user will need to select '**Financial support**'. This button appears on the home screen when an individual has been told to self-isolate via the App because they have been in close contact with someone who has Covid-19. They will be taken to a website which will ask for some information to check whether they could be eligible. None of the information provided will be passed back to the NHS COVID-19 app.

The App is designed to protect the user's privacy and does not know who or where the user is located.

If answers show that a user may be eligible for the NHS Test and Trace Support Payment, there are four steps to apply for the Test and Trace Support Payment:

Step 1 - Confirm who you are with NHS login.

Step 2 - Enter personal details.

Step 3 - Register with NHS Test and Trace.

Step 4 - Apply to your local authority.

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 instructed to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

Funding Pot

As the funding pot for discretionary payments is very cash limited, when the funding has been exhausted no further discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment applications will be considered. Mid Sussex District Council will advise accordingly if this is the case.

4. Application process

Mid Sussex District Council will put arrangements in place to process and verify applications, issue payments to successful applicants and prevent and detect fraud.

Mid Sussex District Council has its own online application system. The online form for Mid Sussex District Council is at <https://midsussex.grantapproval.co.uk>.

To apply, applicants will complete an online form (a telephone application is available upon special request where the applicant has no access to the internet) and provide Mid Sussex District Council with:

- A notification from NHS Test and Trace asking them to self-isolate and quoting their CTAS 8-digit Account ID; and
- Two months' recent bank statements; and
- Proof of employment or, if they are self-employed, evidence of self-assessment returns, trading income and proof that their business delivers services which cannot be undertaken without social contact; and
- Evidence that earned income will reduce; and
- A statement of the Financial Hardship they face.

- Confirmation that they believe to the best of their knowledge they meet the criteria.

Once this evidence has been verified, if the applicant meets all the criteria and the applicant qualifies, Mid Sussex District Council will pay the applicant £500. This payment should be made within three working days of verifying an eligible application.

Accessibility requirements

Mid Sussex District Council will ensure accessibility of forms for citizens across languages and disabilities.

How will people provide evidence?

As applicants will be self-isolating at home, Mid Sussex District Council has provided an online claim form that allows applicants to upload their evidence electronically wherever possible. It is the responsibility of Mid Sussex District Council to ensure data security and that evidence provided will be retained in line with our local policies.

As some applicants will not have access to scanning equipment while they self-isolate, Mid Sussex District Council will accept photographs of documents wherever possible.

5. Pre-payment checks

Mid Sussex District 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 and has engaged with the service to complete the full contact tracing journey; and
- Is employed or self-employed and will lose income because they cannot work from home; and
- Will face financial hardship as a direct result of having to self-isolate (see above for the full 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. To check this, Mid Sussex District Council will use data provided from the Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS) system (see below).

Applicants may have a notification from the NHS Isolation Note service rather than NHS Test and Trace. If this is the case, Mid Sussex District Council will give the opportunity for the applicant to provide a valid NHS Test and Trace notification if they have one. If the

applicant only has an NHS Isolation Note but cannot provide a notification from NHS Test and Trace containing their Account ID, they will not be eligible for this payment.

In order to be eligible for the payment, since the 27th November 2020 local authorities have received an additional instruction from the government that all applicants must have engaged with the NHS Test and Trace Service before any payment can be made. Mid Sussex District Council will be able to verify that this criterion has been met via the web-based PowerBI based Eligibility Checker. This means that all applicants must ensure that they have completed all steps of the NHS Test and Trace contact tracing 'journey' before they can be considered eligible.

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 about the nature of their work, whether they are employed or self-employed, and whether they can do this work from home. These questions will be asked before applicants are asked to confirm whether they will lose income while self-isolating.

For applicants who are self-employed, Mid Sussex District Council will confirm they are satisfied with the evidence of self-assessment returns and trading income provided by the applicant, before considering loss of income. If more income is required, it will be requested from the applicant.

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

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

As long as someone meets the other eligibility criteria and is losing income because they have been told to self-isolate and cannot work from home, they are eligible. So, for example:

- Someone with a single job whose employer continued to pay them a full wage while they self-isolated would not be eligible.
- Someone whose employer paid them a reduced wage while they self-isolated would be eligible (they have lost income).
- Someone 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.

Requesting further evidence

If Mid Sussex District Council has not received all the required evidence in order to carry out the relevant pre-payment checks, they will offer the applicant the opportunity to provide further information, but only where there is a possibility that the applicant may be able to show that the criteria have been met. Mid Sussex District Council will not be required to do this where it is clear from the initial application that one or more of the criteria has not been met.

6. Obtaining a CTAS account number

The NHS Test and Trace service 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. The CTAS Account ID is a 8-character identifier unique to each record on the web tool (e.g. 4a2c204a).

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

All cases and contacts who complete 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.

Mid Sussex District Council will use the web-based PowerBI based Eligibility Checker to check whether an applicant for a £500 Test and Trace Support Payment has a CTAS number.

7. Making payments

Mid Sussex District Council will pay eligible individuals within three working days of verifying their received application. Payments will be made up front, as a single payment, to the bank account matching the bank statement they have provided, via BACS.

