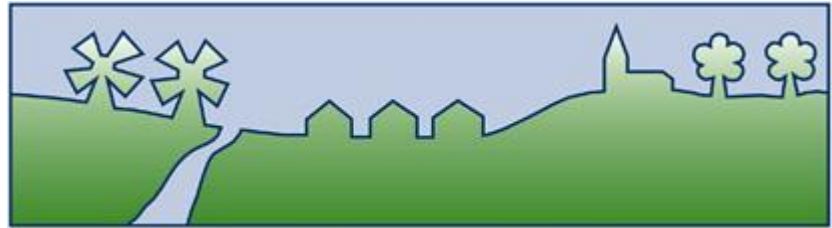




Department  
of Health &  
Social Care



**MID SUSSEX**  
**DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **Test and Trace Support Payments: Discretionary Scheme Guidelines for Mid Sussex DC**

### **1. Purpose of this document**

This guidance sets out the guidelines for Mid Sussex District Council on helping people in their area to claim the discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment.

The criteria set out in this document have been designed and approved by central Government, while the responsibility for administering the scheme has been given to Local Authorities, who receive directives from central Government setting out the terms for the implementation of the scheme. As a result, Mid Sussex District Council is obligated to apply the criteria as laid out in this document and does not have the authority to make a Test and Trace Support Payment in cases that fall outside of the eligibility criteria. The only area of the scheme in which Mid Sussex District Council has been able to exercise discretion is in the definition of 'financial hardship', which has been determined and approved by elected council members.

## 2. Test and Trace Payments: an overview

From 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020, individuals may be entitled to a Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 if they meet all of the following 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.
- Been given an account number by CTAS (Contact Tracing and Advice Service) when informed to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace to quote on your application.
- Have responded to messages received from NHS Test and Trace (which will have been received via a combination of email, text, letter or phone call) in which they provided their contact details and where they have tested positive, the details of their contacts.
- Are employed or self-employed
- Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result
- Will face financial hardship as a direct result of self-isolating.

### Changes to the Self-Isolation rules from 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021

From 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021, the rules about who has to self-isolate have changed. From this date, close contacts of a positive COVID19 case who are either under the age of 18 or have been 'fully vaccinated' are no longer under a legal obligation to self-isolate. They will instead be advised to take precautions such as taking regular lateral flow tests, mask wearing, and avoiding vulnerable relatives, but they will no longer be prohibited from leaving the house or attending their place of work.

'Fully vaccinated' is defined as having received the full dose of a COVID19 vaccine more than 14 days prior to the date of becoming a close contact. In most cases this will mean having received two doses of vaccine. However, for some vaccines only one dose is required for full immunisation. There is a 14 day waiting period between receiving the final dose and being considered 'fully vaccinated', meaning that close contacts who are identified within 14 days of having had their final dose will not be exempt under the new rules and will still be required to self-isolate.

These changes do not affect positive cases of COVID19, who are still required to self-isolate as normal.

Citizens who meet the new criteria of being either fully vaccinated or under the age of 18 are therefore no longer eligible for the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme if they become a close contact of a positive case after 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021. The only exception is a parent/guardian whose dependent child tests positive for COVID19 and is required to self-isolate but as the parent/guardian is fully vaccinated they are no longer under an obligation to themselves self-isolate, but they do have to take time off work to care for the child who is self-isolating. In this situation, the parent/guardian would be able to apply for the parent/guardian scheme detailed below despite being prevented from applying for this scheme prior to 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021.

Please be advised that this means that Mid Sussex District Council can only consider applications from individuals who have received an instruction from NHS Test and Trace that they **must** self-isolate. We are unable to take into consideration circumstances where an individual has chosen to self-isolate, or has been advised to do by a third party such as an employer. Mid Sussex District Council will have the ability to check with NHS Test and Trace whether the applicant is a positive case of COVID19 or is an identified contact of a positive COVID19 case, in addition to checking whether an applicant is 'fully vaccinated'. Checks will therefore be carried out at the start of each application to ensure that the applicant is under a legal obligation to self-isolate.

The date of 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021 applies to the first date of self-isolation. Therefore, someone who is advised to self-isolate starting from 15<sup>th</sup> August would apply according to pre-16<sup>th</sup> August rules, and someone who is advised to self-isolate starting from 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021 would apply according to post-16<sup>th</sup> August rules.

