

For publication

Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme

Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Business Transformation and Customers
Date:	9 October 2020
Cabinet portfolio:	Business Transformation and Customers
Directorate:	Customers, Commissioning and Change

1.0 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To approve a Local Authority Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme for Chesterfield Borough Council.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Chesterfield Borough Council's Local Authority Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is approved and implemented from 12 October 2020
- 2.2 That the Assistant Director – Customers, Commissioning and Change, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Business Transformation and Customers and Arvato's Head of Operations, is given delegated authority to regularly review the scheme and revise the scheme criteria where necessary.

3.0 Reasons for recommendations

- 3.1 To enable the Council to implement a Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme, which will benefit eligible local people who have to self-isolate and who do not meet the criteria of the national Test and Trace Support Payment scheme.

4.0 Report details

- 4.1 On 20 September 2020, the government announced the launch of a new scheme which provides a financial support payment of £500 to people on a low income who are instructed to isolate by NHS Test and Trace, and as a result will suffer a reduction in their income. The scheme is known as the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme and local authorities have been asked to administer it on behalf of the government.
- 4.2 The Test and Trace Support Payment scheme came into force on 28 September 2020 and is currently set to end on 31 January 2021. Local authorities are asked to have the scheme application process operational by 12 October 2020 and be willing to accept backdated applications from 28 September 2020. Local authorities are also asked to implement a Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme to run alongside the national scheme.
- 4.3 Government have set out eligibility criteria for the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. A £500 support payment will be made to people who meet the following criteria:
1. Employed or self-employed
 2. In receipt of any of the following benefits
 - Universal Credit
 - Working Tax Credit
 - Income-based Employment and Support Allowance
 - Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
 - Income Support
 - Housing Benefit
 - Pension Credit
 3. Instructed to isolate by NHS Test and Trace
 4. Unable to work from home and will lose income as a result
- 4.4 Chesterfield Borough Council has been allocated £48,500 of funding for the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. This funding will be regularly reconciled, and additional money will be provided by the government if demand for the scheme exceeds the funding which has been provided. Surplus funding must be returned to the government.
- 4.5 The government has also allocated Chesterfield Borough Council a fixed funding amount of £29,210.43 which should be used to provide a 'discretionary' Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme to

residents of Chesterfield borough. The government have confirmed that they will not reconcile this funding.

- 4.6 This report sets out the criteria under which individuals will qualify for the Chesterfield Borough Council Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme, and the evidence which will be required to support their application. Details of the scheme are attached at Appendix A.

5.0 Alternative options

- 5.1 Consideration was given to determining eligibility for the discretionary support payment by assessing income and expenditure. However, taking this approach would have attracted applications from high earners with high outgoings, which does not meet the intent of the original government scheme.

6.0 Implications for consideration – Council Plan

- 6.1 Provision of a Discretionary Test and Trace Support Scheme will help to improve the quality of life for local people whilst they are self isolating. Delivery of the scheme is not expected to adversely impact on the delivery of other Council Plan activities.

7.0 Implications for consideration – Financial and value for money

- 7.1 The government will provide Chesterfield Borough Council with a finite funding allocation of £29,210.43 for its Discretionary Test and Trace Support Scheme. This will allow the Council to award a maximum of 58 discretionary payments.
- 7.2 The government will provide Chesterfield Borough Council with £27,216.80 to administer the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme and the Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. Some of this funding will be directed to Arvato, who are the Council's Revenues and Benefits service provider. This will be agreed through the Council's existing change control process.
- 7.3 The Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme must be open for applications from 28 September 2020 and, as it currently

stands, will close to applicants on 31 January 2021, in line with the national Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. It is recommended that priority access to the funding is afforded to those who have made claims to the government for benefit support prior to being asked to self-isolate, but whose claims have not yet been set to payment. It is also recommended that priority is given to those people who may have fallen out of benefit entitlement within the last two months and to those who are in receipt of Council Tax support only.

