

CABINET

21st October 2020

Subject: Test & Trace Support Payment Scheme

Cabinet Member: Councillor Stanley – Deputy Leader (Special Projects)

1. Purpose of Report

To update Cabinet on the Test & Trace Support Payment Scheme (Standard Scheme), and to seek approval on the proposed Test & Trace Support Payment Scheme (Discretionary Scheme).

2. Links to Council's priorities and objectives

This report is linked to the Council's COVID-19 Recovery Programme which covers a range of actions under the themes of Service Recovery, Local Economy, Community Resilience, and (more recently) the Health-led response. Delivery of the Track & Trace Support Payment Scheme is part of the Authority's Health-led response.

3. Recommendations

1. That Cabinet note the elements of the national Test & Trace Support Payment Scheme (Standard Scheme), summarised in Section 5 of this report, and detailed in the Castle Point Test & Trace Standard Scheme document at Appendix A.
2. That Cabinet note the elements of the proposed local Test & Trace Support Payment Scheme (Discretionary Scheme) summarised in Section 6 of this report and detailed in the Castle Point Test & Trace Discretionary Scheme document at Appendix B.
3. That Cabinet note the content of the Test & Trace Stage 1 Equality Impact Assessment, at Appendix C.
4. That Cabinet approve for local adoption the proposed Castle Point Test & Trace Discretionary Scheme, at Appendix B.

4. Background Information

- 4.1 On 20th September 2020, and as part of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Government announced that there would be a new legal duty in England (effective from 28th September 2020), on all those who test positive for COVID-19 or who are identified by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact, requiring them to self-isolate.
- 4.2 To reinforce the importance of self-isolation and help ensure people have access to the support they need, Government also provided funding for a new Test and Trace Support Payment scheme for people on low incomes who are unable to work and are financially impacted while they are self-isolating because they cannot work from home.
- 4.3 Government asked Local Authorities in England to put in place arrangements to process applications and make these payments.
- 4.4 The Department for Health & Social Care issued guidance outlining details of the Test & Trace Support Payment Scheme, which consists of two parts – the Standard scheme and a Discretionary scheme.

5. Test & Trace Support Payment Scheme (Standard Scheme)

- 5.1 The criteria and rules of entitlement for the Test & Trace Support Payment (Standard Scheme) – herein referred to as the ‘Scheme’ - are prescribed by Central Government.
- 5.2 The Scheme is effective from 28th September 2020, with Local Authorities required to make it publicly available from 12th October 2020 and required to accept backdated applications for those who become eligible between these dates.
- 5.3 Applicants will be eligible under the Scheme, where they;
 - I. reside in the borough; and,
 - II. 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,
 - III. are employed or self-employed; and,
 - IV. are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result; and,
 - V. 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.
- 5.4 The Scheme is not available to people who;
 - I. were asked to self-isolate before 28th September 2020.

- II. are self-isolating after travelling abroad (unless they test positive during the 14-day quarantine period).
 - III. are self-isolating but have not received a notification from NHS Test and Trace telling them to self-isolate.
 - IV. can work from home and/or continue to receive full wages during the period of self-isolation.
- 5.5 The Scheme provides support on an individual basis, not by household - this means each adult in the household can separately claim and receive a Scheme payment where they separately meet the eligibility criteria.
- 5.6 Applicants can also make multiple applications where they are required to self-isolate more than once – to do so they must meet the eligibility criteria for each separate isolation period and the isolation periods must not overlap.
- 5.7 Applicants are required to apply online using the Council's designated form, and to upload scanned or photographed evidence at the point of application or separately via the Council's website or Benefits@castlepoint.gov.uk.
- 5.8 Third Party 'assisted' applications can be accepted where residents are unable to apply online themselves - First Contact and Peabody are available to support with this, other Third Parties can also support applicants to claim but will be required to provide their details and ID.
- 5.9 Claims must be made within 14 days of the date the self-isolation period ends and applicants are required to provide details about their employment, nature of their work, and evidence to support their claim; their 8-digit NHS Test and Trace Account ID number, proof that they receive one of the qualifying benefits, a recent bank statement, and proof of employment or self-employment.
- 5.10 Successful applicants will receive a single payment of £500, paid directly to their bank account, within 3 working days of the Local Authority receiving the claim and all necessary evidence.
- 5.11 Officers are required to undertake necessary pre and post payment checks, using the NHS CTAS and DWP Searchlight systems (amongst others), to prevent Fraud, and have a legal duty to contact the Police if they become aware that the legal duty to self-isolate has been breached.
- 5.12 Central Government are raising awareness of the Scheme via a national publicity campaign, and it has been promoted to residents via the Council's website and Twitter.
- 5.13 The Scheme is currently expected to end on 31st January 2021.

6. Test & Trace Support Payment Scheme (Discretionary Scheme)

- 6.1 The Test & Trace Support Payment Scheme (Discretionary Scheme) – herein referred to as the ‘Discretionary Scheme’ – is intended to specifically address the situation where a resident meets all the other Standard Scheme eligibility criteria but isn’t entitled under that Scheme because they are not in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits, but will still face hardship while self-isolating because they cannot go to work.
- 6.2 Typically this situation may arise where;
- I. the applicant has applied for, but not actually received, one of the Standard Scheme qualifying benefits,
 - II. the applicant would otherwise be entitled to, but has not actually applied for, one of the Standard Scheme qualifying benefits,
 - III. the applicant has no recourse to public funds, because of their immigration status.
- 6.3 In general the key elements of the proposed Discretionary Scheme for Castle Point mirrors the Standard Scheme, except for the following requirements;
- I. applicants must have less than £6,000 in capital.
 - II. applicants must be in receipt of Castle Point Borough Council's Local Council Tax Support.
 - III. Immediately prior to the self-isolation period starting, applicants must have been working for a total of more than 16 hours per week.
- 6.4 These elements specifically replicate the general requirements of the eligible benefits listed within the Standard Scheme - ensuring that the Discretionary Scheme replicates equitable access to support for all residents, regardless of actual receipt of eligible benefits.

7. Corporate Implications

a. Financial Implications

The Council will receive grant funding from the Government to deliver these schemes. In total, £78K is to be received, with £33k being received for the Standard scheme, £20k for the discretionary scheme and £25k for the administrative costs of running the scheme.

