

**REPORT OF** Senior Solicitor & Monitoring Officer  
**To:** Community and Resources Committee  
**Subject:** The Test and Trace Support Payment and Discretionary Fund  
**Date:** 19 October 2020 **Reference:**

**PURPOSE OF REPORT:**

1. To Report to Members the implementation of both the Standard and Discretionary Self Isolation Scheme made under the Urgency Procedure.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Test and Trace Support Payments have been introduced by Central Government to ensure people on low incomes who are forced to self-isolate and therefore unable to work will not be financially impacted if they are not paid by their employer during the self-isolation period. This in turn will help reduce the transmission of Covid-19 by ensuring people are isolating and avoid further social and economic restrictions.

The Test and Trace Payment Scheme allows for a one-off payment of £500 to individuals who meet the criteria. The Schemes needed to be implemented by 12 October 2020 in order to meet the Government deadline. There are two Scheme available to individuals, being the Standard or Discretionary Scheme, but applicants will not be entitled to apply under both schemes. The Discretionary Scheme will be available to individuals who are not eligible under the Standard Scheme, and if they meet the qualifying criteria.

The Standard Scheme has a strict eligibility criteria, the other provides Local Authorities with the ability to make discretionary payments to a small minority of applicants who have a low income but for whatever reason are not in receipt of a qualifying benefit.

The Schemes are currently scheduled to last until 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021.

## 2. REPORT

Guidance has been provided to Local Authorities and the following criteria must be met in order to qualify for the £500 payment from the standard scheme:

Individuals must:

- have been asked to self-isolate by The NHS Test and Trace Service, on or after 28 September but not before that date;
- be employed or self-employed;
- be unable to work from home and will lose income as a result;
- currently be receiving Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit or Pension Credit.
- People will be asked to self-isolate if:-



- they have been notified that they have tested positive for Coronavirus, or
- they have been notified that they have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive;

In addition to the above the discretionary payment is available for individuals who meet the first three criteria above but:

- **are not** currently receiving Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit or Pension Credit; and
- are on **low incomes** and will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while they are self-isolating.

The guidance has allowed for Local authorities to have the ability to introduce additional criteria in order 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.

The Devon Authorities have been working in partnership in an attempt to provide a common and consistent approach to the Discretionary Scheme across Devon. As the funding is limited, a briefing paper was distributed to the Devon Leaders and Chief Executives outlining additional criteria to be included within the Discretionary Scheme.

The proposals below have been agreed by the Devon District Authorities:

- A maximum gross earnings threshold of £372 per week. (This equates to 40 hours x £9.30 Real Living Wage). This means that if someone has earnings above this level then they would not normally be eligible unless there was an exceptional circumstance;
- A minimum number of hours that an individual will need to be working is 16 hours per week. Anyone normally working less than that would not be eligible;
- Maximum capital threshold of £6,000. Anyone with capital above that level would not be eligible;
- University students or those in higher education would normally be excluded from applying;
- Individuals who have applied for a qualifying benefit but have not yet received a decision or have appealed against a decision not to award a qualifying benefit and are awaiting the outcome of the appeal will be eligible to claim;
- Individuals who are excluded from qualifying benefits by the "Persons from Abroad" provisions will be eligible to claim;
- We will allow multiple claims in line with the government's standard scheme;
- Where more than one individual in a household meets the conditions they will each be eligible to claim;
- An individual will need to demonstrate that they will suffer financial hardship by having to self-isolate;
- Support will be capped to reflect the level of government funding, i.e. funding amount divide by £500 = number of individuals that can claim support.



### 3. IMPLICATIONS

#### Legal Implications

#### Financial Implications

The Council has been allocated limited funds as follows:

£24,538.40 for administration costs

£30,500.00 for programme costs (costs of payments to applicants for the standard scheme)  
This equates to 61 successful applications

£18,349.54 for discretionary payments  
This equates to 36 successful applications

#### Human Resources Implications

There are no direct implications from these proposals the Benefits and Finance Teams are able to undertake the assessments and payments.

#### Sustainability Implications

There are no direct implications from these proposals

#### Equality/Diversity

#### Risk Management

#### Compliance with Policies and Strategies

The Schemes comply with policies and strategies

#### Ward Member and Leader Member Views

### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The Council was required, under extremely tight deadlines, to have Policies and arrangements in place in order to administer payments for both the Standard and Discretionary Scheme by 12<sup>th</sup> October 2020. Time was of the essence to ensure the scheme is up and running, so that people who are required to self-isolate, and on low incomes are not financially affected by the isolation period.



## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The final guidance from the government (version 3) was not received until the 7<sup>th</sup> October. As the schemes were due to be implemented on the 12<sup>th</sup> October 2020, the matter was decided under the Urgency Procedure, and they are retrospectively applicable from the 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

### **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

Consultations: Chief Executive, Interim S151 Officer

Contact officer: Staci Dorey, Senior Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

Background papers:

