

Test and Trace self-isolate support payment scheme

Guidance and procedures

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Important Updates

Following the Prime Ministers' announcement that the legal requirement to self- isolate will end on Thursday 24th February 2022, the Test & Trace Self isolation payment scheme will also end on that date.

This means we will not be able to accept any new applications after the 23th February, unless the applicant received notice to self- isolate on or before the 23rd February. That applicant will be required to isolate as per the current guidelines.

Such applicants have 42 day from the 23rd to make the application meaning no claims will be accepted after the 6th April 2022 regardless of the circumstances.

Please note after the 16th August 2021 – people who are ‘double jabbed’ (fully vaccinated) and only a contact of someone who tested positive will not need to self- isolate so will not qualify under the scheme. However if your self- isolation period started before the 16th August regardless of whether you have been jabbed you will still qualify as long as you meet all the other criteria.

After 16th August 2021 under 18’s who are contacts’ regardless of vaccine status will not be required to self- isolate therefore will not qualify under the scheme. However if your self- isolation period started before the 16th August 21 you may still qualify as long as you meet all the other criteria.

If you are over 18 and a contact only but have not been fully vaccinated i.e. have had no jab or only one jab then you will be required to isolate and can qualify under the scheme, as long as you meet all the other criteria.

Anyone testing positive regardless of being vaccinated will be required to self- isolate and as long as they meet all the other criteria will continue to qualify under the scheme.

The team will use the national eligibility checker to confirm vaccination status.

Government guidance is clear that having tested positive, following the 10 days isolation a person should not, unless showing new symptoms, test again in the next 90 days as the virus can stay in the body for that long. Testing again will mean you have to self- isolate but you may not be eligible for another self- isolation payment. If your employer insists you test before coming back to work you should direct them to the Gov.UK website

“Anyone who has previously received a positive COVID-19 PCR test result should not be re-tested within 90 days of that test, unless they develop any new symptoms of COVID-19.”

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

This document should be read in conjunction with the information on our website and the NHS’s [If you’re told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace or the NHS COVID-19 app webpage](#).

Background

From the 28 September 2020, the government introduced the self-isolate support payment scheme.

The scheme allows for the payment of £500 to people who have been told by the NHS to self-isolate, because they either tested positive for coronavirus COVID-19 or have been in contact with someone who has tested positive, and may be entitled to some financial support during their self-isolation period.

This payment is designed to support people on low incomes, if they will lose income as a result of self-isolating, and to encourage them to get tested if they have symptoms. This is important to help stop the transmission of COVID-19 and avoid further economic and societal restrictions. The scheme will end on the 24th February 2022

The scheme does not apply to lost or reduced earnings caused by a national or local lock down, even where an individual is asked to self-isolate.

The scheme has three elements

- A) National 'Main scheme' where an applicant meets all the qualifying criteria or
- B) Local 'Discretionary scheme' where the applicant is not in receipt of qualifying benefits but meets the other conditions of the main scheme, and further criteria*
- C) Parent and guardians scheme

The application process is primarily via a web based form on the Luton website, which allows electronic document and photographic uploads.

Telephony provision for digitally excluded residents will be available and we will contact such applicants where they are identified to make an application on their behalf and arrange the best means to provide proofs.

The scheme will be administered by the customer service Test and Trace team

Self-isolate support main scheme criteria

From 28 September 2020, people who live in the borough of Luton who have received notification from NHS Test and Trace to self-isolate, will be entitled to a Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 if they:

- have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, after the 28 September 2020 because they have either tested positive for coronavirus or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive
- have fully engaged with the NHS Test and Trace tracking scheme and completed the contact tracing on line questionnaire within eight hours of receiving the message to self-isolate or have completed the questions over the phone with the NHS Test and Trace national or local team (local authorities will be notified by NHS Test and Trace via the Eligibility checker if a person has engaged. Where there is non-engagement a payment will not be made)
- Are 16+ employed or self-employed
- Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result
- Are currently receiving (or partner in the same household) one of the following:
 - Universal Credit
 - Working Tax Credit
 - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
 - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
 - Income Support
 - Housing Benefit and/or;
 - Pension Credit

Proof to support an application will be required and we will accept photographic or scanned images uploaded electronically

*Local discretionary payment scheme

A discretionary £500 lump sum payment in exceptional circumstances may be available to an individual who meets the main qualifying criteria for the Test and Trace Support Payment but not in receipt of a qualifying benefit.

Where an application fails the 'main scheme' criteria we will automatically assess for a discretionary payment under the local scheme, on the information we have, or may ask for further information or proof.

The assessment for a discretionary payment will consider if there is alternative support; this may take the form of foodbank referrals or signposting to other schemes or assistance. Where we consider there is such support the application will not be successful.

The discretionary fund is limited, and we reserve the right to withdraw the discretionary element of the scheme once that budget is depleted.

