



1. Purpose of this document

This framework set out the guidance for Boston Borough Council, East Lindsey District Council and South Holland District to help people in their area to apply for the discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment and ensure people are supported to self-isolate.

It is based on The Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme: Implementation Guide for Local Authorities in England (Version 1.0, Published 12 October 2020)



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2. Test and Trace Support Payments: an overview

From 28 September 2020, eligible 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.

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.

The scheme starts from 28 September 2020, and local authorities should have arrangements in place to administer payments by 12 October 2020. Someone told to self-isolate on or after 28 September (but before the scheme is operational in their local authority) will need to be able to make a backdated claim for payment. The scheme will last until 31 January 2021.

3. Eligibility for Test & Trace Support Payments

Eligibility for a £500 Test and Trace Support Payment is restricted to people who:

- 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;
- are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result; and
- are 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.

4. Eligibility for Discretionary Test & Trace Support payments

Discretionary Test & Trace Support Payments

Test and Trace Support discretionary payments of £500 will be available for people who are told to self-isolate on or after 28th September 2020 and who meet the relevant eligibility 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

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.

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 (SSP) that they currently receive.

Backdating

Councils cannot 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

Someone 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.

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

Eligible individuals can make a claim up to 14 days after their period of self-isolation ended.

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.

Applicants with other welfare and support needs

If people apply for the discretionary support payment, the Council will contact them to ensure no unmet welfare needs. This will help people to self-isolate safely.

As part of the information available on the website and online application form, Councils will reference any other local support that is available for people who have been instructed to self-isolate.

Discretionary Test & Trace Support Payments

Including advising residents that if they need further support to stay at home safely, they can contact the Lincolnshire COVID helpline on 01522 782189 <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/coronavirus-support-services>

Applicants who are self-isolating who have not been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace

Councils cannot approve applications for anyone who does not have a valid notification from NHS Test and Trace. The legal duty to self-isolate that came into force on 28th September 2020 applies only to people who have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace. This means it is important that people who have tested positive share accurate information about their recent contacts with NHS Test and Trace.

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.

Applicants who are furloughed

Councils cannot make payments to applicants whose income is lower than normal because they are furloughed or on the Job Support Scheme. The Test and Trace Support Payment is for people facing a reduction in income because they cannot work while self-isolating.

5. Funding Pot

The Discretionary payments allocations were announced on 2nd October 2020, as follows:

Boston Borough Council: £ 18,318.27

East Lindsey District Council: £ 44,180.79

South Holland District Council: £ 21,621.13

Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has advised, as follows:

The £15 million for discretionary payments is a fixed four-month envelope that will not be topped up or subject to a reconciliation process.

The whole pot has been distributed up front, and will not be rounded down to a multiple of £500 as it will not be subject to a reconciliation process (meaning that it will not be topped up or reclaimed if local authorities overspend or underspend their allocation from the pot).

Based on the allocations, the current number of discretionary payments that can be paid:

Boston Borough Council: 36

East Lindsey District Council: 88

South Holland District Council: 43



DHSC allocation
note.pdf

6. Application and discretionary panel process

Discretionary Test & Trace Support Payments

The Councils have arrangements in place through their Revenue and Benefits service to process and verify applications and to issue payments.

If an individual is rejected because they do not meet the main scheme eligibility criteria, Council's community officers will review the applicant's circumstance and if required contact applicant to understand hardship, health or welfare needs.

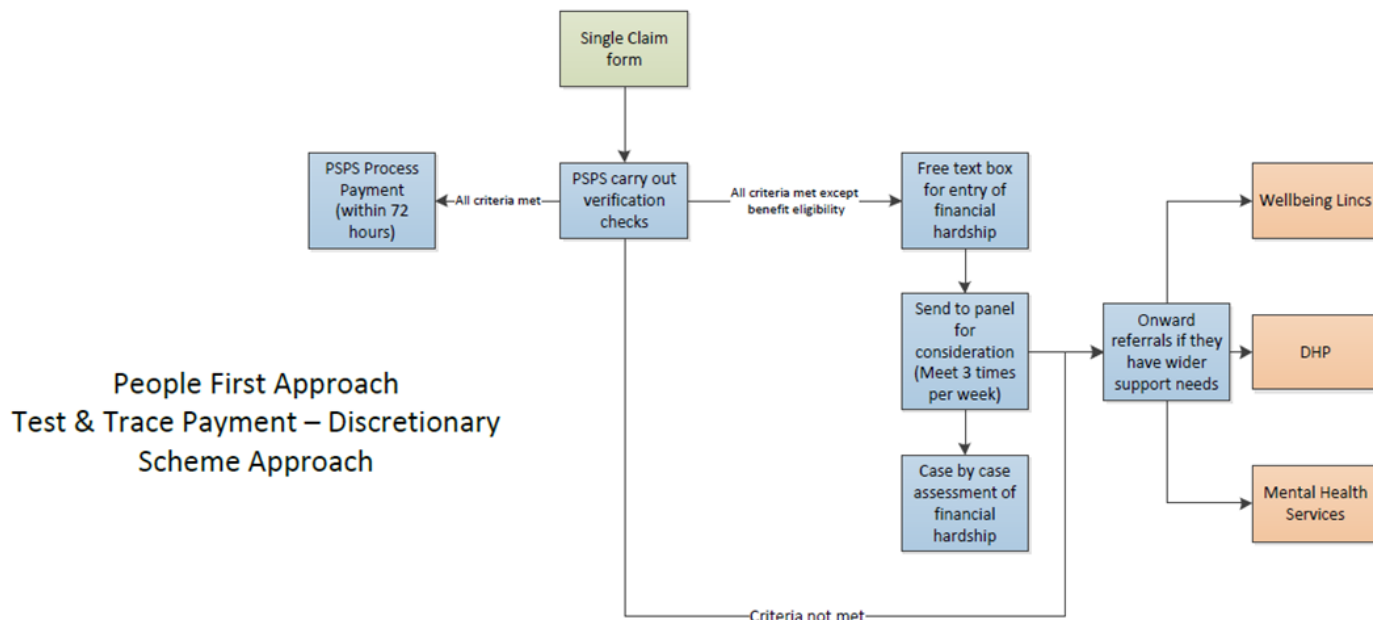
Representatives from each Council will form a panel which will meet regularly to consider if the individual meets the criteria for a discretionary payment. The panel will then authorise discretionary payment through the applicant's Revenues and Benefit Service.