However, fully vaccinated applicants should be aware that if they become a close contact of a positive case of COVID19 shortly prior to 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021, their self-isolation period will end on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021 regardless of start date, meaning that the amount of work lost due to only being required to serve a reduced self-isolation period will be factored into the decision about whether financial hardship is likely to be suffered as a result.

Mid Sussex District Council is still able to accept late applications up to 42 days from the first date of self-isolation, meaning that up until and including 26<sup>th</sup> September 2021, applications can still be accepted under the pre-16<sup>th</sup> August rules if the first date of self-isolation was less than 42 days prior to this date.

### **Parent/Guardian extension to the scheme from 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

From 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021, the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme has been extended to parents and guardians who are not legally required to self-isolate, but who need to take time off work to look after a child or young person who is self-isolating. Applicants will still need to satisfy the other eligibility criteria listed above to qualify (with the exception of the instruction to self-isolate, the provision of a CTAS number (Contact Tracing and Advice

Service) and the requirement to complete contract tracing, as these requirements will not be applicable where the parent or guardian is not under a legal obligation to self-isolate). Please see below for further information on this extension to the scheme.

This scheme extension does not apply to those parents/guardians whose child has themselves tested positive for COVID19 prior to 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021. In these cases the parent/guardian should apply for the original scheme as they themselves have a legal obligation to self-isolate as a close contact of their child.

## Test and Trace Discretionary Support Payments

Individuals that meet all the criteria for the Test and Trace Support Payment with the exception of one of the qualifying benefits (e.g. who are not currently receiving Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit) will be considered for a £500 discretionary payment if they are determined to be in 'financial hardship'.

## Financial Hardship

Financial hardship is determined by factors such as the individual:-

- is experiencing *significant* debt issues - for the purposes of core living expenses - as a direct result of requirement to self-isolate; and
- is unable to afford the essentials for living during the period of isolation; and
- has no access to savings or other financial help to assist during this period.

Core living expenses are considered to be priority expenses which would put the individual in a vulnerable position if left unpaid. Examples of these include rent, mortgage, council tax and court fines. Failure to keep up with these payments can put an individual at risk of court action or at risk of losing their home, which is why they are considered priority debts. Please note that 'rent' in these circumstances is defined as holding a liability for rent on a property you either occupy or require for your business. This will be characterised by the presence of an official commercial contract, tenancy or licence agreement which exists between two separate individuals or entities, which includes penalties, court action and risk of forfeiture following non-payment. By definition, this excludes casual or familial arrangements common between family members, friends or couples who live together, as these arrangements are not legally enforceable and therefore cannot be considered priority debts.

Priority debts are those that carry the most serious consequences if you do not pay them. They are not necessarily the largest debts, or debts with the most expensive interest rates, but non-payment can lead to serious problems.

Examples of non-priority debts include credit cards, payday loans, phone contracts, store cards, memberships to clubs or societies (for example gym membership).

In view of the limited pot and the recent surge of applications we will also apply the following criteria to any discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment:-

- The income lost must exceed £100 in total

However, while the absolute minimum level is set at £100, this does not mean that losing income in excess of £100 will lead to automatic qualification for this support payment, as the total level of income lost will be taken into account alongside other factors to determine likelihood of Financial Hardship.

In determining whether the criteria for Financial Hardship has been met, it will not be sufficient only to prove that income has been lost, but that the effect of income being lost will lead to significant financial difficulties. Where an applicant is unable to evidence either that they have liabilities for core living expenses, or that they struggled to meet these expenses due to their requirement to self-isolate, their application will be turned down.

Please note that any loss of income or risk of financial hardship will be considered directly in relation to the period in which the individual has been instructed to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace. Any loss of income or financial hardships resulting due to external or pre-existing factors, or due to the wider effects of COVID19 (for example a reduction in business during the past year), will not be taken into account. The aim of the scheme is to provide financial support, where required, to those who may otherwise choose not to self-isolate due to the financial repercussions of not being able to attend work.

If financial hardship has been determined, as a part of the process officers will also need to check to see if the applicant is entitled to any qualifying benefits if they apply for a discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment. The individual applying will also agree to be referred by the Council to undertake free independent debt advice.

## **Scheme Outline**

This discretionary payment is designed to support people on low incomes who are not in receipt of the relevant benefits under the National Scheme, who 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 COVID19 and avoid further economic and societal restrictions.