- 7.4 Delegated authority is sought for the Assistant Director – Customers, Commissioning and Change, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Business Transformation and Customers and Arvato’s Head of Operations, to complete regular reviews of the discretionary scheme, ensuring funds are fully utilised for the benefit of local people.
- 7.5 Chesterfield Borough Council will provide regular progress reports to Government with regards to the development and implementation of the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme and the Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme.
- 7.6 Chesterfield Borough Council will also provide information to people on their right of appropriation on the £500 payment so that their bank does not use it to pay their overdraft.

8.0 Implications for consideration – Legal

- 8.1 A privacy notice is in place to support administration of the scheme.
- 8.2 A data sharing agreement between Public Health England and Chesterfield Borough Council is required to enable the Council to complete eligibility checks on Test and Trace activity and provide Public Health England with information on the support payments which have been made. On signature of the data sharing agreement, the Council must comply with specific information security criteria within a twelve-month period. A gap analysis is currently being completed.
- 8.3 The government has introduced a new legal obligation on individuals to self-isolate if someone tests positive or is requested to isolate by NHS Test and Trace. Penalties have been introduced for those breaking the rules, including fines on a sliding scale of £1000 up to a maximum of £10,000. The Test and Trace Support payment and the

Discretionary Test and Trace Support payment have been introduced to help people self-isolate and meet their legal duty.

9.0 Implications for consideration – Human resources

9.1 Responsibility for implementation of the scheme will rest with the Assistant Director – Customers, Commissioning and Change, supported by officers from Arvato’s Benefits.

10.0 Implications for consideration – Risk management

Description of the Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigating Action	Impact	Likelihood
The discretionary scheme is under or oversubscribed	High	High	Chesterfield Borough Council’s scheme will be monitored closely. If it becomes likely that the scheme will be oversubscribed an amendment to the eligibility criteria may be requested.	High	Low
Administration backlogs will delay discretionary payments made to Chesterfield residents	High	High	Adequate resources have been identified to support this process, with the ability to scale the team where necessary.	High	Low
Discretionary payments are made to ineligible people	High	Medium	The scheme provides clarity on eligibility. The process for a discretionary payment requires	Medium	Low

			<p>verification of the information provided.</p> <p>The application form is clear that ineligible payments will be subject to claw back and possible fraud investigation</p>		
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11.0 Implications for consideration – community wellbeing

11.1 The discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme will assist those people on low incomes who experience a reduction in income because they have been asked to self-isolate and are unable to work.

11.2 The scheme will provide eligible applicants with a £500 payment within three days of submission of their application. This payment is intended to provide financial support, helping people to adhere to their legal duty to self-isolate.

11.3 Applicants to the scheme will be signposted to additional help, including how to get access to food and medicine delivery and other community support whilst they are isolating.

12.0 Implications for consideration – Economy and skills

12.1 These payments are designed to help ensure that 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. The scheme is also intended to encourage those people who are eligible for this payment and have symptoms to get tested. This is important to help stop the transmission of COVID-19 and avoid further economic and societal restrictions.

13.0 Implications for consideration – Climate Change

13.1 There are no implications for climate change.

14.0 Implications for consideration – Equality and diversity

- 14.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been produced in development of the scheme. The scheme ensures that discretionary payments are awarded based on set eligibility criteria.
- 14.2 A digital application process has been developed. For those people who are unable to access the internet, a supported telephone application process will also be in place. This will be accessed through the Council's contact centre. A dedicated telephone number will be provided.
- 14.3 Support will be provided for those residents who need translation facilities.

Decision information

Key decision number	980
Wards affected	All wards within the borough of Chesterfield

Document information

Report author	
<i>Damon Bruce – Arvato Head of Operations - Chesterfield</i> <i>Rachel O'Neil – Assistant Director – Customers, Commissioning and Change</i>	
Background documents	
These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when the report was prepared.	
<i>This must be made available to the public for up to 4 years.</i>	
Appendices to the report	
Appendix 1	Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme