

## **Test & Trace Support Payments Guidance**

From 28 September 2020, if you have been required to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace and cannot work from home, you may be eligible for a support payment of £500.

To be eligible, you must:

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

### **Application Process**

You will need to complete our online form, or a telephone application if digitally excluded (0345 600 6400) and provide the following information:

- your unique ID number, which can be found in your NHS Test and Trace notification. This is important as we are not able to accept your claim without it;
- a bank statement in your name;
- proof of employment or proof you are self-employed, such as evidence of self-assessment returns, trading income and proof that the business delivers services which cannot be undertaken without social contact;
- your national insurance number, which we will use to confirm your identity and income by checking your details with HMRC, the Department for Work and Pensions, and local authority data including housing benefit and council tax support records, where relevant.
- evidence that you live in Northumberland (driver's licence, utility bill such as gas, electricity, water, home telephone, bank/building society statement, council tax bill)

Payments will be made from the 12 October 2020 onwards. If you tested positive after the 28 September but before 12 October, you can apply for a back dated grant.

This scheme will last until 30 June 2021.

### **Discretionary Support**

In line with government policy, Northumberland County Council has a limited amount of funds to support individuals who do not meet all of the eligibility criteria for the test and trace support payments, but who would experience severe financial hardship as a result of self-isolating.

You may be eligible for a discretionary track and trace support payment if you meet all of the following criteria:

- You have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because you have tested positive for coronavirus or you have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive;
- Are over the age of 16 years;
- You are employed or self-employed;
- Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result;
- You are a resident of Northumberland;
- You 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;
- Your income is equal to or less than the National living wage i.e. £8.72 per hour;
- You can demonstrate you will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while you are self-isolating.

The discretionary fund is limited and will be judged on a case by case basis, but if you fit into the criteria above please consider applying. You will need to provide a bank statement showing income less than living wage or nil income with no evidence of benefits.

If you do not meet, or are unable to demonstrate that you meet the criteria for this scheme, you will not be eligible to receive a payment. There is no right of appeal.

If you do not qualify for any of the grants above, there are other ways you can get support. If you or anyone you know is struggling at the moment, please get in touch with Northumberland Communities Together. We'll help you find and access the support you need. Call 01670 620015, 7 days a week 9am – 6pm or [visit the Northumberland Communities together webpage here.](#)

### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

*What happens if I'm asked to self-isolate more than once?*

You could be asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace more than once. You can claim more than once, as long as you meet the eligibility criteria for each individual claim and your periods of self-isolation do not overlap.

*Can other members of my household claim?*

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

*How long after self-isolating can I claim?*

If you are eligible, you can make your claim within 42 days of your first day of isolation. We will not be able to accept claims after this date.

*Can I apply on behalf of someone else?*

You 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 you apply on behalf of a parent, the payment would be made into the parent's bank account.

*What if I'm self-isolating after a holiday abroad?*

We will only consider your application if you have a valid notification from NHS Test and Trace telling you to stay at home and self-isolate. The Test and Trace Support Payment scheme does not cover you if you are self-isolating after returning to the UK from abroad, unless you have tested positive for coronavirus or have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

*How long will it take to receive payment?*

All payments will be made via BACS transfer into your bank account.

If you are eligible, we aim to make the payment within five working days of receiving the application and all of necessary evidence.

*Can I receive my payment into a friend's or third-party bank account?*

No. We are only able to make payments into an account in your name. If you do not have a bank account in your name, we can explore alternative ways to make the payment.

*If I am overdrawn, can my bank take the isolation payment to pay my overdraft?*

You can protect your self-isolation payment by telling your bank how it should be used.

If your bank account is overdrawn, you have a right to ask that the £500 is used to pay your bills rather than your overdraft. This is called exercising your first right of appropriation.

If you want to do this, you must tell your bank seven days before the bill is due and you must give them specific details of what should be paid. You can get more information and download a template letter from the National Debtline website.

### *Is this payment taxable?*

This payment will be subject to income tax. It will not be subject to National Insurance contributions.

### *What happens if I'm self-employed?*

The payment will be a coronavirus support payment and therefore a revenue receipt of your business, contributing towards your profits. The payment will need to be included on your Self-Assessment Tax Return along with any other coronavirus support payments you may have received.

### *What happens if I'm employed?*

There is nothing you need to do. If your income for the year is not more than £12,500, you will not have any tax to pay. If tax is due, HMRC will automatically recover it from your pay through a change in your tax code. HMRC will send you a new tax code notice.

### *Can I receive the payment whilst in receipt of Statutory Sick Pay?*

Claimants can claim Statutory Sick Pay as well as a Test and Trace Support Payment, but not contractual sick pay from their employer. Employers can claim Statutory Sick Pay Reimbursement for those self-isolating.

### *Does the payment impact existing benefit entitlements?*

No, the payment does not affect existing entitlements to Universal Credit, Pension Credit, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Job Seeker's Allowance, Income Support, Pension Credit, Housing Benefit. The payment will also be disregarded as income for the purposes of tax credits

*My income has reduced but I am still being partially paid by my employer - can I receive a payment?*

If you have lost some income due to having to self-isolate you may qualify.

This includes where you have more than one source of employment, but are only being paid for some of your jobs during the self-isolation period, or where your employer has reduced your pay as you can only do part of your job from home while you are self-isolating.

*In what circumstances would I not get a payment?*

We would not make awards in the following situations:

- you are quarantining after travelling abroad (unless instructed to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace)
- you continue to receive full wages while you self-isolate
- you can reasonably work from home during a period of self-isolation
- it is more than 42 days since your first day of isolation
- you have not received a notification from NHS Test and Trace telling you to self-isolate
- you are not in employment or self-employment
- you do not live in Northumberland (although you may be able to claim from your home area)

The above list is not exhaustive and there may be other situations where you will not qualify.

*How will the Council handle personal information that I provide?*

The Council has published a privacy notice which sets out why we ask for your personal information, what information we will hold, how it will be used, in what circumstances it would be shared, and with whom, and how long we will keep it for.

You can read the privacy notice on our website.

*What happens once I've applied?*

We will assess your application and let you know if your application has been successful, either for a Test and Trace support payment or a Discretionary payment.

If you are eligible, we aim to make the payment within five working days of receiving your application and additional evidence.