

TEST & TRACE SELF ISOLATION PAYMENTS

Briefing – 21 January 2020

Ask

- I. To extend the discretionary scheme to 31 March 2021 to mirror the government's extension to the main scheme.
- II. To update the financial implications of the Executive Decision made on the 10/11/20

Background

- I. Government has provided funding for a Test and Trace Support Payment scheme for working people on low incomes who experience financial hardship as a result of self-isolation. They are unable to work from home and their employers reduce their pay.
- II. Local authorities have been asked to put in place arrangements to process applications and make these payments.
- III. Since 28 September 2020, individuals have been entitled to a Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 if they are eligible. 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.

Test & Trace Schemes

NATIONAL SCHEME

Eligibility Criteria:

- 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.
- Are employed or self-employed.
- Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result.
- 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.

DISCRETIONARY SCHEME

Eligibility Criteria:

- 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.

- Are employed or self-employed.
- Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result.
- Are not 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.
- On low income and will face financial hardship as a result of not being able to work while they are self-isolating
- Any local eligibility criteria

The following local eligibility criteria was agreed and was applied on initial implementation of the scheme;

- Applicants with less than £6k capital will be considered.
- University or higher education students may be considered under exceptional circumstances for instance underlying entitlement to a means tested benefit as they are responsible for children or have disabilities but not receiving benefits; students who rely on wages to pay accommodation costs or a mortgage.

Discretionary scheme amendments 10th November 2020

In the acknowledgement that, by the first week of November, central government funding had been exhausted and that in order to protect public health and to support low income households to self-isolate, a Cabinet Executive Decision was made 10 November in which it was agreed to reallocate further funds from other COVID 19 support grants to continue to operate the discretionary payment scheme to 31 January 2021. Since implementing changes to the scheme from 10 November 2020, the average percentage of discretionary applications that have been approved for payment has reduced from 88% to 12% which equates to an average of 4.1 payments per week.

The scheme changes are detailed below:-

- Applicants must be liable to pay rent or mortgage for the property they are living in; and low income is defined as receiving on average a gross wage of £372 per week or less. This is based on 40 hours per week on a Real Living Wage of £9.30 per hour
- Applicants who do not satisfy the earnings or rent/mortgage condition can still receive a payment where the applicant demonstrates they have insufficient resources available to them for the 10 day self-isolation period to meet their basic financial needs.

It has also been agreed that if the Government Guidance changes and/or the implementation of the scheme progresses and operational issues arise, rapid changes may be needed to the discretionary scheme. For these reasons, the following has also been agreed;

- Any review and changes to the discretionary framework to be delegated to Strategic Director of Customer and Corporate Services, in consultation with the Director of Public Health and Councillor Chris Penberthy as Portfolio Holder.
- That Plymouth City Council would divert funds from other COVID19 grants once the initial government allocation £77,368.83 was exhausted to enable the scheme to continue to 31 January 2021.

Funding

Since the executive decision that was taken in November we have received additional funding for both schemes as set out in the table below. The current guidance sets out that,

- I. The main scheme will be fully funded and extended until the 31st March 2021.
- II. No further funding for the discretionary scheme will be provided.

Test & Trace Support Payments	Plymouth CC - Initial Allocation	Plymouth CC - Additional Allocation	Total Funding	Valid Applications	No of Payments Issued	Value of Payments Issued	Balance of Fund
Main Payment scheme	£ 128,500.00	£ 42,500.00	£ 171,000.00	564	297	£ 148,500.00	£ 22,500.00
Discretionary Payment scheme	£ 77,368.83	£ 43,131.17	£ 120,500.00	764	247	£ 123,500.00	- £ 3,000.00
Totals	£ 205,868.83	£ 85,631.17	£ 291,500.00	1328	544	£ 272,000.00	

** applications payments issued, values and balances accurate as of 22/01/21**

Benchmarking

As part of our ongoing national engagement a number of local authorities responded to a request for information about Test and Trace eligibility success rates show an average of 34% of applications result in payment – see table Appendix A. Plymouth is ranked 34th out of 112. It certainly would indicate that our assessments are fair and in line with the average acceptance rate.

