

Darlington Borough Council

Test & Trace Support Discretionary Payment Policy 2020/2021

Introduction

From 28 September in England, there will be a new legal duty on all UK residents who test positive for coronavirus 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 as a result are financially impacted. The scheme will run until 31 January 2021.

Purpose of the scheme

To provide a 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.

The scheme will apply to people notified to self-isolate on or after 28 September 2020, but not before that date.

Eligibility

To be eligible for support under the main qualifying benefits related scheme individuals must:

- live in the Darlington Borough Council area, and
- have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace either because they've tested positive for coronavirus or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive, and
- be employed or self-employed, and
- be unable to work from home and will lose income as a result, and
- 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.
- make a claim within 14 days of the last day of self-isolation.

All of the above criteria must be met to be eligible for a payment.

Discretionary Payments

Discretionary payment will not be made in circumstances where the qualifying criteria outlined above have already been met.

If an individual does not receive any of the qualifying benefits but meets all the other criteria, we can consider making a discretionary payment.

The following additional criteria must be met for a discretionary payment to be considered, the individual:

- must not have savings of £500 or more, and
- must be responsible for housing costs such as a domestic mortgage or rent, and
- must have no other form of income coming into the household, including any partner living in the household, and
- must be unable to apply for a state benefit, and unable to apply for an advanced payment of state benefit, for example Universal Credit

All of the above additional criteria must be met to be eligible for a discretionary payment. However, all applications will be assessed on their own individual merits.

The Council reserves the right to exercise additional discretion to provide assistance in **exceptional** circumstances that do not meet the criteria above. However, it is expected that criteria detailed above will be the basis for determining the majority of discretionary decisions.

More than one claim per household

If an individual and their partner are both required to isolate and they meet all of the criteria above two payments can be made. A separate claim will be required from each individual.

Individuals may be eligible to receive more than one discretionary payment in the duration of the scheme, if they are instructed to isolate for a second or subsequent period.

Making a claim

Individuals will need to complete an e-form on the Darlington Borough Council website and upload supporting evidence.

www.darlington.gov.uk

<https://www.darlington.gov.uk/council-tax-and-benefits/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme/>

The outcome of the application will be communicated by email.

Arrangements are available for those individuals with no access to the internet or if they are vulnerable. Appointments will be available with LA staff to complete the application over the phone, by contacting 01325 405444.

Payment

Individuals who are required to self-isolate and who meet the eligibility criteria will be entitled to £500. This will be payable as a lump sum directly into a bank account.

The Council will endeavour to make payments within 3 working days of receipt of the application and all the required supporting evidence, or as soon as practicable thereafter.

The payments will be subject to tax, however this will not be at the point of payment. Darlington Borough Council will collect and provide all relevant data required by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

The payments will not be subject to National Insurance Contributions.

Funding

The Council has received limited government funding of £29,000 for its discretionary scheme with an intention that the scheme lasts from 28th September 2020 to 31st January 2021. The Council reserves the right to end the scheme at the point that the funding has been spent.

How will we use and share this information

Information collected during the application process will be used to assess an individual's claim. Information will be cross matched with other data held by the council and third-party agencies for example the Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS), the department for Works and Pensions (DWP), Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC), for verification purposes.

When assessing a claim, it may be appropriate to make referrals within the council or to external agencies to provide advice or support.

To allow the council to communicate and provide services appropriate to needs such as Council Tax Support, Discretionary Housing Payments, and Free School Meals

The council may also share data with both internal and external organisations for the purposes of validating any applications or support that may be made or have made for other council services such as housing applications, school placements, homeless applications, Emergency Hub, Housing Benefit, Council Tax and Council Tax Support. This list is not exhaustive.

Subject to a legal gateway, information may also be shared for the prevention of fraud and criminal activity with (list not exhaustive):

- the police
- Immigration Service, Absconder Services and/or UK Border Agency
- health and social care organisations
- other local authorities

Appeals

There is no formal right of appeal, individuals who are refused an award will not be eligible because they do not meet the criteria.

If an individual is unhappy with the outcome of an application they can raise a comment through the Council's Corporate Complaints Team.