These discretionary payments have been available from 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020, and Mid Sussex District Council put arrangements in place to administer them from the 12<sup>th</sup> October 2020. Someone told to self-isolate on or after 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020 (but before the scheme is operational in their local authority) will need to be able to make a backdated claim for payment.

When the scheme was first introduced the original closing date was 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021. The Government have since extended the scheme four times, and therefore previous closing dates have included 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021, and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021. The current closing date is 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. No further applications will therefore be accepted after 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

To mirror the National scheme, each award will be for a flat rate of £500 per successful claim. Payments will be made until funding from the Government to Mid Sussex District Council has been fully utilised or the Government has closed the scheme. The current closing date is 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

### **3. Eligibility for payments**

#### **16<sup>th</sup> August Self-Isolation Rule Changes**

From 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021, the rules about who has to self-isolate, and therefore who can claim a Test and Trace Support Payment, have changed. Please refer to section 2 above.

#### **Backdating**

Eligibility for the Test and Trace Support Payment, will be for people who are told to self-isolate on or after 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and who meet the relevant eligibility criteria, as detailed above.

Mid Sussex District Council will not accept applications from people told to self-isolate before 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020, even if the period of self-isolation continues after 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

#### **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.

#### **Multiple claims**

Individuals 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.

For example, if someone claims for a period of self-isolation lasting from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020 to 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020 and then claims again for a second period of self-isolation beginning on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2020, they would only be allowed to claim once, because the two periods overlap. However, they would be allowed to claim for a second period of self-isolation that began after the first period had ended on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

Mid Sussex District Council will keep a record of individuals who make multiple claims to guard against potential fraud.

### **Applications made after someone's period of self-isolation has ended**

Up until 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021, eligible individuals were able to make a claim up to 28 days from the start of their period of self-isolation or whilst they are in their self-isolation period, as advised by NHS Test and Trace. Mid Sussex District Council was not allowed to accept applications after the 28 days had expired.

From 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021, the Government extended the time limit for making an application from 28 days to 42 days, starting from the first date of the self-isolation period. This means that if an individual was told to self-isolate from 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021, they would have to submit their application by 19<sup>th</sup> April 2021.

Therefore, starting from 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021, Mid Sussex District Council will not accept applications submitted more than 42 days after the start of an individual's self-isolation period.

The same applies to applications made by parents or guardians of a child who is self-isolating and is unable to attend their education or childcare setting.

### **Students**

The government have made additional hardship funding available to students attending university who are affected by COVID19. Therefore, students are advised to contact their university for support in the first instance, and only if the university advises that they are either unable to provide support or the student is ineligible, may the student consider making an application for a Test and Trace Support Payment. Upon receipt of an application, the student will be asked to provide evidence that they have been refused financial support by their university.

Students can find out more information about this hardship funding at the link below:

[www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-50-million-to-support-students-impacted-by-covid-19](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-50-million-to-support-students-impacted-by-covid-19)

### **Third-party applications**

Applicants can apply on behalf of someone else. However, the £500 must 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).

## **Applicants with other support needs**

Where appropriate, Mid Sussex District Council will reference applicants to any other local support that is available for people who have been instructed to self-isolate, such as food packages, welfare benefits and other financial assistance such as Discretionary Housing Payments.

## **Applicants who are self-isolating who haven't been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace**

Mid Sussex District Council is not allowed to approve applications for anyone who does not have a valid notification from NHS Test and Trace instructing them to self-isolate. The legal duty to self-isolate that comes into force on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020 applies only to people who have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace and have received a CTAS (Contact Tracing and Advice Service) number and have completed the 'contact tracing journey'. This means it is important that people who have tested positive share accurate information about their recent contacts with NHS Test and Trace.

This does not apply where the application is being made by a parent or guardian as a result of a need to take time off work in order to care for a child who is required to self-isolate due to being a contact of a positive COVID19 case. Separate information will be required in this circumstance, which is detailed further below.

## **The NHS COVID19 App**

Up until 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020, to be eligible for the scheme a person must have been contacted by a human tester working for NHS Test and Trace, either because they had tested positive or they had been in close contact with someone who had, and that contact had provided their details directly to NHS Test and Trace. This meant that anyone advised to self-isolate by the NHS COVID19 App would not meet the requirements for the Test and Trace Support Payment.

From 10 December 2020, the NHS Test and Trace Support Payment was extended to include NHS COVID19 App users who live in England and have been notified only via the app that they have been in close contact with a positive case of coronavirus. An App user will need to follow some steps to request an 8-digit NHS Test and Trace Account ID, and because app users are anonymous, they will need to leave the App to do this. They will need to register with NHS Test and Trace by following a link in the App.