These sums are expected to cover a four-month period to 31st January 2021. If during those four months the Council incurs spend greater than £33k on the Standard scheme, the reconciliation process will allow the Council to receive additional funding. Conversely, if the Council does not require the full £33k, any underspend will be repayable to Government.

Neither the discretionary scheme nor the administrative costs will be subject to a reconciliation process and under or overspend remains with the Council. However, Government guidance states that additional funding could be received for administrative costs where, in general across the country, it is shown the costs are greater than the initial funding.

b. Legal Implications

There is a legal requirement to self-isolate if someone tests positive for COVID-19 and only those who have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace can claim the Test and Trace Support Payment or a discretionary payment.

Local authorities will be able to use the web-based Eligibility Checker to check whether an applicant has an NHS Test and Trace Account ID and only those individuals named in the Data Sharing Agreement are authorised to access the Eligibility Checker. The Data Sharing Agreement has been completed and submitted so that access to the data may be permitted.

There is no legal requirement for Local Authorities to provide a right of appeal against a decision not to award a payment, either for the Standard Test and Trace Support Payment or for the discretionary payment. People who are turned down will not be eligible because they do not meet the criteria.

If the local authority becomes aware, either through post-payment verification checks or through other means, that someone has not self-isolated, the Council will need to refer the case to the police.

Local authorities will be responsible for fraud prevention measures and guidance to assist in bolstering counter-fraud measures will be issued shortly. This will include post-payment verification checks.

Local authorities will have the right to recover costs from people who claim the payment fraudulently and can keep any money recovered to put towards the Council's costs of running the scheme. Local authorities will not be liable for any unrecoverable costs due to fraud.

c. Human resources/equality/human rights

A Stage 1 Equality Impact Assessment for the proposed Discretionary Scheme has been completed and is attached at **Appendix C** of this report.

d. Timescale for implementation and risk factors

Key milestones are as follows:

Milestone	Timeframe	Purpose
Government announces legal duty to self-isolate.	20.9.20	Legal requirement for Local Authorities to deliver Test & Trace Support Payments, effective from 28.9.20
Software Go Live	12.10.20	Both schemes made publicly available
Report to Cabinet	21.10.20	Discretionary Scheme is formally adopted retrospectively from 28.9.20
Both schemes end	31.1.21	

8. Background Papers:

Appendix A Castle Point Test & Trace Standard Scheme

Appendix B Castle Point Test & Trace Discretionary Scheme

Appendix C Castle Point Test & Trace Stage 1 EQIA

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Castle Point Borough Council

Test and Trace Support Payments Scheme

Version Control

Version	Version date	Revised by	Description
1	September 2020	DA	INITIAL DRAFT

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Definitions

The following definitions are used within this document:

- ‘Applicant’**; means the individual making an application for a payment under this scheme;
- ‘Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS)’**; means the web-based system used by Public Health England to contact and trace individuals who are required to self-isolate;
- ‘CTAS Account ID’**; means the unique number provided by Public Health England through the Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS);
- ‘COVID-19’**; means the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus;
- ‘Housing Benefit’**; means the benefit administered by local authorities under either the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 or the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) 2006;
- ‘Income-related Employment and Support Allowance’**; means the means-tested Employment and Support Allowance administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Welfare Reform Act 2007;
- ‘Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance’**; means the means-tested Jobseekers Allowance administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Jobseekers Act 1995;
- ‘Income Support’**; means the means-tested Income Support administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987;
- ‘NHS Test and Trace’**; means the service provided to the National Health Service in England, established in May 2020 to track and help prevent the spread of COVID-19;
- ‘Pension Credit’**; means the means-tested Guarantee or Savings Credit administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the State Pension Credit Regulations 2002;
- ‘Qualifying benefit’**; means any of the following benefits: Housing Benefit, Income support, income-based jobseeker’s Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit;
- ‘Self-isolation, Self-isolate’**; means the legal requirement for an individual to self-isolate when told to by NHS Test and Trace or the NHS COVID-19 app and the legal duty to self-isolate under the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self-Isolation) (England) Regulations 2020 which came into force on 28th September 2020;
- ‘Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme’ (‘Standard Scheme’)**; means the Standard Scheme introduced by Government on 28th September and administered by Local Authorities;
- ‘Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme’ (‘Discretionary Scheme’)**; means the Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme which has been agreed by the Council and which *may* be available for individuals who are unable to access the ‘Standard Scheme’.
- ‘Universal Credit’** means the means-tested Universal Credit administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Universal Credit Regulations 2013;

‘Working Tax Credit’; means the means-tested benefit administered by Her Majesty’s Revenues and Customs under the Working Tax Credit (Entitlement and Maximum Rate) Regulations 2002.

1. Background to Self-Isolation and Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme

- 1.1 From 28th September 2020, Government has changed the legislation so that certain people will have to self-isolate due to the current COVID-19 crisis.
- 1.2 A package of legislative measures has been introduced both to ensure that those who are required to self-isolate, do so and, that those on a low income, receive a payment to assist their finances and to encourage compliance with the legislation.
- 1.3 The Council, together with Government, recognises that self-isolation is one of the most powerful tools for controlling the transmission of the Covid-19 virus and this scheme document details who will be eligible and how the Test and Trace Support Payment will be made. It also outlines the approach the Council will take in determining whether a payment will be made or not.
- 1.4 This document, which covers the **Standard Scheme**, should be read alongside the Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Support scheme which *may* be available to individuals who do not qualify a payment under this scheme.

2. An overview of the Test and Trace Payment scheme (the standard scheme).

- 2.1 From 28th September 2020, individuals will be entitled to a Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 from the Council if they meet the eligibility criteria listed below:
 - (a) Make an application to the Council in the prescribed form and provide all the evidence and verification required;
 - (b) Are a resident within the Council's area;
 - (c) 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;
 - (d) Are employed or self-employed;
 - (e) Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result; and
 - (f) Are currently receiving any of the following 'qualifying benefit's':
 - Universal Credit;
 - Working Tax Credit;
 - income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
 - income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;
 - Income Support;
 - Housing Benefit; or

- Pension Credit.

