

# Test and Trace Support Payments

## Frequently Asked Questions

From 28 September in England, there will be a new legal duty on all UK residents who test positive for COVID-19 or are identified by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact, requiring them to self-isolate. Failure to comply will be an offence carrying a fine of at least £1,000 and up to £10,000 for multiple breaches.

To support this the government has introduced support for those having to self-isolate who are financially impacted because of this and this scheme will run until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021. Eligibility for support was changed in March 2021 to include parents or guardians who are not legally required to self-isolate, but need to take time off work to care for a child or young person who has been told to self-isolate.

### Purpose of the scheme

The Test and Trace Support Payment of £500, paid as a lump sum for those on low incomes to support them if they cannot work during their self-isolation period and have lost income as a direct result of self-isolation. The scheme will apply to people notified to self-isolate on or after 28 September, or for parents or guardians of a child or young person told to self-isolate on or after 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021. This funding is to help ensure people on low incomes self-isolate 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.

### Q. Am I eligible for support?

A. To be eligible for support you must:

1. live in the Huntingdonshire District and
2. have been notified to self-isolate on or after 28 September, not before that date, and have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace or via the NHS Covid-19 App, either because you've tested positive for coronavirus or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive, or
3. 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 you have provided your contact details and, where you have tested positive, the details of your contacts, or
4. are the parent or guardian of a child or young person in the same household and need to take time off work to care for them whilst they self-isolate. The child must be 15 or under (or 25 or under with an Education, Health and Care Plan), and normally attend an education or childcare setting. The child or young person must have been told to self-isolate on or after 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 by either NHS Test and Trace or by their education or childcare setting as they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive. This is limited to one parent or guardian per household.

5. be employed or self-employed.
6. be unable to work from home and will lose income as a result and
7. 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.
8. for applications received from 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021, make a claim up to 42 days after the first day of the period of self-isolation

You may be eligible for a discretionary payment if you meet all the above criteria except for receiving one of the qualifying benefits listed under point 7, but instead you:

- Are in receipt of Council Tax Support, or
- You are responsible for dependent children, and
- You pay a mortgage or rent for the place where you live (excluding rent paid to parents where living with them), and
- You have less than £1.5k in personal savings

Discretionary payments are also subject to sufficient funds being available.

**Q. How much is the payment?**

A. Individuals who are required to self-isolate and who meet the benefits-linked eligibility criteria will be entitled to £500. This will be payable as a lump sum.

**Q. How do I apply and do I need to give you anything?**

A. You will need to complete an [online application](#) and submit supporting evidence:

You will need the following information to complete the application form:

- your 8-digit Test and Trace ID number
- National Insurance number
- proof of receipt of one of the qualifying benefits
- most recent bank statement and
- proof of employment or, if you are self-employed, evidence of self-assessment returns, trading income and proof that your business delivers services which cannot be undertaken without social contact.
- if applying as the parent or guardian of a child or young person, the child or young person's Test and Trace ID number, or a letter or email from the education or childcare setting

As you will be self-isolating at home, you will need to upload evidence electronically. We are aware that some applicants will not have access to scanning equipment while they self-isolate, so we will accept photographs of documents wherever possible.

**Q. How far back can I get this backdated?**

A. Eligibility for the NHS Test and Trace Support Payment, including discretionary payments, will be for people who are told to self-isolate on or after 28 September 2020 and who meet the relevant eligibility criteria. Eligibility for parents or

guardians of a child or young person who has been told to self-isolate can only be made where the child or young person was told to self-isolate on or after 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

Local authorities cannot accept applications from people told to self-isolate before 28 September 2020, even if the period of self-isolation continues after 28 September, or prior to 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 in respect of parent or guardian applications, even if the child or young person's period of self-isolation continues after 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

Since 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021, applications cannot be accepted more than 42 days after the first day of the self-isolation period. For example, if someone was told to self-isolate from 8<sup>th</sup> March, they would have until 19<sup>th</sup> April to make a claim.

**Q. How long will this scheme last**

**A.** The scheme will be open until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

**Q. Can more than one member of a household make an application?**

**A.** People in the same household can each make an individual application to receive the payment if they each meet the eligibility criteria. One application covers one person, not the household. However, applications in respect of a child or young person who are required to self-isolate is limited to one parent or guardian per household.

**Q. Can I make more than one claim?**

**A.** Someone can claim more than once (if they, or their child or young person, 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. We will keep a record of individuals who make multiple claims to guard against potential fraud.

**Q. How long will it take for my application to be considered/processed?**

**A.** We council will aim to make decisions within 3 working days where all applications and supporting documents are supplied.

**Q. How long will it take to receive payments**

**A.** A member of the team handling the applications will check and verify the information you have provided as soon as possible. We will aim to complete your application within 3 working days. However, if we need to contact you for more information, it may take longer for us to do this.

Once we have assessed your application, we will contact you (by email where possible) to let you know the outcome. If your application is successful, we will confirm the payment details. If your application is unsuccessful, we will confirm why you have not qualified for a payment.

**Q. How will payments be made?**

**A.** The payment will be made by BACS transfer directly into your nominated account.

**Q. Can I make an application after my period of self-isolation has ended?**

**A.** Since 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021, eligible individuals can make a claim up to 42 days after the first day of their period of self-isolation. We will not accept applications after this point.