The user must do this while they are in their self-isolation period. They will be unable to request an Account ID after they've finished self-isolating.

To start the process on the App, the user will need to select '**Financial support**'. This button appears on the home screen when an individual has been told to self-isolate via the App because they have been in close contact with someone who has COVID19. They will be taken to a website which will ask for some information to check whether they could be



eligible. None of the information provided will be passed back to the NHS COVID19 app. The App is designed to protect the user's privacy and does not know who or where the user is located.

If answers show that a user may be eligible for the NHS Test and Trace Support Payment, there are four steps to apply for the Test and Trace Support Payment:

**Step 1 - Confirm who you are with NHS login.**

**Step 2 - Enter personal details.**

**Step 3 - Register with NHS Test and Trace.**

**Step 4 - Apply to your local authority.**

Please note that the 'Financial support' button will no longer be available to those notified to self-isolate from 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021 who are either under the age of 18 or who are 'fully vaccinated'.

### **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.

### **Funding Pot**

As the funding pot for discretionary payments is very cash limited, when the funding has been exhausted no further discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment applications will be considered. Mid Sussex District Council will advise accordingly if this is the case, including publicising a warning on its website and preventing applications being made once the funding has been exhausted.

## **4. Parents and Guardians providing care for self-isolating children**

### **Overview**

From 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021, parents or guardians who are not legally required to self-isolate can apply for a discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment if they need to take time off work to care for a child or a young person who is required to self-isolate and cannot attend their normal educational or childcare setting. This does not include circumstances where a parent or guardian has had to take time of work due to a partial or complete closure of the educational or childcare setting.

However, from 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021 children aged under 18 are no longer required to self-isolate if they are identified as being a close contact of a positive case, and therefore although this extension to the scheme was introduced on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021, from 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021 this scheme will only apply to a limited minority of cases.

Mid Sussex District Council is still able to accept late applications up to 42 days from the first date of self-isolation, meaning that up until and including 26<sup>th</sup> September 2021, applications can still be accepted under the pre-16<sup>th</sup> August rules if the first date of self-isolation was less than 42 days prior to this date.

Applicants must meet all the criteria below:

- They are the parent or guardian of a child or young person in the same household and need to take time off work to care for them while they self-isolate. This is limited to one parent or guardian per household for the child or for the young person's self-isolation period (it is not possible for two people to claim for the same self-isolation period of one child).
- They are employed or self-employed.
- They cannot work from home and will lose income as a result. This only applies where it is not possible for the work to take place at home, which means that applicants who have the capability to work from home but may need to take time off to provide care will not be eligible. Similarly, if one adult takes time off work where there is another adult in the household capable of providing care, they will not be considered eligible.
- They meet all the other means-tested eligibility criteria for a discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment as outlined above.
- Their child or young person is:
  - aged 15 or under (or 25 or under with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC)) and normally attends an education or childcare setting; and
  - has been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace or by their education or childcare setting because they have been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID19.

### **Parents/guardians of a child who has tested positive for COVID19**

Prior to 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021, parents/guardians of a child who has tested positive for COVID19 would be advised to apply for the original scheme (and not the parents/guardians extension) because they would be under their own obligation to self-isolate which means separate verification steps must be taken to confirm their eligibility for the Test and Trace Support Payment which do not apply to a parent/guardian of a child who has been identified as being a close contact only.

However, from 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021, close contacts of a positive case of COVID19 are no longer required to self-isolate if they have been 'fully vaccinated' against COVID19. This may lead to situations where a child has tested positive and must self-isolate but their parent/guardian who they reside with does not have the same legal obligation. In this instance, the parent/guardian will no longer meet the criteria for the original scheme as they are not required to self-isolate. However, they may qualify for the parents/guardians scheme extension in the event that they are required to take time off work in order to care for the self-isolating child, and they meet the other criteria outlined above.

The date of 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021 applies to the first date of self-isolation. Therefore, someone whose child is advised to self-isolate starting from 15<sup>th</sup> August would apply according to

pre-16<sup>th</sup> August rules, and someone whose child is advised to self-isolate starting from 16<sup>th</sup> August would apply according to post-16<sup>th</sup> August rules.