Applicants who are overdrawn

Applicants may be able to exercise their first right of appropriation on the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment, so that their bank does not use it to pay their overdraft if they are overdrawn. More information about this can be found by visiting the web address below.

[Money Advice Hub - Right of Set-off & First Right of Appropriation](#)

Appeals

Mid Sussex District Council will not provide a right of appeal against any decision not to award a discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment. This is the same as applications made under the National scheme. People who are turned down will not be eligible because they do not meet the criteria.

However, where possible, the Government have requested that local authorities should work with applicants to make sure they have provided the necessary evidence to support a successful application. For instance, someone who is self-employed may have forgotten to provide their self-assessment return in the first instance. This person should not be rejected but given the opportunity to provide further evidence if they have it.

8. Records to be kept by local authorities

As a minimum, in accordance with the requirements laid out by the Government, Mid Sussex District Council will need to keep a record for the purposes of monitoring:

- The number of applications for discretionary payments under the scheme
- The number of approved applications for discretionary payments under the scheme
- The number of approved discretionary payment applications for which post-payment checks indicate the applicant was not eligible.

9. Taxation

These payments will be subject to income tax. Payments under the standard eligibility criteria will not be subject to National Insurance contributions.

10. Eligibility for other benefits

These discretionary payments will be disregarded when calculating eligibility for other benefits. This includes calculating entitlement to Universal Credit and Council Tax Support.

11. Evidence of failure to self-isolate

Applicants should note that if Mid Sussex District Council becomes aware, either through post-payment verification checks or through other means, that someone has not self-isolated, they will refer the case to the police.

12. Fraud

Mid Sussex District Council will be responsible for fraud-prevention measures and has a duty to protect the public purse.

Mid Sussex District Council will have the right to recover costs from people who claim the discretionary £500 payment fraudulently. Any such money recovered will be put towards the costs of running the scheme.

APPENDIX 1: Wider policy on self-isolation

Why does self-isolation matter?

Ensuring infected individuals and their close contacts isolate is one of our most powerful tools for controlling transmission.

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.

Self-isolating helps prevent family, friends and the community from contracting coronavirus, as well as helping to protect the health and care system.

The changes announced by the government on 20th September 2020 will:

- introduce a new duty on individuals to self-isolate if someone tests positive or is identified as a contact by NHS Test and Trace.
- introduce a new Test and Trace Support Payment of a £500 lump sum payment for those on low incomes to support them if they cannot work during their self-isolation period.
- 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.
- place a new legal obligation on employers that they must not knowingly enable or encourage their employees to break the law on self-isolation.
- provide discretionary funding for local authorities to help those who require corresponding financial support to the Test and Trace Support Payment to self-isolate, but do not meet all the eligibility criteria.

What difference does it make if self-isolation has a legal basis?

This change is intended to make clear the importance of people self-isolating when they have COVID-19 or they have been in recent and close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. A new legal obligation, implemented rapidly nationwide, will help stop the virus continuing to spread.

What is the aim of the Test and Trace Support Payment?

The Test and Trace Support Payment has been introduced in response to feedback from local authorities and directors of public health that some of their residents were struggling to self-isolate as directed due to financial constraints. It is to help ensure that people on low incomes self-isolate when they test positive or are identified as a contact, and to encourage more people to get tested. This will help to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 and avoid further societal and economic restrictions, including local lockdowns.

How will the duty to self-isolate be imposed?

The proposed legal duties will apply in England only. Anyone notified of a positive test result and any of their notified contacts will have a legal duty to self-isolate. Guidance will make clear that people who have symptoms should, as now, self-isolate while they get a test.

Those testing positive for COVID-19 will be legally obliged to self-isolate for a period ending 10 days after the onset of symptoms or, for people who did not have symptoms when they were tested, 10 days after the date of the test. Other members of their household will be legally obliged to self-isolate for a period ending 14 days after the onset of the infected person's symptoms (or, if they were asymptomatic, after the date of the test). Non-household contacts will be obliged to self-isolate for the period notified to them by NHS Test and Trace (the period ending 14 days after their most recent exposure to the person who has tested positive).

What is the role of local authorities in supporting the requirement to self-isolate?

NHS Test and Trace and local authorities will continue to work together to help ensure that people understand their obligations on self-isolation and why it is so important to self-isolate – and help them access any support they need in order to do so.

Local authorities will focus on the principle of encouraging, educating and supporting self-compliance – they will not be expected to enforce the legal requirements. Local authorities will pass on the details of anyone they suspect of breaking the rules to the police. Where there is clear evidence that someone is not following the rules, the police will determine what follow-up action to take and, where necessary, issue fixed penalty notices.

Do local authorities need to launch a communications campaigns to advertise the Test and Trace Support Payment?

The government is running a central communications campaign to publicise the new legal duty to self-isolate and the Test and Trace Support Payment. We will support local authorities in arranging additional local communications, publicity and engagement.

Do local authorities need to check that Test and Trace Support Payment recipients are self-isolating?

Local authorities should focus on encouraging, educating and supporting self-isolation compliance. They should pass on the details of anyone they suspect of breaking the rules to the police.