**Q. Can someone else apply on my behalf?**

**A.** 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. For example, if someone applied on behalf of a parent, the payment would be made into the parent's bank account.

**Q. What if I need further support?**

**A.** Please visit our dedicated coronavirus (COVID-19) hub [WeAreHuntingdonshire](#) for the latest information, guidance and support for residents and businesses.

**Q. Where can I find my Test and Trace number?**

**A.** Everyone who tests positive for COVID-19 or is 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 via a text message or email) contains the 8-character Account ID. Everyone who has completed the contact tracing journey will receive a 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.

**Q. How do I provide proof of my Test and Trace ID number?**

**A.** You can provide a photo or screenshot of the number.

**Q. How do I provide proof of loss of income?**

**A.** You will be asked to provide a written statement on this in the application form process.

**Q. I am self-isolating, losing income but unable to get a test as there is a high demand for testing - am I still able to get this payment?**

**A.** No, both the £500 payment (for eligible individuals) and the legal duty to self-isolate will apply only where someone has tested positive or has been notified that they are a close contact of someone who has tested positive. The legal duty and the payment do not apply to people isolating because they or another member of their household has symptoms. The government is continuing to expand testing capacity.

**Q. I lost income whilst waiting for a test result. The test was negative - am I eligible for a payment for this lost income?**

**A.** No, you will not be entitled for a Test and Trace Support Payment if the result is negative. One of the eligibility criteria is that you need to have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because you've tested positive or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive.

**Q. Which internet browser should I use to complete this application form?**

**A.** Please do not use Internet Explorer. You may wish to use Chrome, Firefox, Edge, or Safari.

**Q. How do I provide proof of benefits that I receive?**

**A.** You will need to provide a copy of your entitlement letter(s) or screenshot showing the relevant benefit(s).

**Q. What if I am self-isolating but haven't been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace?**

**A.** We cannot approve applications for anyone who does not have a valid notification from NHS Test and Trace, and corresponding ID number (unless applying as the parent or guardian of a child or young person). The legal duty to self-isolate that comes into force on 28 September 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.

**Q. Can I apply if I'm quarantining after returning to the UK?**

**A.** No, the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme does not cover people who are self-isolating due to 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.

**Q. Can I apply if I am furloughed?**

**A.** People who have been furloughed can't generally claim the payment as they were already on a reduced income (80% of wages).

Some people may be furloughed from one job, but still working part-time on another. If they cannot do their part-time job from home while self-isolating and will lose income as a result, they will be eligible for the scheme provided they meet the other eligibility criteria.

**Q. If I've been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace but my employer is still paying me a full wage, would I be eligible?**

**A.** No, the payment is for people who are financially impacted. If you receive full pay you would not be eligible.

**Q. I've been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, but my employer is paying me a reduced wage whilst I self-isolate - would I be eligible?**

**A.** Yes, you have lost income, the payment is for people who are financially impacted. If you are receiving a reduced wage due to the need to self-isolate, you would be eligible.

**Q. I have two part-time jobs, one employer has continued to pay me a full wage, but my other employer is not paying me while I self-isolate - would I be eligible?**

**A.** Yes, you have lost income, the payment is for people who are financially impacted. If you are receiving a reduced wage due to the need to self-isolate, you would be eligible.

**Q. I'm self-employed - what evidence should I provide?**

**A.** Evidence of self-assessment returns and trading income.

**Q. If I am refused a payment, can I appeal against a decision?**

**A.** No, the government has stipulated that there is no requirement to provide a right of appeal. If your application was rejected it was because you did not meet the criteria.

**Q. Are these payments subject to tax and National Insurance?**

**A.** These payments will be subject to income tax, however they will not be subject to National Insurance contributions. You will be contacted by Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs regarding the tax payable on this payment at a later date - it will not be taxed at the point of payment.

**Q. Will this payment impact on my benefit entitlement?**

**A.** The payment will be disregarded when calculating entitlement to Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit or Pension Credit.

**Q. What if I don't have any evidence of self employed status, ie I've just set up as self-employed?**

**A.** Please contact the team ([benefit@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:benefit@huntingdonshire.gov.uk)) for further advice.

**Q. Are students eligible for the payments (either for the main Test and Trace Support Payment or for the discretionary payments)?**

**A.** The Test and Trace Support Payment has been set up to support people on low incomes who are employed or self-employed and cannot work from home while they self-isolate. Students can claim from the scheme provided they meet the eligibility criteria. In practice, most will not be eligible.

**Q. Can a bank take my self-isolation payment to pay my overdraft?**

**A.** You will need to write a letter to your bank to explain that you are expecting a £500 Test and Trace Support Payment and how you would like to spend the money. This protection is called a 'first right of appropriation of funds order'.

**Q. Can you confirm that someone on Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) wouldn't be eligible as they are losing income due to them being off work sick rather than because they are isolating (even if the illness is COVID-19 and they have to self-isolate)?**

**A.** Applicants can receive a £500 payment on top of SSP, provided they meet all the eligibility criteria. Therefore, if someone is off sick because of COVID-19 and is receiving SSP, they could still claim a £500 payment, provided they could prove they had been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace and met all the other eligibility criteria.