## **Backdating**

The child or young person must have been told to self-isolate on or after 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021. Applications can be backdated to this point and the parent or guardian will be eligible for the payment if they meet all the other eligibility criteria. If the child or young person's first day of self-isolation was before 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021, the parent or guardian will not be eligible.

## **Applications from members of the same household**

Parents and guardians who are not legally required to self-isolate can make one application per household for the child or young person's self-isolation period.

People in the same household who are applying because they themselves are legally required to self-isolate can make an individual application based on their own circumstances. Each person will need to meet the eligibility criteria, as set out above.

## **Applications that overlap with another period of self-isolation**

It is possible for a parent or guardian to claim more than once, provided their child or young person's self-isolation periods do not overlap. This applies irrespective of whether the parent or guardian is claiming twice for the same child, or for two different children.

This means that it is not possible to claim a support payment in respect of each child in the household where two or more children are all required to self-isolate at the same time, or during periods where the self-isolation periods overlap. The parent or guardian would therefore only be able to claim more than one support payment where they are claiming for two entirely separate non-overlapping periods, irrespective of which children they relate to.

## **Time limit for backdated applications**

A parent or guardian of a qualifying child or young person can make an application up to 42 days from the first date of the child or young person's self-isolation period.

This means that if a child or young person was told to self-isolate from 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021, they would have to submit their application by 19<sup>th</sup> April 2021.

Mid Sussex District Council will not accept any applications submitted once the 42 day time limit, or the closing date of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, has elapsed.

## **5. Application process**

Mid Sussex District Council has put arrangements in place to process and verify applications, issue payments to successful applicants and prevent and detect fraud.

Mid Sussex District Council has its own online application system. The online form for Mid Sussex District Council can be found at <https://midsussex.grantapproval.co.uk>. **Please note that there are separate claim forms for individuals applying in respect of their own period of self-isolation and for parents or guardians applying in respect of a child or young person's period of self-isolation. This will be clearly indicated online.**

To apply, applicants will complete an online form (a telephone application is available upon special request where the applicant has no access to the internet) and provide Mid Sussex District Council with:

- A notification from NHS Test and Trace asking them to self-isolate and quoting their 8-digit CTAS Account ID; and
- Two months full bank statements for the account into which payment should be made; and
- Proof of employment or, if they are self-employed, evidence of self-assessment returns, trading income and proof that their business delivers services which cannot be undertaken without social contact; and
- Evidence that earned income will reduce; and
- Confirmation that they believe to the best of their knowledge that they meet the criteria and any such relevant evidence as may support this.

Once this evidence has been verified, if the applicant meets all the criteria and the applicant qualifies, Mid Sussex District Council will pay the applicant £500. This payment should be made within three working days of verifying an eligible application.

### **Applying as a parent or guardian who has not been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace**

The extension of the eligibility criteria from 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 allows for applications from parents and guardians who are not themselves required to self-isolate but who need to take time off work to care for a child or young person who has been identified as a close contact of someone with COVID19. This does not include circumstances where a parent or guardian has had to take time of work due to a partial or complete closure of the education or childcare setting.

Please note that parents or guardians who themselves are under a legal obligation to self-isolate can still apply for the Test and Trace Support Payment in their own right under the normal criteria and do not need to also provide the evidence set out below.

To apply for a Test and Trace Support Payment under the discretionary scheme as a parent or a guardian of a child who is self-isolating, the parent or guardian must provide all the evidence as set out above, with the exception of the notification to self-isolate and

accompanying CTAS 8-digit Account ID. This means that all applicants must show that they have met all the set criteria above before Mid Sussex District Council will consider the facts of the child or young person's requirement to self-isolate.

In addition to showing they meet the criteria for the standard payment, applicants will be required to self-declare:

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

Applicants will also need to provide one of the following three pieces of evidence:

- The child's 8-digit NHS Test and Trace Account ID number. This is for parents and guardians of children or young people who have received a notification directly from NHS Test and Trace telling them to self-isolate.

OR

- A communication from the child or young person's education or childcare setting confirming that they have to self-isolate. This is for parents and guardians of children or young people who have been told to self-isolate by their education or childcare setting because they have been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive. Please note that this does not include cases where the educational or childcare setting has been closed either in part or in its entirety.

OR

- A screenshot of a young person's NHS COVID19 App notification telling them to self-isolate AND evidence that the young person has an Education, Health and Care Plan. This is for parents or guardians of young people aged 16-25 who have additional support needs and who have been notified to self-isolate by the NHS COVID19 App.

