



HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

MANAGING DIRECTOR'S DECISION RECORD

Date of Decision:	12.10.20
Department:	Resources and Development
Division:	Finance
Officer Making Decision:	Managing Director, in consultation with the Leader (or in his absence the Deputy Leader), Chair of the relevant Committee (or in his absence Vice Chair) and Monitoring Officer.
Subject / Description & Reason for Decision:	<p>The Government recently announced that, from 28.09.20 in England, there is a new legal duty on anyone who tests positive for COVID-19, or are identified by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact to self-isolate. Final Government guidance was not provided until 10.10.20 and councils were required to launch their schemes on 12.10.20.</p> <p>The Government has provided funding for a new Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme for people on low incomes who are unable to work while they are self-isolating because they cannot work from home. This scheme will run until 31st January 2021. The Government have defined eligibility criteria and will fully reimburse councils for the cost of providing this support.</p> <p>Additionally the Government are providing councils with a cash limited allocation to support people not eligible for the main scheme. Hartlepool's allocation is £32,000, which is only sufficient funding to support 64 households with a payment of £500. Criteria for allocating the discretionary payments are set out in the attached document.</p>
Type of Decision:	<p>In accordance with Article 12 – 12.3 - the decision is not defined as a Key decision for the following reason:-</p> <p>The Expenditure is inevitable as a result of the Government providing a Section 31 grant to help fund the impact of specific legislative commitments where there is no in year cost, or future commitment for the General Fund.</p>

Nature of Delegation Being Exercised:	Constitution Reference – CE15 – urgent decisions normally reserved to a Committee. The Managing Director (or in his/her absence the Director of Resources and Development) may take a decision normally reserved to Full Council or a Committee where: (a) Failure to take the decision quickly would, or would be likely to, harm the interests of the Council and the public. (b) The decision is so urgent that it cannot wait until the next meeting of the Committee at which the decision would normally be taken
Alternative Options Considered & Rejected:	A number of criteria were considered for the discretionary element. The final discretionary scheme was considered the most reasonable in the light of the cash limited sum provided by Government.
Any Declared Register of Interest	No

Hartlepool Borough Council

Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme

1. Background

- 1.1 The Government recently announced that, from 28th September 2020, in England there is a new legal duty on anyone who tests positive for COVID-19, or are identified by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact, to self-isolate.
- 1.2 The Government has provided funding for a new Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme for people on low incomes who are unable to work while they are self-isolating because they cannot work from home.
- 1.3 The eligibility of the Standard Test and Trace Support Payment is defined by Government. This includes that an individual 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.
- 1.4 Where an applicant does not receive any of these qualifying benefits, but does meet all of the other criteria, they may be considered for a discretionary payment provided they can demonstrate financial hardship as a result of not being able to work whilst self-isolating.
- 1.5 The funding of the discretionary scheme is fixed for the period within which it operates. No additional Government funding is anticipated.

2. Scheme Commencement and Closure

- 2.1 Subject to meeting the eligibility criteria, only those who were told to self-isolate on or before the 28th of September will be eligible. In line with Government criteria those told to self-isolate before this date will not be eligible for payment.
- 2.2 The scheme will run until 31st January 2021, subject to any further Government guidance to the contrary.

3. Criteria

- 3.1 To be eligible for a £500 discretionary support payment, you must be resident within the Council area and fulfil the following criteria:

- You comply with the NHS Test and Trace notification to self-isolate;
- You are employed or self-employed;
- You are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result;
- You have capital of less than £3,000 (this shall be calculated in the same way as welfare benefits);
- Your net weekly household income, in order to be considered as 'low income' needs to be less than the amounts used for the receipt of benefits and the benefit cap (broadly £385 per week for a family or couple, £258 per week if you are single); and
- You will need to demonstrate that you will suffer financial hardship by having to self-isolate. Financial hardship means you are unable to pay essential household bills such as rent, mortgage, heating and food.

