



**Melton
Borough
Council**

Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payments Scheme

Author:	Revenues & Benefits Manager
Owner:	Revenues & Benefits Manager
Version No:	1.3
Date:	October 2020

APPROVALS:

Designation	Title	Date of Approval	Version
SLT	SLT		

DISTRIBUTION:

Title	Date of Issue	Version
SLT		
T3		
MIKE		

Updates:

Updates made	Section	Date
Amendments made to eligibility criteria	4.1 & 4.2	13/10/2020
Amendments made to eligibility criteria	4.2 & 4.3	11/02/2021
Amendments made to scheme following extension of scheme nationally. Also amendments made to eligibility criteria	1.1, 1.3, 3.2, 4.1 & 4.2	29/07/2021

1. What are Discretionary Test & Trace Support Payments?

- 1.1 The scheme helps to support residents within the Borough of Melton who receive a positive Covid-19 test result or who are asked to self isolate via a contact by the NHS Test & Trace Team between 28th September 2020 and 30th September 2021. In order to be assessed under the discretionary scheme you must fall outside the eligibility criteria of the main Test & Trace Support Payments scheme. This was provided to all Local Authorities by the Department of Health and Social Care.
- 1.2 This Policy is subject to change. Should any amendments or additions be required, the updated Policy will be republished. All applications received the day following any published amendments to the Policy will be assessed in accordance with that updated Policy.
- 1.3 From 8 March 2021, the scheme has been extended so that parents or guardians who are not legally required to self-isolate can apply for a Test & Trace discretionary payment if they need to take time off work to care for a child or young person who is required to self-isolate. Applicants will need to satisfy the other eligibility criteria of the discretionary scheme to receive the payment.

2. Why is the scheme being introduced?

- 2.1 The Government has introduced Test and Trace Support Payments alongside a Discretionary Payments scheme to support people on low incomes who are unable to work from home and have been asked to self-isolate and their income has reduced as a result of this.

3. What are the main features of the scheme?

- 3.1 The Council may decide to make a Discretionary Payment, provided that the claimant can meet all criteria outlined in sections 4.1 to 4.2 below. Successful claimants will be awarded £500.
- 3.2 Discretionary Payments are limited by a budget allocated by a government grant and the Council will not be able to fund payment once this has been spent.

4. Am I eligible for support?

- 4.1 In order to be eligible for a Discretionary Support Payment, a claimant must meet all the following three criteria set out in the 'standard' scheme:
 - 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.

- Be employed or self employed.
- Be unable to work from home and will lose income as a result.
- Have responded to messages received from NHS Test and Trace and have provided any required information.
- If you need to take time off work and, are the parent or guardian of a child or young person that has been told to isolate. For example this could be due to someone in their nursery/school bubble testing positive
-

4.2 Applicants must also meet the following criteria

- Resident within the Borough of Melton
- Are not currently in receipt of Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, Employment and Support Allowance (Income Based), Job Seekers Allowance (Income Based), Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit; and
- Will face severe demonstrable financial hardship, as a direct result of not being able to work whilst self-isolating.

Applications will not normally be considered in the following circumstances:

- Your normal household gross Income exceeds £35,000 per annum.
- Household is considered to be you, you partner and/or anyone else that contributes to your household bills.
- Household Income should include all income received such as earnings, benefit payments, tax credits, pensions or any other income. Income in respect of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments is disregarded.
- Total savings/capital exceeds £6,000 once monthly outgoings have been taken into account.

4.3 The Council reserves full discretion in regards to this scheme. In some circumstances awards may be made outside of the eligibility criteria if financial hardship can be evidenced. As part of this a full income and expenditure assessment may be required. Contrary to this the Council also reserve the right to reject an application if the qualifying criteria are met. 4.4 The discretionary scheme is not open to University students, those in Higher Education together with non dependants in a household that don't have a rent/mortgage/council tax liability.

- 4.5 There is a limited funding envelope for this scheme; applications will be made on a first come basis and The Council reserve the right to alter or amend the scheme dependent upon demand and to withdraw the discretionary scheme when the funding has been exhausted.

5. What do I need to provide with my application?

- 5.1 We will, for all applications under the scheme, ask you to provide the following evidence in order to verify your identity and ensure you meet the eligibility criteria
- A notification from NHS Test and Trace asking you to self isolate (this will include a Unique ID number)
 - A bank statement; and
 - Proof of employment, or, if you are self-employed, evidence of self-assessment returns, trading income and proof that your business delivers services which cannot be undertaken without social contact.

We will be unable to consider your application unless all of the above evidence is provided.

- 5.2 Where the conditions at 4.1, 4.2 and 5.1 are met additional evidence will be requested. This will be limited to the relevant circumstances to demonstrate the need for financial assistance.

6. How do I apply?

- 6.1 Applications to the Scheme should be made using the online form at <http://www.melton.gov.uk/testandtracesupport>
- 6.2 If you are unable to complete the online form please contact customer services on 01664 502502 between the hours of 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday please note Wednesday phone lines will close at 4pm

7. How will I be paid?

- 7.1 Payment will be made directly to a claimant's bank account by BACS. We will aim to make payment within 3 working days of an eligible application being made.
- 7.2 No eligible application will be considered to have been made until all the required evidence is received and checked.

- 7.3 If it is subsequently identified that a payment under the Scheme has been awarded as a result of false or fraudulent information, including the claiming of duplicate awards, the Council reserves the right to withdraw the award and recover the resulting sum due. The Council also reserves the right to refer suspected fraud and any suspected failure to self-isolate to the Police.

8. How will I be notified of the decision?

- 8.1 The Council will provide a written notice of its decision to the applicant or their representative. Electronically where possible

9. What can I do if I want the decision to be reviewed?

- 9.1 There will be no automatic right of appeal against a decision not to award a payment. However, the Council may at its discretion reconsider any refusal if there is clear evidence that a significantly wrong decision may have been made. Claimants may request in writing that the Council looks again at the decision within one calendar month of the decision notice.

10. How does the Council prevent fraudulent claims for the Scheme?

- 10.1 If you falsely declare your circumstances, provide a false statement or provide false evidence in support of your application, you may have committed an offence under the Fraud Act 2006.
- 10.2 Melton Borough Council has a zero-tolerance approach to fraud and financial irregularity. All suspicions of fraud relating to this scheme will be referred to Leicestershire Police. In addition to any criminal action, the Council will seek to recover all fraud losses.