

REPORT TO:		Cabinet	
DATE:		11 November 2020	
PORTFOLIO:		Cllr Joyce Plummer - Resources	
REPORT AUTHOR:		Pauline Duckworth – Head of Benefits, Revenues and Customer Contact	
TITLE OF REPORT:		Test and Trace Support Payments Scheme	
EXEMPT REPORT:	No		
KEY DECISION:	No	If yes, date of publication:	

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This report is to update Cabinet on the Test and Trace Support Payments Scheme.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Cabinet note that Test and Trace Support Payments Scheme was approved by Urgent Council Decision on the 9th October 2020, ready for implementation on Monday 12th October 2020.

3. Background Information

3.1 The Government introduced the Test and Trace Support Payments Scheme to support individuals who were told on or after the 28th September 2020 to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

3.2 To support residents on a low income and to increase rates of self-isolation, from the 28th September 2020, individuals are entitled to a Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 if they:

- a) 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;
- b) Are employed or self-employed, and;
- c) Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result, and;

d) Are 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.

3.3 Test and Trace Support payments are 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.

3.4 Low income for the purpose of this scheme is based on the Government's benefit cap rates as detailed below:-

Couple – Joint income	£384.62	£20,000 per year
Single parent and children reside with you	£384.62	£20,000 per year
Single Adult	£257.69	£13,400 per year

3.5 The Test and Trace Support scheme commenced on the 28th September 2020 and local authorities had to have arrangements in place to administer payments by 12th October 2020. Provision for backdated claims for the period 28 September up to including the 11th October were included in the scheme. The scheme will last until 31 January 2021.

Funding

3.6 The Government has provided funding to support local authorities in implementing the Test and Trace Support Payments scheme. This includes administrative costs and costs of the payments made under the scheme.

3.7 In total, the UK Government has provided £50 million for the Test and Trace Support Payments and corresponding discretionary payments. This funding is meant to cover the four months of the scheme until 31 January 2021. Hyndburn's funding allocation is detailed below. Early indications suggest the funding estimated by Government is not adequate.

Main Scheme	£44,500
Discretionary Payments	£26,877
Administration payment	£26,621

3.8 The Main Scheme fund is subject to reconciliation, which means if demand exceeds our allocation then the Government will make a top up payment, equally if we use less than our allocation this would have to be returned.

- 3.8.1 Both the Administration costs and the Discretionary Payment fund are for a four month fixed period and will not be topped up or subject to a reconciliation process.

Discretionary Scheme

- 3.9 In addition to the main scheme, the Test and Trace Support Scheme includes provision for residents who meet the first three criteria for the main scheme and who are on a low income but who are not currently in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits.
- 3.10 Funds for the Discretionary Scheme are limited and therefore each application for a discretionary payment is considered based on the first 3 criteria of the main scheme with additional information and evidence required in order to make a fair and consistent decision.
- 3.11 The full scheme at appendix 1 provides further detail on the scheme as a whole as well as the discretionary scheme.

Council Tax Support

- 3.12 Within the Government Guidance on the scheme, published by the Department of Health and Social Care, there is confirmation that for income based benefits such as Universal Credit and Housing Benefit, that the Test and Trace Support payments will be disregarded when calculating benefits. This means that residents will not lose out by receiving lower benefit payments because they have self-isolated and received a support payment.

Projected demand

- 3.13 Government modelling estimates that 800 people per day across England could be eligible for the Test and Trace Support Payment (based on average COVID-19 incidence levels on 17 September 2020).
- 3.14 For Hyndburn this would represent 1 application per day. In essence the reality is far greater. Since opening the Test and Trace Support Payment application process, Hyndburn Council has received as at Friday 30 October, 231 completed applications; 198 more applications than estimated by Government.
- 3.15 The disparity in numbers for website traffic hits against completed applications submitted for Test and Trace is purely customers who have tried to complete the application process but failed to meet one or more of the specified criteria laid down in the rules and therefore the application process prohibits completion. An example would be if the customer is asked if they are employed or self-employed – if they tick **NO** to this question – then the application process would stop at this stage.

- 3.16 Detailed below are two tables, one listing the fund allocation and spend as at the 30th October and table 2 with details of applications received for both the main and discretionary scheme.