Mid Sussex District Council will not be able to accept applications without at least one of the three pieces of supporting evidence listed above.

As a part of the process Mid Sussex District Council will perform a verification check with the Department for Work and Pensions, where possible, using the details provided for the child or young person.

Please note that Mid Sussex District Council will be required to verify the information provided by the applicant relating to their child directly with their educational or childcare setting. This is why contact details of the relevant educational or childcare setting must be provided.

This check will verify:

- The child's name, age and main address.
- The child's first day of self-isolation.
- That the child didn't continue to attend the education or care setting when they should have been self-isolating.
- Whether the communication from the education or care setting is genuine.

Please note that this check may be carried out after the application has been approved on the basis of the declaration and supporting evidence provided. This means that should it later be discovered that an application has been incorrectly or fraudulently made, Mid Sussex District Council will seek to recover any monies incorrectly awarded and the applicant will be liable for repaying the sum in full.

## **Accessibility requirements**

Mid Sussex District Council will ensure accessibility of forms for citizens across languages and disabilities.

## **How will people provide evidence?**

As applicants will be self-isolating at home, Mid Sussex District Council has provided an online claim form that allows applicants to upload their evidence electronically wherever possible. It is the responsibility of Mid Sussex District Council to ensure data security and that evidence provided will be retained in line with our local policies.

As some applicants will not have access to scanning equipment while they self-isolate, Mid Sussex District Council will accept photographs of documents wherever possible.

## **6. Pre-payment checks**

Mid Sussex District Council will carry out three main pre-payment checks. These are to verify that each applicant:

- Has been instructed to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace and has engaged with the service to complete the full contact tracing journey OR is the parent or

guardian of a child or young person required to self-isolate and no other claim has been made in respect of the same or other children during their self-isolation period; and

- Is employed or self-employed and will lose income because they cannot work from home; and
- Will face financial hardship as a direct result of having to self-isolate (see above for the full criteria)

### **Checking that an applicant has been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace**

With the exception of parents or guardians applying due to the self-isolation of a qualifying child, only people who have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace can claim the Test and Trace Support Payment. To check this, Mid Sussex District Council will use data provided from the CTAS (Contact Tracing and Advice Service) system (see below).

Applicants may have a notification from the NHS Isolation Note service rather than NHS Test and Trace. If this is the case, Mid Sussex District Council will give the opportunity for the applicant to provide a valid NHS Test and Trace notification if they have one. If the applicant only has an NHS Isolation Note but cannot provide a notification from NHS Test and Trace containing their Account ID, they will not be eligible for this payment.

In order to be eligible for the Test and Trace Support Payment, from the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2020 the Government introduced an additional requirement stating that all applicants must have engaged with the NHS Test and Trace Service before any payment can be made. Mid Sussex District Council will be able to verify with Test and Trace that this criterion has been met via the web-based PowerBI based Eligibility Checker. This means that the applicant must ensure that they have completed all steps of the NHS Test and Trace contact tracing 'journey' before they can be considered eligible. Mid Sussex District Council has no involvement with contact tracing, therefore applicants must ensure they have fully engaged with all stages of contact tracing and have resolved any issues with Test and Trace directly, before making their application for a Test and Trace Support Payment.

From 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021, the rules about self-isolation have changed, meaning that fewer people will be instructed to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace (please refer to section 2 above for details). Mid Sussex District Council will use the web-based PowerBI based Eligibility Checker to check that applicants are required to self-isolate, either because they have tested positive for COVID19, or because they are not in one of the exempt groups on account of age or vaccination status.

## **Checking that an applicant is employed or self-employed and will lose income because they cannot work from home**

The application process will ask applicants about the nature of their work, whether they are employed or self-employed, and whether they can do this work from home. These questions will be asked before applicants are asked to confirm whether they will lose income while self-isolating.

For applicants who are self-employed, Mid Sussex District Council will confirm they are satisfied with the evidence of self-assessment returns and trading income provided by the applicant, before considering loss of income. If more income is required, it will be requested from the applicant.

In checking that an applicant is employed or self-employed, it will not be sufficient only for the applicant to prove that they are either registered with an employer or with HMRC. They must be able to show that they are not only employed but are *gainfully* employed, meaning they are actively working and taking an income on a regular and consistent basis which, due to self-isolation, they will now lose. If, for example, an applicant is registered as self-employed with HMRC, but has not been earning a wage from their self-employed work in recent months, they will not meet this criterion.

