

## South Somerset District Council Test and Trace Discretionary Payment Scheme

The council's Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme is for any individual who meets all the required criteria (including the council's additional criteria) except that they are not currently in receipt of a qualifying benefit and they would face financial hardship due to self-isolation. The reason for this could be, for example, that a claim for a benefit has not yet been made or that the individual, whilst normally resident in the UK, is unable to gain access to public funds.

The council will receive a limited amount of funding from government for Discretionary Scheme.

In view of this, and to ensure that discretionary payments are available throughout the period to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021, the council reserves the right to change the Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme at any time to ensure funds go to those who face the most financial hardship.

### Eligibility

The payment will total £500 for those who qualify. The eligibility criteria under which you can apply is as follows:

- 1) You must have been asked by NHS Test and Trace to self-isolate on or after 28<sup>th</sup> September. All applicants will be required to provide the 8 digit unique number which was provided to them by test and trace. This will only be valid after the Test and Trace digital journey and engagement has been completed.

OR

You 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 while they self-isolate on or after 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021. (This is limited to one parent or guardian per household for the child or young person's self-isolation period).

**\*a child or young is someone who is aged 15 or under (or 25 or under with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC)) and normally attends an education or childcare setting.**

- 2) You must be employed or self-employed and provide evidence of this:

Employed:

- a) Current wageslips or salary slips
- b) Employment contract
- c) Letter from employer confirming current employment

Self- Employed:

- d) Self assessment form
- e) HMRC registration as self employed
- f) Current accounts / accounts and trading statements

The above list is not exhaustive.

- 3) You must not be able to carry out your work from home during the period of self-isolation, resulting in a loss of income, which all applicants will have to certify on the application form. The council will need to be satisfied that any applicants meet these conditions in full and may require further information about the nature of their work and whether they can undertake this work from home.
- 4) Meet the council's additional criteria for discretionary payments;

Income:

- a) Prior to the applicant's need to self-isolate their average gross weekly earnings must have been £100 per week or higher as the potential loss of earnings must represent a fundamental change in your weekly income. Applicants under the lower threshold will be signposted for Universal Credit.
- b) Prior to the applicant's need to self-isolate their average gross weekly earnings must have been less than £490\* per week to be considered as a low income.

For clarity, 'prior to' means the average of the 4 weeks prior to the applicant's requirement to self-isolate, or part thereof if they are able to evidence a starting date within that four-week averaging period.

Savings:

- a) Not hold savings in excess of £5,000.00

Where an applicant meets all of the eligibility criteria for a discretionary payment, a single payment of £500 shall be paid for each period of self-isolation. Payments will be made direct to the applicant's bank account within 3 working days, starting with the date of completed application.

Where further information or evidence is required from the applicant, the council will look to make payment within 3 working days starting with the date when all of the required information is received.

Full details of the applicant's bank account must be supplied on the application form and this will be cross checked with the copies of the bank statements provided as part of the verification process.

As required by government, payments can only be made to the applicant's bank account. No payments can be made to third parties whatsoever.

The council is aware that in some cases, applicants may be overdrawn and may not be able to gain access to the payment. In these cases, the applicant may apply for protection. This protection is called a 'first right of appropriation of funds order'. More information can be obtained from Citizens Advice.

Applications for discretionary payments will be considered by officers of the council and all decisions made by the council shall be notified to the applicant either in writing or by email.

Whilst there is no statutory appeal process, the council will operate an internal review process and will accept an applicant's request for an appeal of its decision by a senior officer.

All such requests must be made in writing or by email to the council, within 3 days of the council's decision, and should state the reasons why the applicant is aggrieved with the

decision of the council. New information may be submitted at this stage to support the applicant's appeal. The application will be reconsidered as soon as practicable, and the applicant informed in writing or by email of the decision.

### **Taxation and provision of information to HMRC**

The council has been informed by government that all payments under this scheme are taxable. However, the payments will not be subject to National Insurance contributions.

The council does not accept any responsibility in relation to an applicant's tax liabilities and all applicants should make their own enquiries to establish any tax position.

All applicants should note that the council is required to inform Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) of all payments made to individuals.

### **Managing the risk of fraud**

Any applicant caught falsifying information to gain payments will face prosecution and any payment issued will be recovered from them and this may also include other recovery costs.

Applicants should note that, where a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment is paid by the council, details of each individual applicant will be passed to police. Applicants should also note that the council utilises a number of databases and government systems to verify information in connection with any application submitted.

### **Recovery of amounts incorrectly paid**

If it is established that any Test and Trace Discretionary Support Payment has been made incorrectly due to misrepresentation or incorrect information provided to the council by an applicant or their representative(s), the council will look to recover the amount in full.

### **Delegated powers**

The council has implemented this Discretionary Scheme in line with government requirements and guidance.

Officers of the council will administer the scheme and the Section 151 Officer is authorised to make technical scheme amendments to ensure it continues to meet the criteria set by the council and, in line with central government guidance.

\*£490 per week (gross) represents the mean salary for the South Somerset area, based on ONS 2019 data.