Fund Allocation

	Fund allocation	Payments made	Fund remaining
Main scheme	£44,500	12,500	32,000
Discretionary	£26,877	3,000	23,877
Totals	£71,377	15,500	55,877

Applications

Website traffic for all applications attempted by customers		<u>623</u>
	<u>Main</u>	<u>Discretionary</u>
Completed applications submitted	153	78
Applications approved	25	6
Applications refused	35	3
Total applications processed	60	9
Applications waiting to be dealt with or in progress awaiting evidence/information.	93	69

Scheme administration

- 3.17 Government introduced this legislation on the 28th September 2020 giving local authorities 2 weeks until the 12 October 2020 to devise a scheme, complete data sharing agreement, develop an on-line application form and train relevant staff in order to deliver this new Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme.

4 **Consultations**

- 4.1 N/A as this is an update report to Cabinet.

5. **Implications**

- 5.1 Financial implications and legal and human rights implications are referenced back to the Council report approved on the 9th October 2020.

<p>Financial implications (including any future financial commitments for the Council)</p>	<p>The reconciliation of the main scheme fund will ensure that the Council is reimbursed if we overspend. The Discretionary element of the Government funding however is finite and spend in this area will be monitored closely.</p>
<p>Legal and human rights implications</p>	<p>Any and all legal and human rights implications have been considered and balanced against the rights of the individual and the obligations placed on the authority for the administration of this scheme. The protection of vulnerable groups and individuals has been considered extensively as have the rights of our residents and customers. Legal implications and human rights have been considered at each stage and the policy intentions within this report are considered proportionate and justifiable when balanced against the rights of the individual.</p>
<p>Assessment of risk</p>	<p>Council report approved 9 October 2020 details the assessment of risk</p>
<p>Equality and diversity implications <i>A Customer First Analysis should be completed in relation to policy decisions and should be attached as an appendix to the report.</i></p>	<p>Council report approved 9 October 2020 details the Equality and diversity implications and CFA.</p>

**7. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985:
List of Background Papers**

8. Freedom of Information

8.1 The report does not contain exempt information under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A and all information can be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Test and Trace Support Payments

6th October 2020

1. Introduction

- 1.1 From 28 September 2020, individuals will be entitled to a Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 if they:
- e) 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;
 - f) Are employed or self-employed, and;
 - g) Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result, and;
 - h) Are 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.
- 1.2 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 last until 31 January 2021.

2. Discretionary Scheme

- 2.1 The Test and Trace Payment scheme includes provision for applicants who meet the first three criteria of the main scheme's eligibility but who are not currently in receipt of any of the qualifying benefits.
- 2.2 Individuals may make an application to the Discretionary Test and Trace Support Scheme if they:

- a) 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;
- b) Are employed or self-employed, and;
- c) Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result.

2.3 Applications for the Discretionary Scheme will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and we will work with applicants in order to maximise their entitlement to a support payment.

2.4 With the exception of being in receipt of a qualifying benefits, all other scheme criteria for the Discretionary Scheme will be the same as for the main scheme, as outlined in this document.

3. Date of isolation and backdating

3.1 Eligibility for the Test and Trace Support Payment, including discretionary payments, will be for people who are told to self-isolate on or after 28th September 2020 and who meet the relevant eligibility criteria.

3.2 Backdated applications

Residents will be able to claim retrospectively, as long as their period of self-isolation began on or after 28th September 2020. Retrospective applications can be made up to 14 days after the end of the resident's isolation period. We are not able to accept or pay any applications after this date.

3.3 Isolation periods prior to 28th September 2020

We are not able to accept applications from people told to self-isolate before 28 September 2020, even if the period of self-isolation continues until or after 28 September.

3.4 Applications made after the period of isolation

Eligible individuals can make a claim up to 14 days after their period of self-isolation ends. We are not able to accept applications after this point.

3.5 Applications from members of the same household

People in the same household can each make an individual application to receive the payment, if they each meet the eligibility criteria as an individual applicant.

3.6 Multiple claims

An individual can claim more than once (if they are told to self-isolate multiple times), as long as they meet the eligibility criteria for each individual claim and their periods of self-isolation do not overlap.

3.7 Third-party applications

Applicants can apply on behalf of someone else. However, the £500 will be paid into a bank account in the name of the person for whom the application is being made (so, for example, if someone applied on behalf of a parent, the payment would be made into the parent's bank account).

