

## **Chesterfield Borough Council**

### **Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 On 20 September 2020, the government announced the launch of a new support payment, known as the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme and asked local authorities to administer the scheme on their behalf.
- 1.2 The Test and Trace Support Payment scheme has been introduced in response to feedback that some people are struggling to self-isolate as directed due to financial constraints. The scheme is intended to help ensure that people who are on low incomes self-isolate when they test positive for coronavirus or are identified as a contact of someone who has tested positive. The scheme is also intended to encourage more people to get tested when they are displaying symptoms of coronavirus. This will help to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 and avoid further societal and economic restrictions, including local lockdowns.
- 1.3 Chesterfield Borough Council has been allocated £48,500 to fund its Test and Trace Support payments. This amount will be regularly reconciled by the government and additional funds will be provided where required.
- 1.4 The council has also been allocated £29,210.43 to implement a Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. This is a fixed amount of funding and is not subject to reconciliation.
- 1.5 Chesterfield Borough Council is responsible for administering the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme and the

Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme to residents located within its boundaries.

- 1.6 This document sets out the criteria under which residents can apply for the Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment scheme and gives details of the evidence which will be required to support an application.

## **2.0 Eligibility for the Discretionary Test and Trace Support Scheme**

- 2.1 Local authorities can introduce additional criteria to determine eligibility for discretionary support payments as long as these operate in addition to, rather than instead of the criteria already set by government.
- 2.2 The government has set the eligibility criteria for a discretionary Test and Trace support payment as:
  - Those 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; and
  - Those 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
  - Those who are on low incomes and will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work at home while they are self-isolating;

- 2.3 The Council has set the following **additional** criteria, in determining eligibility for the scheme.
- Applicants must be in receipt of Council Tax Support; or
  - have been in receipt of Council Tax Support or any of the Test and Trace Support Scheme qualifying benefits within the previous two calendar months of the date of isolation; or
  - have made a claim for Council Tax Support or any of the Test and Trace Support Scheme qualifying benefits prior to the date of isolation but are still awaiting the outcome.

### 3.0 **The Council's approach**

- 3.1 The council will accept applications for the Discretionary Test and Trace Support Scheme from people who meet the eligibility criteria and who have been asked to self-isolate on or after 28 September 2020.
- 3.2 Those people who were in self-isolation before 28 September 2020 are not eligible to apply for the scheme, even if their isolation continues after 28 September.
- 3.3 The scheme will run until 31 January 2021.
- 3.4 People from the same household can make individual applications if they each meet the eligibility criteria.
- 3.5 Applicants can claim for each period of self-isolation as long as they meet the eligibility criteria for each individual claim and as long as their periods of self-isolation do not overlap.
- 3.6 Eligible individuals can make a claim up to 14 days after the period of self-isolation has ended.

- 3.7 Applicants can apply on behalf of someone else; however, the £500 support payment can only be paid to the bank account of the person for whom the application is made.
- 3.8 The support payment can only be made to those people who have a valid notification from NHS Test and Trace telling them to stay at home and self-isolate. The scheme does not cover people who are self-isolating after returning to the UK from abroad.
- 3.9 The Council reserves the right to vary the terms of the scheme at any time, and without notice, should it be necessary to do so.

## **4.0 The application process**

- 4.1 An online application or telephone application must be completed. Applicants must provide:
  - a notification from NHS Test and Trace asking them to self-isolate;
  - proof of receipt of one of the qualifying benefits; or
  - proof that one of the qualifying benefits is being assessed;
  - a bank statement in the name of the applicant;
  - proof of employment; or
  - evidence of self-assessment returns, trading income and proof that their business delivers services which cannot be undertaken without social contact.
- 4.2 The online application will allow applicants to upload relevant evidence.

## **5.0 How payments will be made**

- 5.1 Payments of £500 will be credited directly to the applicant's bank account within 3 days of receipt of an eligible

application. A ‘faster payments’ process will be utilised to transfer funds to the applicant.

- 5.2 Applicants who are overdrawn can exercise their 1<sup>st</sup> right of appropriation on the £500 payment, so that their bank does not use the support payment to pay their overdraft. The Council will provide a template to help applicants where this is required.
- 5.3 Discretionary Test and Trace Support payments will be subject to income tax but will not be subject to National Insurance Contributions.

## **6.0 Other information**

- 6.1 The Government and the Council will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud and any person caught falsifying records or breaching self-isolation when support payments have been awarded may face prosecution and the support payments issued will be subject to claw back.