2.2 This particular scheme is designed for those individuals (applicants) who:

- meet the standard conditions 2.1 (a) to (e) above;
- are in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits listed in 2.1(f); and
- comply with the self-isolation requirements laid down by Government;

2.3 Where individuals meet all the requirements but are **not in receipt of a qualifying benefit (2.1 (f))**, no payment can be made; however, they may be able to apply for a discretionary payment under the Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme which is available on the Council's website
<https://www.castlepoint.gov.uk/test-and-trace-support-payments>

2.4 Individuals will **not** be entitled to apply for both a payment under the Standard Scheme and under the Council's Discretionary Scheme.

3. Commencement of the scheme and scheme closure

Commencement

3.1 This scheme is available to all individuals who meet the eligibility criteria and who are told to self-isolate **on or after** 28th September 2020.

3.2 Individuals who are required to self-isolate **before** 28th September 2020 will not be eligible for a payment.

Scheme closure

3.3 At the present time, Government has stated that this Standard Scheme will be available until 31st January 2021.

4. Applying for a Test and Trace Support Payment (the Standard Scheme).

4.1 Individuals who are resident within the Council's area will be entitled to make an application for a Test and Trace Support Payment under this scheme. In all cases, the 'applicant' will be required to answer **all** of the questions asked and provide the information required by the Council in the specified timescale.

4.2 In order to receive a payment, all applicants must meet the full eligibility criteria, details of which are shown within Section 6 of this scheme. The applicant will be required to self-verify certain criteria and also confirm that they will comply with the self-isolation requirements set by Government.

- 4.3 Where the applicant fails to meet the eligibility criteria, they will not receive a payment and will be informed of this by the Council, either at the point of application or as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 4.4 Where the applicant is successful, the Council will notify them accordingly and make payment in line with the timings and methods shown in Section 8.
- 4.5 Applications can **only** be accepted from individuals who are resident in the Council's area.
- 4.6 Applications will be accepted from a third party in respect of any individual who meets the eligibility criteria for a payment. However, the following should be noted:
- The person making the application will need to provide evidence of their identity and also the reason why they are applying on behalf of another person; and
 - That any payment **must** only be made by the Council to the person who is self-isolating. No payment will be made to a third party under any circumstance.
- 4.7 All applications shall be made online using the Council's dedicated webpage <https://www.castlepoint.gov.uk/test-and-trace-support-payments>. There are no paper or other types of application processes; however, should individuals experience difficulties in making any application, they should contact the Council on 01268 882200

5. Time limits for making an application for a payment

- 5.1 No application for a payment can be made before the 28th September 2020 or for any individual who has been required to self-isolate before 28th September 2020.
- 5.2 Eligible individuals can apply for a Test and Trace Support Payment at any time up to 14 days after their period of self-isolation ended. The Council will **not** accept any applications after this point.
- 5.3 Where an individual has been required to self-isolate on or after 28th September but before the Council's scheme opened on 12th October 2020, an application for a backdated discretionary payment must be made by 26th October 2020 (14 days after commencement of scheme).

6. Multiple claims within the household and from the same applicant

- 6.1 Individuals in the same household can each make an application to receive a Test and Trace Support Payment, if they each meet the eligibility criteria in full.
- 6.2 An individual may make an application more than once but only:
- If the individual is told to self-isolate multiple times; **and**
 - they meet the eligibility criteria for each individual application; **and**
 - the periods of self-isolation do not overlap.

6.3 The Council is mindful that this can be confusing for applicants and it will be essential, where multiple applications are made by an individual, to ensure correct eligibility. Therefore, a new application will need to be made for each distinct period of self-isolation.

7. The eligibility criteria and evidence required for the Test and Trace Support Payment (the Standard Scheme).

7.1 For payment to be made under this scheme, all of the criteria **must** be met. As with the application form itself, all evidence will need to be provided electronically. The Council provides facilities for all applicants to upload documents, evidence and photographs.

7.2 Where documentation is only held in 'hard copy' or paper form, the Council will accept digital images or photographs provided they show all the relevant information.

7.3 The Council will keep all information supplied by applicants, secure and in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

An individual must make a valid application to the Council in the prescribed form and provide the all evidence and verification required

7.4 As mentioned in Section 4, a valid application must be made via the Council's website <https://www.castlepoint.gov.uk/test-and-trace-support-payments>.

All applicants will be required to provide details sufficient to identify themselves, their address and to allow the Council to contact them including:

- Full name;
- Address;
- National Insurance Number;
- Telephone number; and
- Email address.

7.5 In addition to the above, all applicants will be required to submit a copy of their current bank statement(s) in order to:

- Verify that their income has reduced due to having to self-isolate (see later); and
- Provide details of the bank account number and sort code of the account into which a payment would be made.

That they are a resident within the Council's area

7.6 The applicant will be required to verify that they have their sole or main residence in the Council's area. The Council will check other records held (and make other enquiries where appropriate) to determine this.

- 7.7 Where necessary, the Council will ask the applicant to provide additional evidence of residence.

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

- 7.8 A key requirement of the scheme is that the applicant has been instructed by the NHS Test and Trace to stay at home and self-isolate either because:
- they have tested positive for COVID-19 (coronavirus); or
 - have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive.
- 7.9 All applicants will be required to provide the 8-digit unique ID number which has been provided to them by NHS Test and Trace.
- 7.10 For information, the NHS Test and Trace service uses the Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS) to record information about people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and their contacts. The CTAS Account ID is an 8-digit identifier unique to each case (e.g. 3b1a3015c). Most individuals who test positive for COVID-19 or are a contact of someone who has had a positive test, will receive a digital invitation from the CTAS system to undertake the contact tracing journey.
- 7.11 All cases and contacts who have completed the contact tracing journey (including those who were ineligible for the digital invitation such as children or individuals with a landline number only) will receive a citizen advice message upon completion of the NHS Test and Trace questionnaire. The citizen message (sent either via a text message/email or postal service for people with no access to mobile phone or email) contains the 8-character Account ID.
- 7.12 The Council will check that the applicant has a valid Account ID produced by the Contact Tracing and Advice Service. Only this number will allow an application to be processed.
- 7.13 The Council will not make payment to anyone who does not have a valid notification (Account ID) from NHS Test and Trace. It should be noted that there is a legal duty to self-isolate which only applies to people who have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.
- 7.14 The Council will not accept a notification from the NHS Isolation Note service. Where the applicant has provided this only, they will be given an opportunity to provide a valid NHS Test and Trace notification if they have one.

- 7.15 This scheme does not cover people who are self-isolating after returning to the UK from abroad, unless they have tested positive for COVID-19 (coronavirus) or have been instructed to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

All applicants must be currently employed or self-employed

- 7.16 Only those applicants who are currently employed or currently self-employed will be entitled to claim a Test and Trace Support Payment. For the sake of clarity, this scheme requires all applicants to provide sufficient evidence of their current employment or self-employment status. In the case of employed applicants, full details of their employer must be given on the application form including contact numbers.

- 7.17 The Council will also require applicants to provide proof such as listed below:

Employed

- Current wages or salary slips;
- Employment contract; or
- Letter from the employer confirming current employment.

Self Employed

- Self-assessment form;
- Details of HMRC registration as self-employed;
- Current accounts; or
- Current accounts and trading statements

- 7.18 The above list is not exhaustive.

- 7.19 As this is an essential requirement in order for a Test and Trace Support Payment to be made, the applicant must satisfy the Council that they meet this criterion.

Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result

- 7.20 All applicants will have to certify on the application form that they are:
- Unable to work from home; and
 - Will lose income as a result.

- 7.21 The Council will need to be satisfied that any applicants meet these conditions in full.

Unable to work from home

- 7.22 The Council will require applicants to give details about the nature of their work and whether they can undertake this work from home.

7.23 Only those applicants that cannot work from home whilst self-isolating will meet the criteria and therefore, each applicant will not only be required to verify the fact, but also provide details of the reasons why this is the case, together with details of the type of work that they would normally undertake.

7.24 This criterion applies whether an applicant is either employed or self-employed and Government has provided a number of examples as follows:

- An applicant with a single job whose employer continued to pay them a full wage while they self-isolated would not meet the criteria;
- An applicant whose employer paid them a reduced wage while they self-isolated would meet the criteria (as they have lost income); and
- An applicant with two part-time jobs who continued to be paid a full wage by one employer, but whose other employer did not pay them while self-isolating, would be eligible.

Are currently receiving any of the qualifying benefits.
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7.25 The final criterion is that the applicant **must be in receipt** of one of the following qualifying benefits:

- Universal Credit;
- Working Tax Credit;
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;
- Income Support;
- Housing Benefit; or
- Pension Credit.

7.26 Applicants must be **actually** in receipt of the listed benefits. Each applicant will be required to verify that they are in receipt of one of the benefits and provide evidence of that to the Council. Evidence will need to be provided electronically but typically could be copies of bank statements showing the payments, confirmation of benefit entitlement or award /payment summaries (as in the case of Universal Credit). The Council will accept 'screenshots' of any online benefit account.

7.27 Where an applicant has yet to apply for a qualifying benefit; is awaiting a decision on a benefit; is currently appealing a negative decision; or is unable to apply for a qualifying benefit, they will not be entitled to a payment under the Standard Scheme and will be directed to apply for a payment under the Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Payment Scheme.

7.28 The Council will verify the current receipt of a qualifying benefit with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC) as appropriate.

8. How much grant will be paid, methods of payment and timings.

- 8.1 Where an applicant meets all of the eligibility criteria, 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 application.
- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 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.
- 8.4 As required by Government, payments can only be made to the applicant's bank account. No payments can be made to third parties whatsoever.
- 8.5 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 details of this can be obtained from the Councils website <https://www.castlepoint.gov.uk/test-and-trace-support-payments> or from Citizens Advice.

9. Notification of Decisions

- 9.1 Applications 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.

10. Implications for other benefits and reductions

- 10.1 The Council has been advised by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) that the Test and Trace Support Payment will be disregarded for the purposes of all means-tested benefits.
- 10.2 The Council has decided that any payment made under this scheme shall not affect entitlement to Council Tax Reduction.

11. Review of Decisions

- 11.1 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.
- 11.2 All such requests must be made in writing 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.

12. Complaints

- 12.1 The Council's 'Complaints Procedure' (available on the Councils website) will be applied in the event of any complaint received about this scheme.

13. The Discretionary Test and Trace Payment Scheme and its relationship with the Standard Scheme

Standard Scheme

- 13.1 This 'Standard' Scheme has been determined by criteria set down by Government and is primarily aimed at all applicants who are working or self-employed; are unable to work from home and will therefore have a reduction in income and are in receipt of certain qualifying benefits (Universal Credit; Working Tax Credit; Income-based Employment and Support Allowance; income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; Income Support; Housing Benefit; or Pension Credit).

- 13.2 The receipt of one of those benefits is essential in order for a payment to be made.

Discretionary Scheme

- 13.3 The Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme is for any individual who meets all the required criteria **except** that they are not currently in receipt of a qualifying benefit. 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.

- 13.4 Details of the Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Payment Scheme can be found at <https://www.castlepoint.gov.uk/test-and-trace-support-payments>

Claiming from the schemes

- 13.5 Individuals who are entitled to a payment from the Standard Scheme are unable to make a claim from the Council's discretionary scheme.

- 13.6 However, an applicant who is refused a 'Standard Scheme' payment on the basis that they meet all the criteria **except** that they are not in receipt of a qualifying benefit, will be directed to make an application for a discretionary payment.

14. Funding of the scheme

- 14.1 Government has confirmed that it will reimburse the Council for all payments correctly made under this scheme.

15. Taxation and provision of information to HMRC

- 15.1 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.
- 15.2 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.
- 15.3 All applicants should note that the Council is required to inform Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) of all payments made to individuals.

16. Managing the risk of fraud

- 16.1 Neither the Council, nor Government will accept deliberate manipulation of the scheme and 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.
- 16.2 Applicants should note that, where a Test and Trace Support Payment is paid by the Council, details of each individual applicant will be passed to Government. Applicants should also note that the Council utilises a number of databases and Government systems to verify information in connection with any applications submitted.

17. Recovery of amounts incorrectly paid

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

18. The Council's duties in relation to self-isolation

- 18.1 The duty to self-isolate is an important one. Ensuring infected individuals and their close contacts isolate is one of our most powerful tools for controlling transmission.
- 18.2 We know that someone with the virus can remain infectious to other people for up to 10 days after developing symptoms. It can take up to 14 days for individuals to develop coronavirus symptoms after they catch the virus, and in this time, they can unknowingly pass it on to others, even if they don't have symptoms.

18.3 Self-isolating helps prevent family, friends and the community from contracting coronavirus, as well as helping to protect the health and care system.

18.4 The changes announced by Government on 20th September 2020 and brought into force on 28th September 2020 (as well as providing for the Test and Trace Support payments scheme):

- introduce a new legal duty on individuals to self-isolate if someone tests positive or is identified as a contact by NHS Test and Trace;
- introduce penalties for those breaking the rules, including fines of at least £1,000 and up to a maximum of £10,000 for repeated or very serious offences; and
- place a new legal obligation on employers that they must not knowingly enable or encourage their employees to break the law on self-isolation.

18.5 As part of this, the Council has a duty if it becomes aware, either through post-payment verification checks or through other means, that someone has not self-isolated, to refer the case to the police.

18.6 The Council has been informed by Government that, in order to ensure compliance with the new legislation NHS Test and Trace call handlers will be increasing contact with those self-isolating. Police resources will be used to check compliance in highest incidence areas and in high-risk groups, based on local intelligence including acting on instances where third parties have identified others who have tested positive, but are not self-isolating.

18.7 The Council will continue to focus on the principle of encouraging, educating and supporting self-compliance.

19. Delegated Powers

19.1 The Council has implemented this scheme in line with Government requirements and guidance.

19.2 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.

20. Data Protection and use of data

20.1 All information and data provided by businesses shall be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Data Protection policy and Privacy Notices which are available on the Council's website.



Castle Point Borough Council Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme

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Definitions

The following definitions are used within this document:

‘Additional Eligibility Criteria’; means the additional criteria decided by the Council that need to be met, in order to receive a payment under the Council’s Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme. These will be in addition to the standard criteria and are allowable under Government guidance;

‘Applicant’; means the individual making an application for a payment under this scheme;

‘Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS)’; means the web-based system used by Public Health England to contact and trace individuals who are required to self-isolate;

‘CTAS Account ID’; means the unique number provided by Public Health England through the Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS);

‘COVID-19’; means the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus;

‘face financial hardship’; a key criterion of the Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme is that all applicants will, if not for the payment, face financial hardship solely due to their need to self-isolate;

‘Housing Benefit’; means the benefit administered by local authorities under either the Housing Benefit Regulations 2006 or the Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state pension credit) 2006;

‘Income-related Employment and Support Allowance’; means the means-tested Employment and Support Allowance administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Welfare Reform Act 2007;

‘Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance’; means the means-tested Jobseekers Allowance administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Jobseekers Act 1995;

‘Income Support’; means the means-tested Income Support administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987;

‘NHS Test and Trace’; means the service provided to the National Health Service in England, established in May 2020 to track and help prevent the spread of COVID-19;

‘Pension Credit’; means the means-tested Guarantee or Savings Credit administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the State Pension Credit Regulations 2002;

‘Qualifying benefit’; means any of the following benefits: Housing Benefit, Income support, income-based jobseeker’s Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit;

‘Self-isolation, Self-isolate’; means the legal requirement for an individual to self-isolate when told to by NHS Test and Trace or the NHS COVID-19 app and the legal duty to self-isolate under the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self-Isolation) (England) Regulations 2020 which came into force on 28th September 2020;

‘Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme’ (‘Standard Scheme’); means the Standard Scheme introduced by Government on 28th September and administered by Local Authorities;

‘Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme’ (**‘Discretionary Scheme’**); means the Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme which has been agreed by the Council and which *may* be available for individuals who are unable to access the ‘Standard Scheme’.

‘Universal Credit’ means the means-tested Universal Credit administered by the Department for Work and Pensions under the Universal Credit Regulations 2013;

‘Working Tax Credit’; means the means-tested benefit administered by Her Majesty’s Revenues and Customs under the Working Tax Credit (Entitlement and Maximum Rate) Regulations 2002.

1. Background to Self-Isolation and the Test and Trace Payments

- 1.1 From 28th September 2020, Government has changed the legislation so that certain people will have to self-isolate due to the current COVID-19 crisis.
- 1.2 A package of legislative measures has been introduced to ensure that those who are required to self-isolate, do so and that those on a low income receive a payment to assist their finances and to encourage compliance with the legislation.
- 1.3 The Council, together with Government, recognises that self-isolation is one of the most powerful tools for controlling the transmission of the Covid-19 virus. The Government has set down the requirements for two payment schemes to be set up by the Council as follows:

(a) The **Test and Trace Support Payments Scheme (the Standard Scheme)** for those eligible applicants who are in receipt of Housing Benefit, Income support, income-based jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit (the qualifying benefits); and

(b) The **Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme (the Discretionary Scheme)** for those applicants who are **not** in receipt of any of the qualifying benefits but who are on a low income and will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while they are self-isolating.

- 1.4 This document details who will be eligible for a payment under the **Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme**.

- 1.5 Any applicant who is in receipt of a qualifying benefit, should apply for a payment under the standard scheme details of which are available at <https://www.castlepoint.gov.uk/test-and-trace-support-payments>

2. An overview of the Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme (the Discretionary Scheme).

- 2.1 From 28th September 2020, individuals will be entitled to a payment of £500 from the Council's Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme if they meet the eligibility criteria listed below:

- (a) Make an application to the Council in the prescribed form and provide all the evidence and verification required;
- (b) Are a resident within the Council's area;
- (c) 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;

(d) Are employed or self-employed;

(e) Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result;

(f) Are **NOT** currently receiving any of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit;
- Working Tax Credit;
- income-based Employment and Support Allowance;
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;
- Income Support;
- Housing Benefit; or
- Pension Credit; **and**

(g) Meet the Council's addition criteria for a discretionary payment.

2.2 This particular scheme is designed for those individuals (applicants) who:

- meet the standard conditions 2.1 (a) to (g) above;
- are **not** receiving a benefit listed in 2.1(f); and
- comply with the self-isolation requirements laid down by Government;

2.3 Where individuals meet all the requirements but **are in receipt of a benefit stated in**

2.1 (f), no payment can be made under the Discretionary Scheme; however, they may be able to apply for payment under the Standard Scheme which is available on the Council's website

<https://www.castlepoint.gov.uk/test-and-trace-support-payments>

2.4 Individuals will **NOT** be entitled to apply for both a payment under the Standard Scheme and under the Council's Discretionary Scheme.

3. Commencement of the scheme and scheme closure

Commencement

3.1 This scheme is available to all individuals who meet the eligibility criteria for a discretionary payment and who are told to self-isolate **on or after** 28th September 2020.

3.2 Individuals who are required to self-isolate **before** 28th September 2020 will not be eligible for a payment.

Scheme closure

3.3 At the present time, Government has stated that this Discretionary Scheme (and the Standard Scheme) will be available until 31st January 2021.

4. Applying for a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment (the Discretionary Scheme).

- 4.1 Individuals who are resident within the Council's area *may* make an application for a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment under this scheme. In all cases, the 'applicant' will be required to answer **all** of the questions asked and provide the information required by the Council in the specified timescale.
 - 4.2 In order to receive a payment, all applicants must meet the full eligibility criteria, details of which are shown within Section 6 of this scheme. The applicant will be required to self-verify certain criteria and also confirm that they will comply with the self-isolation requirements set by Government.
 - 4.3 Where the applicant fails to meet the eligibility criteria, they will not receive a payment and will be informed of this by the Council, either at the point of application or as soon as practicable thereafter.
 - 4.4 Where the applicant is successful, the Council will notify them accordingly and make payment in line with the timings and methods shown in Section 8.
 - 4.5 Applications can **only** be accepted from individuals who are resident in the Council's area.
 - 4.6 Applications will be accepted from a third party in respect of any individual who meets all the eligibility criteria for a payment. However, the following should be noted:
 - The person making the application will need to provide evidence of their identity and also the reason why they are applying on behalf of another person; and
 - That any payment **must** only be made by the Council to the person who is self-isolating. No payment will be made to a third party under any circumstance.
 - 4.7 All applications shall be made online using the Council's dedicated webpage <https://www.castlepoint.gov.uk/test-and-trace-support-payments> There are no paper or other types of application processes; however, should individuals experience difficulties in making any application, they should contact the Council on 01268 882200
- ## 5. Time limits for making an application for a payment
- 5.1 No application for a discretionary payment can be made before the 28th September 2020 or for any individual who has been required to self-isolate before 28th September 2020.

5.2 Eligible individuals can apply for a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment at any time up to 14 days after their period of self-isolation ended. The Council will **not** accept any applications after this point.

5.3 Where an individual has been required to self-isolate on or after 28th September but before the Council's scheme opened on 12th October 2020, an application for a backdated discretionary payment must be made by 26th October 2020 (14 days after commencement of scheme).

6. Multiple claims within the household and from the same applicant

6.1 Individuals in the same household can each make an application to receive a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment, if they each meet all the eligibility criteria in full.

6.2 An individual may make an application more than once but only:

- If the individual is told to self-isolate multiple times; **and**
- they meet the eligibility criteria for each individual application; **and**
- the periods of self-isolation do not overlap.

6.3 The Council is mindful that this can be confusing for applicants and it will be essential, where multiple applications are made by an individual, to ensure correct eligibility. Therefore, a new application will need to be made for each distinct period of self-isolation.

7. The eligibility criteria and evidence required for a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment.

7.1 For payment to be made under this Discretionary Scheme, all of the criteria **must** be met. As with the application form itself, all evidence will need to be provided electronically. The Council provides facilities for all applicants to upload documents, evidence and photographs.

7.2 Where documentation is only held in 'hard copy' or paper form, the Council will accept digital images or photographs provided they show all the relevant information.

7.3 The Council will keep all information supplied by applicants, secure and in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

An individual must make a valid application to the Council in the prescribed form and provide all the evidence and verification required

7.4 As mentioned in Section 4, a valid application must be made via the Council's website <https://www.castlepoint.gov.uk/test-and-trace-support-payments>.

All applicants will be required to provide details sufficient to identify themselves, their address and to allow the Council to contact them including:

- Full name;
- Address;
- National Insurance Number;
- Telephone number; and
- Email address.

7.5 In addition to the above, all applicants will be required to submit a copy of their current bank statement(s) in order to:

- Verify that their income has reduced due to having to self-isolate (see later); and
- Provide details of the bank account number and sort code of the account into which a payment would be made.

That they are a resident within the Council's area

7.6 The applicant will be required to verify that they have their sole or main residence in the Council's area. The Council will check other records held (and make other enquiries where appropriate) to determine this.

7.7 Where necessary, the Council will ask the applicant to provide additional evidence of residence.

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

7.8 A key requirement of the scheme is that the applicant has been instructed by the NHS Test and Trace to stay at home and self-isolate either because:

- they have tested positive for COVID-19 (coronavirus); or
- have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive.

7.9 All applicants will be required to provide the 8-digit unique ID number which has been provided to them by NHS Test and Trace.

7.10 For information, the NHS Test and Trace service uses the Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS) to record information about people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and their contacts. The CTAS Account ID is an 8-character identifier unique to each case (e.g. 3b1a3015c). Most individuals who test positive for COVID-19 or are a contact of someone who has had a positive test, will receive a digital invitation from the CTAS system to undertake the contact tracing journey.

7.11 All cases and contacts who have completed the contact tracing journey (including those who were ineligible for the digital invitation such as children or individuals with

a landline number only) will receive a citizen advice message upon completion of the NHS Test and Trace questionnaire. The citizen message (sent either via a text message/email or postal service for people with no access to mobile phone or email) contains the 8-character Account ID.

7.12 The Council will check that the applicant has a valid Account ID produced by the Contact Tracing and Advice Service. Only this number will allow an application to be processed.

7.13 The Council will not make payment to anyone who does not have a valid notification (Account ID) from NHS Test and Trace. It should be noted that there is a legal duty to self-isolate which only applies to people who have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

7.14 The Council will not accept a notification from the NHS Isolation Note service. Where the applicant has provided this only, they will be given an opportunity to provide a valid NHS Test and Trace notification if they have one.

7.15 This scheme does not cover people who are self-isolating after returning to the UK from abroad, unless they have tested positive for COVID-19 (coronavirus) or have been instructed to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

All applicants must be currently employed or self-employed

7.16 Only those applicants who are currently employed or currently self-employed will be entitled to claim a Test and Trace Support Payment. For the sake of clarity, this scheme requires all applicants to provide sufficient evidence of their current employment or self-employment status. In the case of employed applicants, full details of their employer must be given on the application form including contact numbers.

7.17 The Council will also require applicants to provide proof such as listed below:

Employed

- Current wages or salary slips;
- Employment contract; or
- Letter from the employer confirming current employment.

Self Employed

- Self-assessment form;
- Details of HMRC registration as self-employed;
- Current accounts; or
- Current accounts and trading statements

7.18 The above list is not exhaustive.

- 7.19 As this is an essential requirement in order for a Test and Trace Discretionary Payment to be made, the applicant must satisfy the Council that they meet this criterion.

Are NOT currently receiving any of the following benefits.

- 7.20 To receive a discretionary payment the applicant **must not be in receipt** of one of the following benefits:
- Universal Credit;
 - Working Tax Credit;
 - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
 - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;
 - Income Support;
 - Housing Benefit; or
 - Pension Credit.

- 7.21 Where applicants are in receipt of any of the above benefits, then payments can **ONLY** be made through the Standard Scheme. The Council has designed the application process so that the same form can be used to claim either payment (Standard Scheme or Discretionary Scheme) and applicants who fail to qualify for a Standard Scheme payment because they are not in receipt of one of those benefits, will automatically be directed to the Discretionary Scheme.

- 7.22 Where an applicant has yet to apply for one of the benefits listed; is awaiting a decision on a benefit; is currently appealing a negative decision; or is unable to apply for a qualifying benefit, they *may* make an application under this Discretionary Scheme.

Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result and will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while they are self-isolating

- 7.23 All applicants will have to certify on the application form that they are:
- Unable to work from home;
 - Will lose income as a result; **and**
 - Will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while they are self-isolating
- 7.24 The Council will need to be satisfied that any applicants meet these conditions in full.
- 7.25 The Council will require applicants to give details about the nature of their work and whether they can undertake this work from home.
- 7.26 Only those applicants that cannot work from home whilst self-isolating will meet the criteria and therefore, each applicant will not only be required to verify the fact, but

also provide details of the reasons why this is the case, together with details of the type of work that they would normally undertake.

- 7.27 The Council will also require all applicants making an application for a discretionary payment to provide evidence of financial hardship. All applicants will be required to demonstrate that the financial hardship is **solely** due to having to self-isolate.

Meet the Council's additional criteria for discretionary payments

- 7.28 Given that the funding for the Discretionary Scheme is limited (see Section 14), Government has stated that it will be up to each Council to determine additional criteria that have to be met if a payment is to be made. The additional criteria are shown below:

- (a) The applicant must not have more than £6,000 capital (savings etc in all accounts); and
 - (i) The applicant must currently be in receipt of the Council's Local Tax Support; or
 - (ii) Immediately before the self-isolation, the applicant was working for at least 16 hours per week.

8. How much discretionary payment will be paid, methods of payment and timings.

- 8.1 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 application.

- 8.2 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.

- 8.3 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.

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

- 8.5 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 details of this can be obtained from the Councils website <https://www.castlepoint.gov.uk/test-and-trace-support-payments> or from Citizens Advice.

9. Notification of Decisions

- 9.1 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.

10. Implications for other benefits and reductions

- 10.1 The Council has been advised by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) that all Test and Trace Support Payments (of any type) will be disregarded for the purposes of all means-tested benefits.
- 10.2 The Council has decided that any payment made under this scheme shall not affect entitlement to Council Tax Reduction.

11. Review of Decisions

- 11.1 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.
- 11.2 All such requests must be made in writing 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.

12. Complaints

- 12.1 The Council's 'Complaints Procedure' (available on the Council's website) will be applied in the event of any complaint received about this scheme.

13. The Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme and its relationship with the Standard Scheme

Standard Scheme

- 13.1 This 'Standard Scheme' has been determined by criteria set down by Government and is primarily aimed at all applicants who are working or self-employed; are unable to work from home and will therefore have a reduction in income and are in receipt of certain qualifying benefits (Universal Credit; Working Tax Credit; Income-based Employment and Support Allowance; income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; Income Support; Housing Benefit; or Pension Credit).
- 13.2 The receipt of one of those benefits is essential in order for a payment to be made.
- 13.3 Details of the Standard Scheme can be found at <https://www.castlepoint.gov.uk/test-and-trace-support-payments>

Discretionary Scheme

- 13.4 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.

Claiming from the schemes

- 13.5 Individuals who are entitled to a payment from the Standard Scheme are unable to make a claim from the Council's Discretionary Scheme.
- 13.6 However, an applicant who is refused a 'Standard Scheme' payment on the basis that they meet all the criteria **except** that they are not in receipt of a qualifying benefit, will be directed to make an application for a discretionary payment. It should be noted that in all cases, where an individual applies for a discretionary payment, they will have to satisfy not only the basic criteria laid down by Government but also the additional criteria set by the Council.

14. Funding of the Discretionary Scheme

- 14.1 The Council will receive a fixed amount of funding from Government which will be for the four months that the Discretionary Scheme is intended to last. Government has confirmed that **no** additional monies will be given to the Council.

- 14.2 In view of this, and to ensure that discretionary payments are available throughout the period to 31st January 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.

15. Taxation and provision of information to HMRC

- 15.1 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.
- 15.2 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.
- 15.3 All applicants should note that the Council is required to inform Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) of all payments made to individuals.

16. Managing the risk of fraud

- 16.1 Neither the Council, nor Government will accept deliberate manipulation of the scheme and 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.
- 16.2 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 Government. Applicants should also note that the Council utilises a number of databases and Government systems to verify information in connection with any application submitted.

17. Recovery of amounts incorrectly paid

- 17.1 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.

18. The Council's duties in relation to self-isolation

- 18.1 The duty to self-isolate is an important one. Ensuring infected individuals and their close contacts isolate is one of our most powerful tools for controlling transmission.
- 18.2 We know that someone with the virus can remain infectious to other people for up to 10 days after developing symptoms. It can take up to 14 days for individuals to develop

coronavirus symptoms after they catch the virus, and in this time, they can unknowingly pass it on to others, even if they don't have symptoms.