Options

1. End the discretionary scheme on 31 January 2021. This is in line with the CEMT decision of 10 November 2020 but before the government announced the extension of the main scheme to 31 March 2021.
2. Extend the discretionary scheme in line with the government's extension to the main scheme diverting funding from other COVID19 grants to support costs to 31 March 2021. This would be in the region of an additional £17,000 based on the current average of 4 applications approved for payment per week in the 9 weeks since 16 November 2020 following the implementation of scheme changes.

Recommendation

1. To extend the discretionary scheme until the 31/03/21
2. Revise the current financial implications in the Executive Decision circa 17K based on the current rate of 4 applications per week for the discretionary scheme and to take in account of the new funding provided by government.

APPENDIX A

This table shows the Test and Trace Eligibility Success Rate reported by individual councils. The average success rate is 34%. Plymouth is LA 34 in the table, highlighted in yellow.

Local Authority	Applications received	Applications approved	% approved
1	564	41	7%
2	988	89	9%
3	1804	207	11%
4	460	64	14%
5	217	30	14%
6	270	40	15%
7	631	95	15%
8	572	86	15%
9	1354	217	16%
10	NA	NA	16%
11	NA	NA	17%
12	243	46	19%
13	331	63	19%
14	1176	241	20%
15	NA	NA	20%

16	317	68	21%
17	394	91	23%
18	625	144	23%
19	146	34	23%
20	20018	4542	23%
21	476	114	24%
22	2292	573	25%
23	1400	350	25%
24	1803	453	25%
25	2031	525	26%
26	585	155	26%
27	NA	NA	27%
28	951	257	27%
29	1518	415	27%
30	NA	NA	27%
31	NA	NA	27%
32	NA	NA	27%
33	NA	NA	27%
34	1647	465	28%
35	4504	1245	28%
36	660	187	28%
37	1951	546	28%
38	1189	346	29%
39	172	50	29%
40	464	134	29%
41	3546	1027	29%
42	282	85	30%
43	930	279	30%
44	945	281	30%

45	930	275	30%
46	NA	NA	30%
47	468	142	30%
48	1072	327	31%
49	570	177	31%
50	504	154	31%
51	NA	NA	32%
52	1862	587	32%
53	621	198	32%
54	NA	NA	32%
55	416	133	32%
56	319	103	32%
57	493	158	32%
58	328	108	33%
59	1155	381	33%
60	NA	NA	33%
61	NA	NA	33%
62	675	225	33%
63	278	95	34%
64	377	127	34%
65	316	106	34%
66	407	139	34%
67	NA	NA	34%
68	1259	439	35%
69	334	117	35%
70	544	190	35%
71	544	190	35%
72	892	312	35%
73	425	148	35%

74	1127	408	36%
75	493	182	37%
76	1902	701	37%
77	205	78	38%
78	NA	NA	38%
79	258	98	38%
80	881	342	39%
81	1202	481	40%
82	112	45	40%
83	448	179	40%
84	NA	NA	42%
85	681	285	42%
86	917	385	42%
87	1301	540	42%
88	1958	824	42%
89	NA	NA	43%
90	3226	1379	43%
91	311	134	43%
92	NA	NA	44%
93	2688	1191	44%
94	372	169	45%
95	119	54	45%
96	133	61	46%
97	4398	2060	47%
98	287	139	48%
99	112	56	50%
100	612	306	50%
101	127	65	51%
102	1131	579	51%

103	807	411	51%
104	216	112	52%
105	296	160	54%
106	307	169	55%
107	NA	NA	55%
108	418	234	56%
109	232	135	58%
110	312	182	58%
111	NA	NA	61%
112	301	183	61%

AVERAGE 34%