## **Checking that an applicant will lose income because they cannot work from home**

The application form will ask applicants to confirm both that they cannot work from home while they are self-isolating and that they will have a reduction in earned income because they are self-isolating.

As long as someone meets the other eligibility criteria and is losing income because they have been told to self-isolate and cannot work from home, they are eligible. So, for example:

- Someone with a single job whose employer continued to pay them a full wage while they self-isolated would not be eligible.
- Someone whose employer paid them a reduced wage while they self-isolated would be eligible (they have lost income).
- Someone 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.

## **Requesting further evidence**

If Mid Sussex District Council has not received all the required evidence in order to carry out the relevant pre-payment checks, they will offer the applicant the opportunity to provide further information, but only where there is a possibility that the applicant may be able to



show that the criteria have been met. Mid Sussex District Council will not be required to do this where it is clear from the initial application that one or more of the criteria has not been met.

Mid Sussex District Council may therefore be required to request as much additional information as is sufficient to show that all criteria have been met. Failure or refusal to provide the evidence requested will lead to the application being turned down without further consideration.

## **7. Obtaining a CTAS number (NHS Test and Trace Account ID)**

The NHS Test and Trace service uses a web-based tool called CTAS to record information about people who have tested positive for COVID19 and their contacts. The CTAS Account ID is a 8-character identifier unique to each record on the web tool (e.g. 4a2c204a).

Most individuals who test positive for COVID19 or are a contact of someone who has had a positive test will receive a digital invitation from the CTAS web tool to undertake the contact tracing journey.

All cases and contacts who complete 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.

In some cases, individuals will have received an 8-digit code from NHS Test and Trace in a message asking them to complete the contact tracing journey. This code is not the same as an Account ID or CTAS Number. An Account ID will only be obtained in conjunction with an instruction from NHS Test and Trace to self-isolate, once all contact tracing has been completed.

Mid Sussex District Council will use the web-based PowerBI based Eligibility Checker to check whether an applicant for a £500 Test and Trace Support Payment has a CTAS number. If Mid Sussex District Council is unable to locate an applicant on the Eligibility Checker (with the exception of parents and guardians applying on behalf of a child or young person – see criteria above), it will not be possible to issue a Test and Trace Support Payment to the individual.

Please note that while Mid Sussex District Council has the ability to search for an applicant's CTAS number (for example in the case that the applicant has lost their number), the council cannot generate Account IDs for customers who do not already have one. All CTAS Account IDs are created by the NHS Test and Trace system during the contact tracing process. We therefore recommend that you ensure you have completed all

instruction from NHS Test and Trace before approaching the council to make an application.

## **8. Making payments**

Mid Sussex District Council will pay eligible individuals within three working days of verifying that the received application meets all the set criteria. Payments will be made up front, as a single payment, to the bank account matching the bank statement they have provided, via BACS.

### **Applicants who are overdrawn**

Applicants may be able to exercise their first right of appropriation on the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment, so that their bank does not use it to pay their overdraft if they are overdrawn. More information about this can be found by visiting the web address below.

[Money Advice Hub - Right of Set-off & First Right of Appropriation](#)

### **Appeals**

Mid Sussex District Council will not provide a right of appeal against any decision not to award a discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment. This is the same as applications made under the National scheme. People who are turned down will not be eligible because they do not meet the criteria.

However, where possible, the Government have requested that local authorities should work with applicants to make sure they have 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. This person should not be rejected but given the opportunity to provide further evidence if they have it.

## **9. Records to be kept by local authorities**

As a minimum, in accordance with the requirements laid out by the Government, Mid Sussex District Council will need to keep a record for the purposes of monitoring:

- The number of applications for payments under the scheme
- The number of approved applications for payments under the scheme
- The number of approved payment applications for which post-payment checks indicate the applicant was not eligible.
- The number of declined applications for payments under the scheme

## 10. Taxation

These payments will be subject to income tax. Payments under the standard eligibility criteria will not be subject to National Insurance contributions.

## 11. Eligibility for other benefits

These discretionary payments will be disregarded when calculating eligibility for other benefits. This includes calculating entitlement to Universal Credit and Council Tax Support.

## 12. Evidence of failure to self-isolate

Applicants should note that if Mid Sussex District Council becomes aware, either through post-payment verification checks or through other means, that someone has not self-isolated, they will refer the case to the police.

## 13. Fraud

Mid Sussex District Council will be responsible for fraud-prevention measures and has a duty to protect the public purse.