- 3.2 An application may be considered in cases where income and/or capital exceeds the above limits and financial hardship is due to exceptional circumstances
- 3.3 People who have no recourse to public funds will be eligible for this scheme subject to all other eligibility (listed above) being met.
- 3.4 University students and those in higher education are excluded from this scheme.
- 3.5 The Council reserves the right to change the eligibility criteria during the life of the scheme in the light of the funding position.

4. Application

- 4.1 Applications for the Discretionary Scheme payment will be identified from the main Test and Trace Support Payment application. A separate application is not required.
- 4.2 Applications will be accepted from a third party in respect of any individual who meets the eligibility criteria for payment. The third party will be required to provide evidence of their identity and to confirm the reason why they are applying on behalf of another person. Payment will only be made to the person who

is self-isolating. No payment will be made to a third party applicant.

4.3 Applications should be made via the following link:

www.hartlepool.gov.uk/testandtracepayment

4.4 A telephone process is available for those unable to access digital services. Applicants should call 01429 284188 if this service is required, or support is required to complete the online application form.

4.5 Applicants will require the following information to complete the application;

- a notification from NHS Track and Trace asking you to self-isolate (this will include a unique 8-digit ID reference);
- a current bank statement showing the applicant's name, sort code and account number;
- if employed, proof of employment, verification of a loss of earnings and confirmation that your job cannot be undertaken without social contact,
- if self-employed, evidence of self-assessment returns, trading income and proof that your business delivers services which cannot be undertaken without social contact; and
- their National Insurance Number.

4.6 The Council may request any information or evidence it reasonably requires to support the decision making process.

4.7 Eligible individuals can apply for a discretionary payment up to 14 days after their period of self-isolation ended. No applications will be accepted after this point.

4.8 Individuals in the same household can each make an application to receive a discretionary payment, if they each individually meet the eligibility criteria in full.

4.9 Applications may be made more than once, but only if;

- The individual has been told to self-isolate on more than one occasion;
- The period of self-isolation does not overlap; and
- The eligibility criteria is met in full for each individual application.

5. Assessment Process

- 5.1 The Council will undertake all necessary checks to verify the application in order to be satisfied that applicants meet the criteria in full. This may include contact with the Department of Work and Pensions, the applicant's employer for verification purposes, HMRC for tax purposes and NHS Test and Trace to confirm isolation status.
- 5.2 Applicants will be informed of the outcome of the application process.
- 5.3 There is no statutory appeal process for the discretionary scheme. The Council will operate an independent internal review process where an applicant is dissatisfied with the decision.
- 5.4 Any such requests should be lodged in writing with the Council within 3 days of the original decision, clearly stating the reasons for their disagreement, and providing any additional information to support the application where relevant. Applications should be lodged via the following e-mail address:

benefitstandtracesupport@hartlepool.gov.uk

- 5.5 The application will be reconsidered as soon as practicable, and the applicant informed of the outcome of the review.

6. Payment

- 6.1 Where the applicant meets all of the eligibility criteria for a discretionary payment, the £500 will be payable as one lump sum within 3 working days of an approved application.
- 6.2 The Government has stated the payment will be subject to income tax. The payment will not be subject to National Insurance contributions and will not be taken into account for Benefit purposes.

- 6.3 The Council accepts no responsibility in relation to applicant's tax liabilities. Applicants should make their own enquiries to establish their tax position as appropriate.

7. Fraud and failure to self-isolate

- 7.1 Any applicant falsifying information to gain payments may face prosecution and any payment issued will be recovered from them. This may also include recovery costs.
- 7.2 Similarly if it is established that payment has been made incorrectly due to misrepresentation or incorrect information provided to the Council, the Council will look to recover the amount in full.
- 7.3 The Council has a duty, if it becomes aware that an individual in receipt of this payment has failed to self-isolate, to refer the case to the police. This may result in recovery action against payments made.

8. Data Protection

- 8.1 All information and data provided by the applicant, or their representative will be kept secure and dealt with in accordance with the Council's Data Protection policy and Test and Trace Privacy Notice.