

Haringey Council

Policy on providing discretionary support to people who are self-isolating during the Covid-19 pandemic

1. Introduction

1.1 This document sets out Haringey Council's ('the Council's') approach to supporting people who are self-isolating during the Covid-19 pandemic but are not eligible for the Department of Health and Social Care's Test and Trace Support Payment as they are not in receipt of qualifying benefits or are not able to demonstrate their eligibility in the prescribed ways.

1.2 The Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is designed to support people on low incomes with a lump sum payment of £500 and who have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, 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. At this stage, it is indicated that the scheme will last until 31 January 2021.

1.3 Within the guidance, local authorities are also able to make a discretionary payment in exceptional circumstances to an individual who meets the main qualifying criteria for the Test and Trace Support Payment (i.e. they are a low-income worker who is unable to work because they are self-isolating) but is not in receipt of qualifying benefits and could suffer financial hardship as a result of not being able to work. This paper sets out the details of the Council's proposed discretionary policy.

2. To whom this discretionary policy will apply:

2.1 Recognising the profile and specific needs of low-income residents in Haringey, it is proposed that this policy allows for discretionary payments to be offered in the following circumstances:

2.1.1 Individuals who are employed, or self-employed but who are not in receipt of the qualifying benefits in the Test and Trace Support Scheme. These may include but are not limited to:

- Residents with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)¹
- Self-employed residents who have yet to submit a year's self-assessment
- Residents who have a pending claim or current appeal to qualifying benefits

2.1.2 Individuals who are unemployed and are not able to evidence receipt of qualifying benefits but for whom self-isolation poses significant financial hardship and/or who, without such support, would be unable to self-isolate.

¹ As a taxable payment, the self-isolation payment is assumed not to be a 'public fund'

2.2 In order to be eligible under the Council's discretionary scheme, all individuals must have been instructed to self-isolate by the NHS Track and Trace service.

2.3 To apply, residents must be over the age of 18 and need to self-isolate or have a caring responsibility for someone who needs to self-isolate.

3. The Discretionary Scheme:

3.1 The maximum award will be a package of direct support to a value of £400 with additional information, advice, guidance and support to ensure residents are supported holistically and household resilience is developed. The Council will reserve the right to increase the support to a value of up to £500 in extraordinary circumstances where applicants meet the criteria of the Discretionary Scheme. The package of support could consist of the following:

3.1.1 Food Support:

Individuals who qualify for support will be offered a weekly ambient food parcel for their self-isolation period.

Residents will also be supported to access local online and delivery services.

Cost: £80 for two weeks

3.1.2 Utility Support:

Residents will be supported to contact their utility suppliers, many of whom have support systems for customers who need to self-isolate including providing additional emergency credit or pre-paid credit through the post. In exceptional circumstances, direct support with credit will be provided to those on pre-payment meters.

Cost: £20 for two weeks: £10 top up for gas and electricity for those on pre-payment meters whose utility suppliers do not provide them with support.

3.1.3 Housing Support:

Residents in shared accommodation or those who are unable to provide a tenancy agreement will receive up to £200 per fortnight to support with rent.

Residents in non-shared accommodation will receive up to £300 per fortnight to support with rent. Proof of tenancy will be required for this higher rate payment.

This support will be paid into the bank account of the individual making the claim for self-isolation support.

As a cash payment, this will be subject to income tax but will be disregarded when calculating eligibility for other benefits including universal credit.

3.2 Making an Application

3.2.1 Evidence will be submitted electronically in most cases although the Council recognises the language barriers which some residents face and is willing to accept other

forms of evidence as appropriate. As some residents will not have access to scanning equipment while they self-isolate, this includes accepting photographs of documents wherever possible.

3.2.2 Residents who are employed will need to provide information about their employer who may be contacted to confirm the resident is employed, unable to work from home, and consequently experiencing a reduction in income.

3.2.3 Self-employed residents will need to provide evidence of self-employment for example through self-assessment returns or trading income.

3.2.4 Residents who are unemployed but are applying to the scheme on the grounds of hardship will need to confirm that they are not eligible for other forms of support including:

- Unemployment welfare benefit support

- Destitution support from the Local Authority support including under the Children or Care Act

3.3 Making Payments

3.3.1 The Council will pay eligible individuals within three working days of receiving their application. This will be a single payment, to the bank account matching the bank statement they have provided and in the name of the claimant.

3.3.2 The Council will email each recipient to confirm that they have been paid. In the event a resident does not have an email address, a letter will be sent.

3.3.3 Support will be provided to residents with overdrafts to ensure they are able to access the funds.

3.4 Appeals

3.4.1 There will be no process of appeal. However, wherever possible the Council will work with residents to ensure that those who are eligible for support under the self-isolation discretion payment scheme receive this support. Those residents who are not eligible for a self-isolation payment will be supported to access all other support to which they may be entitled.

4. Policy implementation and review

4.1 This Policy will be applied from 28th September 2020 until 31st January 2021.

4.2 In applying the Policy, the Council will have regard to “The Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme: Implementation Guide for Local Authorities in England” issued on 30th September 2020 and any future amendments to the guidance.