Due to the limited nature of the funding discretionary payments can only be made in exceptional circumstances and only where there is no alternative support identified. Where the applicant is not in receipt of qualifying benefits but meets the other conditions of the main scheme and are:

- a low-income worker who is unable to work because they are self-isolating and will suffer **real financial hardship** as a result of not being able to work
- and is in receipt of one of the following:
 - Child Tax Credit, and Child Benefit
 - Council Tax reduction

Or is one of the following:

- is a Luton Care leaver aged 18 to 25*1
- is in employment but with No Recourse to Public Funds
- provides proof of an application for one of the qualifying benefits of the main scheme and is waiting to hear*2

*1 Care Leaver

A care leaver is a young person who has been in local authority care, and has subsequently left that care. For more information please visit our [What type of care leaver am I? webpage](#)

*2 Waiting to hear about an existing Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support application

Applicants will be required to submit proof to evidence the above criteria. Applicants who have applied for one of the listed benefits after being told to self-isolate, will not be considered eligible.

We will require further proof of financial hardship for example bank account balances, and savings accounts. When assessing an application we will take into account liability for bill payments for example, mortgage, rent, Council Tax payments. We can assess on financial hardship alone where that is evident from the information provided that **real financial hardship** exists.

Parents and guardians who have not been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace but their child has

From 8 March 2021, parents or guardians who are not legally required to self-isolate can apply for a Test and Trace Support Payment or discretionary payment if they need to take time off work to care for a child or young person who is.

Applicants must meet all the criteria below:

- Child's first day of isolation is on or after the 8th March 2021
- they 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. This is limited to one parent or guardian per household for the child or young person's self-isolation period.
 - they are employed or self-employed.
 - their work is such they cannot work from home, and will lose income as a result of caring responsibilities
- There is no-one else in the household who can look after the child(ren)
- **they meet all the other means-tested eligibility criteria for a Test and Trace Support Payment or locally determined criteria for a discretionary payment described above in pages 2 and 3.**
- their child or young person: 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.
 - has been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace or by their education or childcare setting because they have been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

Applicants will also need to self-declare on the application form and provide proofs where required:

- their child's name.
- their child's age.
- their child's main address.
- the child's education or care setting and year group. This should include contact details for the setting (at least one of an email address and/or phone number).
- their child's first day of self-isolation.
- whether their child has an Education, Health and Care Plan. This is to support applications from parents and guardians of young people between 16 and 25 who have additional support needs.

Supporting evidence about the child or young person

Applicants will need to provide either:

- the child's eight-digit NHS Test and Trace ID number. This is for parents and guardians of children or young people who have received a notification directly from NHS Test and Trace telling them to self-isolate.

OR

- a communication from the child or young person's education or childcare setting confirming that they have to self-isolate. This is for parents and guardians of children or young people who have been told to self-isolate by their education or childcare setting because they have been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive.

OR

- a screenshot of a young person's NHS COVID-19 App notification telling them to self-isolate **AND** evidence that the young person has an Education, Health and Care Plan. This is for parents or guardians of young people aged 16-25 who have additional support needs and who have been notified to self-isolate by the NHS COVID-19 App.

Local authorities **cannot** accept applications without **at least one** of the three pieces of supporting evidence listed above.

Assessment and payment

An application is for an individual and not on behalf of a household. The individual's main residence must be in Luton, where we cannot verify residency the application will fail.

An application will need to be supported by documentary proof and cannot be assessed without the required proofs so will not be regarded as 'eligible' until all the information and proofs have been supplied to verify the application.

Information or proofs required or requested has to be provided within seven calendar days of the request, failure to provide within the timeframe will lead to the application automatically failing.

Where we cannot verify the NHS Test and Trace ID identifier code against the national Eligibility Checker database the application will fail. The applicant will need to resubmit their application with the correct details to allow verification.

An invalid National Insurance number will lead to an application being automatically disqualified. The applicant will need to resubmit their application with the correct details to allow verification. Employer's details must be verifiable, and we may contact your employer to confirm details you have given us.

Self-employment proofs should be current and trading figures should be for financial year 2019/20. Our intention is to make payment within five working days of verifying an application as eligible. Some payments may fall outside this timescale.

The scheme allows for an application to be made on someone's behalf however payments will only be made into the bank account of the person who has been asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

We will cross reference the bank statement details with those entered on the application form and where there is a mismatch the application will fail and the resident will be invited to resubmit a new application.

Details of 'first right of appropriation' for customers whose accounts are overdrawn are described on the webpage.

We will email, write or call the applicant to notify if their application is eligible or not, and note the reason for any failure.

Appeals and disputes

Where a 'main' or 'discretionary' application is refused there is no right of appeal. We will however endeavour to signpost failed applicants to other forms of support.

Where an application has been refused future applications from the same individual can be submitted where they have been required to isolate for a new period that does not overlap with the first period of isolation and they have received a new Test and Trace NHS ID identifier number we can verify.

As long as each applicant meets the main scheme criteria multiple claims from a single household will be accepted.

The Test and Trace team will not become involved in disputes between account holders and their banks.

Applications time limit

An application must be received by us within 42 calendar days after the first day of self-isolation and must include proofs to verify the eligibility. Applications received outside this timeframe will be invalid.

Data and verification

The team will use local and national systems to verify an application and are under a duty to report fraud or non-compliance to the police.

Data will be used to cross reference information we already hold in order to detect and prevent fraud

The team will be carrying out post-payment checks to confirm compliance and eligibility. Were fraud is detected we will seek to recover the grant.

As the payments are subject to income tax, details will be shared with HMRC