Mid Sussex District Council will have the right to recover costs from people who claim the discretionary £500 payment fraudulently. Any such money recovered will be put towards the costs of running the scheme.

Please be certain that you are eligible for this scheme before applying. Claiming grants you are not entitled to may lead to criminal prosecution and any grant which is incorrectly awarded will need to be immediately repaid along with any associated costs and fines. You may also face prosecution.

The Council will also verify all data provided when claiming a Test and Trace Support Payment to check against fraud. This may include notifying other relevant departments within the council where discrepancies in information are highlighted. This is to protect the public purse. By making your application you give your consent to these checks being carried out.

## 14. Customer Conduct

Mid Sussex District Council is charged with delivering the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme on behalf of the Government in accordance with their instruction. Mid Sussex District Council may need to provide the Government with data obtained from a Test and Trace Support Payment application for monitoring purposes, including individual data to ensure value for money as well as protect the public purse. By making your application you give your consent for any such actions to be taken.

Mid Sussex District Council will not tolerate behaviour of an abusive, aggressive or contemptuous nature directed at staff engaged in the administration of the Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme in accordance with these guidelines.

## **APPENDIX 1: Wider policy on self-isolation**

### **Why does self-isolation matter?**

Ensuring infected individuals and their close contacts isolate is one of our most powerful tools for controlling transmission.

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.

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

The changes announced by the Government on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2020 will:

- introduce a new duty on individuals to self-isolate if someone tests positive or is identified as a contact by NHS Test and Trace.
- introduce a new Test and Trace Support Payment of a £500 lump sum payment for those on low incomes to support them if they cannot work during their self-isolation period.
- 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.
- place a new legal obligation on employers that they must not knowingly enable or encourage their employees to break the law on self-isolation.
- provide discretionary funding for local authorities to help those who require corresponding financial support to the Test and Trace Support Payment to self-isolate, but do not meet all the eligibility criteria.

### **What difference does it make if self-isolation has a legal basis?**

This change is intended to make clear the importance of people self-isolating when they have COVID19 or they have been in recent and close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID19. A new legal obligation, implemented rapidly nationwide, will help stop the virus continuing to spread.

## **What is the aim of the Test and Trace Support Payment?**

The Test and Trace Support Payment has been introduced in response to feedback from local authorities and directors of public health that some of their residents were struggling to self-isolate as directed due to financial constraints. It is to help ensure that people on low incomes self-isolate when they test positive or are identified as a contact, and to encourage more people to get tested. This will help to reduce the transmission of COVID19 and avoid further societal and economic restrictions, including local lockdowns.

## **How will the duty to self-isolate be imposed?**

The proposed legal duties will apply in England only. Anyone notified of a positive test result and any of their notified contacts will have a legal duty to self-isolate. Guidance will make clear that people who have symptoms should, as now, self-isolate while they get a test.

Those testing positive for COVID19 will be legally obliged to self-isolate for a period ending 10 days after the onset of symptoms or, for people who did not have symptoms when they were tested, 10 days after the date of the test. Other members of their household will be legally obliged to self-isolate for a period ending 14 days after the onset of the infected person's symptoms (or, if they were asymptomatic, after the date of the test). Non-household contacts will be obliged to self-isolate for the period notified to them by NHS Test and Trace (the period ending 14 days after their most recent exposure to the person who has tested positive).

## **What is the role of local authorities in supporting the requirement to self-isolate?**

NHS Test and Trace and local authorities will continue to work together to help ensure that people understand their obligations on self-isolation and why it is so important to self-isolate – and help them access any support they need in order to do so.

Local authorities will focus on the principle of encouraging, educating and supporting self-compliance – they will not be expected to enforce the legal requirements. Local authorities will pass on the details of anyone they suspect of breaking the rules to the police. Where there is clear evidence that someone is not following the rules, the police will determine what follow-up action to take and, where necessary, issue fixed penalty notices.

## **Do local authorities need to launch a communications campaigns to advertise the Test and Trace Support Payment?**

The Government is running a central communications campaign to publicise the new legal duty to self-isolate and the Test and Trace Support Payment. We will support local authorities in arranging additional local communications, publicity and engagement.

## **Do local authorities need to check that Test and Trace Support Payment recipients are self-isolating?**

Local authorities should focus on encouraging, educating and supporting self-isolation compliance. They should pass on the details of anyone they suspect of breaking the rules to the police.