3.8 [Applicants who are self-isolating who haven't been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace](#)
We are not able to approve applications for anyone who does not have a valid notification from NHS Test and Trace. The legal duty to self-isolate that comes into force on 28 September 2020 applies only to people who have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

3.9 [Applicants who are quarantining after returning to the UK](#)
The Test and Trace Support Payment scheme does not cover people who are self-isolating after returning to the UK from abroad, unless they have tested positive for coronavirus or have been instructed to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

3.10 [Applicants who are furloughed](#)
We are not able to make payments to applicants whose income is lower than normal because they are furloughed. The Test and Trace Support Payment is for people facing a reduction in income because they cannot work while self-isolating.

4. [Application process](#)

4.1 To apply, applicants will complete an online form available at www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/testandtracesupport

4.2 A telephone application can be made by calling 01254 388 111 Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm for resident who do not have access to the internet. All residents will be encouraged when they telephone us to use the online form whenever possible.

4.3 [Evidence requirements](#)

To support their application, all applicants must provide all evidence required to assess and pay a Track and Trace Support Payment. This evidence includes:

1. A notification from NHS Test and Trace asking them to self-isolate;
2. Proof of receipt of one of the qualifying benefits;
3. A bank statement from a live bank or building society account in the name of the applicant; and
4. Proof of employment or, if they are self-employed, evidence of self-assessment returns, trading income and proof that their business or employment delivers services which cannot be undertaken without social contact.

4.4 Evidence can be provided online at the time of application or by email to enquiries@hyndburnbc.gov.uk

4.5 Evidence to support an application can be a scanned copy, a clear photograph of the evidence or screen shots of online accounts. Hard copy evidence should be provided as a last resort and may delay any payment.

4.6 [Payment](#)

Once this evidence has been verified, and we are satisfied that the application meets the criteria for the Track and Trace Support Payment, we will pay the applicant £500. We aim to make this payment within three working days once all appropriate checks and verification has been completed.

4.7 A single payment of £500 will be made by BACS transfer or Faster Payments to the person named on bank statement provided as evidence to support the application. Payment by cheque or cash is not available.

4.8 Successful applicants will receive notification via email or post if email is not available that a payment will be made. Unsuccessful applicants will be given an explanation of their application outcome along with advice on making future applications.

4.9 Taxation

These payments will be subject to income tax. Payments under the standard eligibility criteria will not be subject to National Insurance contributions. Details of successful payments will be sent to HMRC to make any necessary changes to the recipient's income tax calculations

4.10 Eligibility for other benefits

These payments will be disregarded when calculating eligibility for other benefits. This includes calculating entitlement to Universal Credit.

5. Appeals

5.1 Unsuccessful applicants will not be eligible because they do not meet, or are unable to prove that they meet the scheme's criteria. There is no right of appeal against any decision not to award a payment, either for the main Test and Trace Support Payment or for applications to receive a discretionary payment. Should any applicant disagree with a decision not to award a Test and Trace payment, they may ask for their application to be reviewed by another officer.

5.2 Where possible, we will work with applicants to make sure they provided the necessary evidence to support a successful application. For instance, someone who is self-employed may have forgotten to provide their self-assessment return in the first instance.

6. Evidence of failure to self-isolate

6.1 If we become aware, either through post-payment verification checks or through other means, that someone has not self-isolated, we will refer the case to the police.

6.2 If, as a result of post-payment verifications it is evident that an individual in receipt of a support payment has not self-isolated, the support payment may be recovered.

7. Fraud

7.1 We are responsible for fraud-prevention measures and the protection of public funds.

7.2 Local authorities have the right to recover costs from people who claim the payment fraudulently.

8. Publication

- 8.1 Details of this scheme will be published on our website and paper copies of this document will be made available to residents by request.

9. Complaints

- 9.1 The Council's Complaints Procedure will apply in the event of any complaint about the application of this scheme.

10. Equalities

- 10.1 Our intention is to make this scheme fair and equitable for all applicants. This scheme is accompanied by a Customer First Analysis which has been produced in response to our obligation to the Public Sector Equality Duty as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. No adverse impact on any protected characteristic has been identified as a result of this scheme.

11. Data Protection

- 11.1 Details of our privacy notice can be found at www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/privacy-notice/