18.3 Self-isolating helps prevent family, friends and the community from contracting coronavirus, as well as helping to protect the health and care system.

18.4 The changes announced by Government on 20th September 2020 and brought into force on 28th September 2020 (as well as providing for the Test and Trace Support Payments Schemes):

- introduce a new legal duty on individuals to self-isolate if someone tests positive or is identified as a contact by NHS Test and Trace;
- introduce penalties for those breaking the rules, including fines of at least £1,000 and up to a maximum of £10,000 for repeated or very serious offences; and
- place a new legal obligation on employers that they must not knowingly enable or encourage their employees to break the law on self-isolation.

18.5 As part of this, the Council has a duty If it becomes aware, either through post-payment verification checks or through other means, that someone has not self-isolated, to refer the case to the police.

18.6 The Council has been informed by Government that, in order to ensure compliance with the new legislation NHS Test and Trace call handlers will be increasing contact with those self-isolating. Police resources will be used to check compliance in highest incidence areas and in high-risk groups, based on local intelligence including acting on instances where third parties have identified others who have tested positive, but are not self-isolating.

18.7 The Council will continue to focus on the principle of encouraging, educating and supporting self-compliance.

19. Delegated Powers

19.1 The Council has implemented this Discretionary Scheme in line with Government requirements and guidance.

19.2 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.

20. Data Protection and use of data

20.1 All information and data provided by applicants shall be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Data Protection policy and Privacy Notices which are available on the Council's website.



Test and Trace Discretionary Payments Scheme

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)


Oct 2020

Strategy and Policy EqIA

All strategies and policies must be initially screened for their positive and negative equality impacts.

This initial screening will determine whether or not it is necessary to carry out a full EqIA for the strategy or policy.

This template has been designed to help you initially screen your strategy or policy and, if necessary, undertake a full EqIA .

Title of strategy or policy:	Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme (Discretionary Scheme)
Person undertaking EqIA:	Nick Bale
Head of Service:	Edwina Mosuro 
Department:	Customer and Digital Services
Date EqIA completed:	07/10/2020

Strategy and policy overview

Strategy and policy overview	
What is the strategy or policy intending to achieve?	To fulfil the Local Authorities legal obligation under the Test and Trace Discretionary Payment Scheme with effect from 12 th of October 2020.
What are the summary aims and objectives of the strategy or policy?	<p>Under Public Health England, a scheme to assist with a financial payment of up to a maximum of £500 for applicants who are liable to self-isolate under the “Test and Trace rules” These are within The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self Isolation) (England) Regulations 2020.</p> <p>The Council can determine under the Discretionary Test and Trace Scheme an award up to a maximum of £500 for those applicants who fulfil the application process as set out in the scheme. The scheme qualifying criteria has been set by Central Government, with the ability to modify the Discretionary Scheme as agreed by the Local Authority.</p> <p>The Discretionary scheme will run for the period 28/09/2020 to the 31/01/2021. Central Government funding as been provided to enable the Local Authority to award Test and Trace Discretionary Payments using the policy as agreed by the Local Authority.</p>

Who will benefit from implementing the strategy or policy?	The Discretionary Scheme will support applicants who do not qualify for a Test and Trace Payment under the standard scheme because they do not receive eligible benefits, but who (due to the need to self-isolate) are unable to carry out their normal employment from home and are suffering hardship.
What are the links to other Council strategies and policies?	The Council has put in place a Recovery Programme which covers a range of actions under the themes of: Service Recovery, Local Economy; and Community Resilience. Implementation of the Recovery Programme is monitored by the Council's Corporate Management Team.

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 introduces 2 specific statutory duties on public bodies such as local authorities:

- **Socio-economic duty:**
 - Have due regard when making strategic decisions to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage
- **Single (integrated) equality duty:**
 - Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation or any other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a "protected characteristic" and those who do not

- Foster good relations between people who share a “protected characteristic” and those who do not

The Equality Act 2010 brings together all of the different equality strands and refers to them as “**protected characteristics**”:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Initial screening

This initial screening template will determine whether or not the strategy or policy requires a full EqlA
If any of the answers to the 6 screening questions is “yes”, then a full EqlA will be required.

Initial screening		
Does the strategy or policy aim to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage?	Yes / No	The Policy fundamentally aims to provide financial assistance in meeting Test and Trace self-isolation rules
Does the strategy or policy aim to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation?	Yes / No	The scheme is prescribed for all those that meet the criteria set by Central government.

Does the strategy or policy aim to advance equality of opportunity?	Yes / No	The Policy fundamentally aims to provide financial support as designated under the Test and Trace self-isolation guidelines.
Does the strategy or policy aim to foster good community relations?	Yes / No	No evidence available – not applicable.
Does the strategy or policy have the potential to make a negative contribution to equality?	Yes / No	No evidence available – not applicable.
Does the strategy or policy make a positive contribution to equality?	Yes / No	Applicants qualify under Government Regulations.
Initial screening outcome	Full EqIA is not required	Initial screening outcome: Stage 1 Assessment is sufficient

Full assessment

Information gathering	
What quantitative and qualitative information is there?	
What additional information is required?	
What are the outcomes of any internal and/or external consultation with stakeholders?	
What further consultation is required?	
What examples are there of existing good practice?	.

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Making a judgement	
How will the strategy or policy eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation?	
How will the strategy or policy advance equality of opportunity?	
How will the strategy or policy foster good community relations?	
<p>Does the strategy or policy have the potential to make a negative contribution to equality?</p> <p>If so, which groups with “protected characteristics” will be affected and what are the reasons?</p>	

What can be done to address any contribution to inequality caused by the strategy or policy?	
What can be done to assist understanding of the strategy or policy?	

Action plan					
Equality objective	Action(s)	Lead responsibility	Resources	Timescale(s)	Outcome(s)
Assist understanding of the Policy	Update website and hard copy information once 2020/21 Final Scheme formally adopted.	First Contact Manager	Staff time	Sept 20 – Jan 21	All affected groups fully aware of the Policy and how it will affect them.
Assist understanding of the Policy	Website Information to raise awareness amongst local advice and support groups.	Benefit Manager	Staff time	Sept 20 to Jan 21	All local advice and support groups fully aware of the policy and how it will affect their customers.