

Test and Trace Support Payment Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Who will be eligible?

To be eligible for the 'Test and Trace Support' payment, a person must:

- have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace either because they've tested positive for COVID-19 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 one of the following: Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit.

If you satisfy the first three conditions but are not in receipt of one of the above benefits you may still be entitled to a discretionary payment if you are suffering from exceptional financial hardship.

Q. Why is the payment a fixed amount of £500?

Central Government considered and determined this as the appropriate amount to support those who are required to self-isolate whilst being in an economically vulnerable situation.

Q: Is there a minimum number of hours a week a person has to work?

No.

Q Will the payments be pro-rata for people in part-time jobs?

No.

Q. What about people who have had to self-isolate in the past? Have they missed out?

This is a new scheme introduced by Central Government which is available to anyone who is asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace from 28 September. Those who have self-isolated when asked, have played a critical role in controlling the virus and protecting their friends and family. This is a measure designed to support those in the most economically vulnerable situations so that they adhere to self-isolation.

Q. Can you claim for every period of self-isolation?

Yes. Applicants will be able to claim more than once if they can demonstrate they meet the eligibility criteria on more than one occasion. However, where the periods of self-isolation overlap only one payment can be made, if entitled.

Q. Will everyone in a household be eligible to apply? Or only one person?

All those who meet the criteria set out above can apply individually, including members of the same household.

Q. Will it apply to those who are self-isolating because of a recent trip to a country not on the travel corridor list?

No. The scheme is for people on low incomes who cannot work from home while self-isolating because they have tested positive or have been in recent contact with someone who has tested positive. It is not for people returning from abroad who are required to self-isolate as a result of having visited a country not on the travel corridor list. People quarantining will not be eligible unless they subsequently develop symptoms and test positive after their return to the UK and meet the other eligibility criteria.

Q. Will EU citizens / foreign citizens be eligible? What about those that are only here for a short time?

All those who meet the eligibility criteria above can apply for and receive this payment.

Q. What if someone is working illegally?

Anyone applying for the payments will need to demonstrate evidence of employment. Employers are required to carry out right to work checks to ensure those in their employment have a right to work in the UK. Where it is suspected that someone applying for the payment is working illegally, we will be able to escalate the matter to immigration enforcement and/or the police.

Q. How will you combat fraud? What is stopping people from repeatedly signing up to receive this payment?

Individuals who are found to have committed fraud (or to have attempted to do so) will be prosecuted. This is about enabling people to play their part in the fight against COVID-19. Those who seek to take advantage of this through fraud should know that this will be taken very seriously, with targeted and data-driven enforcement. Sunderland City Council will also work with HMRC and DWP to carry out robust pre-payment checks to ensure that only those who are eligible will be able to claim.

Q. What happens if someone receiving the payment is found flouting the rules? Do they have to pay back the money they received?

Those who seek to take advantage of this through fraud should know that this will be taken very seriously, with targeted and data-driven enforcement by the police. Individuals who are found to have committed fraud (or to have attempted to do so) will be prosecuted.

Sunderland City Council will have the right to recoup money from any recipients who do not adhere to the terms of the scheme including from anyone who receives the payment but does not self-isolate.

Q. Will the self-isolation payments be taxed?

These payments will be subject to income tax. Sunderland City Council will advise HMRC of all payments made. The payments will not be subject to National Insurance contributions.

Q. How long will this be in place for?

The scheme will initially run until 31 January 2021. During this time, Central Government will continue to review the efficacy of the scheme, including the impact of COVID-19 incidence levels.

Q. If I am waiting for a test, can I claim the payment?

Only if you have been identified as a close contact of somebody who has tested positive and you have been instructed to isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

Q. Are those on zero-hours contracts eligible?

If they meet the criteria above, then yes.

Q. Are students eligible?

If they meet the criteria, then yes.

Q. Are children eligible for this payment / can I receive this payment for my children in addition to myself?

Children are not eligible for this payment.

Q. If my child is identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive and advised to self-isolate, am I eligible for this payment if I have to stay at home to look after them?

You would not be eligible for this payment.

Q. If I cannot work because of a local lockdown or the temporary closure of a workplace, am I eligible for this payment?

No – the payments are for people who have to self-isolate at home and will lose income as a result.

Q. Are those advised to self-isolate by the NHS Covid-19 app eligible?

Anyone who receives notification of a positive test result (including app users who initially report their symptoms through the app and are referred on to the test booking system) will be able to apply for the Test and Trace Support Payment, if they meet the other eligibility criteria.

For app users notified through the app that they are a contact of someone who has recently tested positive and have been told to self-isolate from NHS Test and Trace, further work is to be carried out by Central Government to determine if it will be possible to qualify for this payment, bearing in mind that the app user remains anonymous.