A representative from Lincolnshire Wellbeing will also be invited to support this panel ensure people have immediate needs met through either their Lincolnshire COVID Community Support response or the core Wellbeing Service.

An online application form is being developed which is able to take applications for both the Test & Trace Support Payment and discretionary support scheme. Residents without internet access to online facilities will be supported to make a claim over the telephone.

To apply, applicants will complete the online form and provide the Council's Revenue and Benefits services with:

- A unique ID reference from NHS Test and Trace asking them to self-isolate;
- A recent bank statement;
- 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;
- Their National Insurance Number



Discretionary Test & Trace Support Payments

7. Providing Evidence

Arrangements in place to allow applicants to upload their evidence electronically, wherever possible. As some applicants will not have access to scanning equipment while they self-isolate, this will include accepting photographs of documents and screenshots if possible. Data security and evidence provided will be retained in line with council policies.

If people struggle to apply online or need help to upload evidence, service the applicant will be contacted and supported to do this.

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 a discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment. To check this, Councils will use data provided from the Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS) system through the 'Eligibility Checker' process in place.

Checking that an applicant is employed or self-employed and will lose income because they cannot work from home

The application form asks applicants about the nature of their work and whether they can do this work from home, and whether they are employed or self-employed. These questions should be asked in relation to applicants confirming whether they will lose income while self-isolating.

For applicants who are self-employed, councils will confirm they are satisfied with the evidence of self-assessment returns and trading income provided by the applicant.

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

The application form asks 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 may be eligible for a discretionary payment. 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.

8. Obtaining a Contact Tracing Advice Service 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 an 8-character identifier unique to each record on the web tool (e.g. 4a2c204a).

Most people 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.

Discretionary Test & Trace Support Payments

All cases and contacts who completed 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 an advice message upon completion of the NHS Test and Trace questionnaire. The 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.

The Councils can through authorised officers, use the web-based PowerBI based Eligibility Checker to check whether an applicant has a CTAS number.

9. Making payments

Revenues and Benefits Services aim to pay all eligible individuals within three working days of receiving the evidence to support the application. Payments will be made as a single payment, to the bank account matching the bank statement they have provided.

Revenues and Benefits Services will send each recipient a letter or email to confirm that they have been paid.

Applicants who are overdrawn

The application form and website advises applicants who are overdrawn how to exercise their first right of appropriation on the £500 payment, so their bank does not use it to pay their overdraft if they are overdrawn. There is a link to a letter template for people to use.

Appeals

The Councils are not required to provide a right of appeal against any decision not to award a discretionary payment. People who are turned down will not be eligible because they do not meet the criteria.

10. Records to be kept by local authorities

As a minimum, each Council's Revenue & Benefits Service will keep a record for these purposes of:

- The number of applications for discretionary payments under the scheme;
- The number of approved applications for discretionary payments under the scheme;
- Any other requirements as notified by DHSC;
- Any other requirements in relation to applications and decisions, as considered proportionate and in line with data retention policies.

11. Taxation

These payments will be subject to income tax, but they will not be subject to National Insurance Contributions (NICs).

12. Eligibility for other benefits

These payments will be disregarded when calculating eligibility for other benefits. This includes calculating entitlement to Universal Credit.

13. Evidence of failure to self-isolate

If the Council becomes aware, either through post-payment verification checks or through other means, that someone has not self-isolated, they will need to refer the case to the police. Recovery of

Discretionary Test & Trace Support Payments

the discretionary payments made to the individual will be carried out in line with government guidance.

14. Fraud

The Councils have the right to recover costs from people who claim the payment fraudulently and can keep any money recovered to put towards costs of running the scheme. The Councils are not liable for any unrecoverable costs due to fraud.