

THE TEST AND TRACE SUPPORT PAYMENT SCHEME

UPDATED GUIDANCE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES: processing applications from parents and guardians who are caring for a child or young person who is self-isolating

The Test and Trace Support Payment scheme (TTSP) is being 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 need to satisfy the other eligibility criteria for the main scheme or their local discretionary scheme to receive the payment.

This insert accompanies ***The Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme: Implementation Guide for Local Authorities in England*** and explains how local authorities should put arrangements in place to enable applications from parents and guardians in their area.

1. Eligibility: parents and guardians who have not been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace

From 8 March 2021, parents or guardians who are not legally required to self-isolate can apply for a Test and Trace Support Payment or discretionary payment if they need to take time off work to care for a child or young person who is.

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 young person's self-isolation period.
- they are employed or self-employed.
- they cannot work from home while undertaking caring responsibilities and will lose income as a result.
- **they meet all the other means-tested eligibility criteria for a Test and Trace Support Payment or locally determined criteria for a discretionary payment.**
- 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.
 - 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 COVID-19.

Backdating

The child or young person must have been told to self-isolate on or after **8 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 (for the main scheme or the discretionary scheme).

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 are legally required to self-isolate can make an individual application to receive the payment. Each person will need to meet the eligibility criteria, as set out in Section 3 'Eligibility for payments' of *The Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme: Implementation Guide for Local Authorities in England*.

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

Claims made by parents and guardians can be made up to six weeks (42 days) after the child or young person's first day of self-isolation. For example, if a child or young person was told to self-isolate on 8 March, their parent or guardian must apply by 19 April. Local authorities should not accept retrospective applications after the 42-day cut-off.

Applications that overlap with another period of self-isolation

We are extending eligibility to **one parent or guardian per household for the child or young person's self-isolation period**. This means a parent or guardian can 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.

So for example, in a household with two children (Child A and Child B), the parents or guardians can claim twice (either twice from the same parent or one claim per parent) if Child A's first day of self-isolation is on 8 March and Child B's first day of self-isolation is on 21 March. This is because Child B's first day of self-isolation is after Child A's ten-day self-isolation period. However, if Child B's first day of self-isolation is 15 March, the two children's self-isolation periods overlap; their household can only make a single TTSP claim.

2. Application process

As set out in *The Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme: Implementation Guide for Local Authorities in England*, local authorities are responsible for putting in place arrangements to process and verify applications, issue payments to successful applicants and prevent fraud.

Each local authority should continue to run its own online application system and an alternative system for non-digital users.

Local authorities should ensure that their application system notifies applicants who are applying as a parent or guardian that **their application will be checked with their child or young person's education or care setting.**

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

To apply for a main payment or discretionary payment, parents or guardians will need to provide the usual supporting evidence and information (excluding their own NHS Test and Trace Account ID number), as outlined in Section 4 'Application process' of *The Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme: Implementation Guide for Local Authorities in England*. Applicants will also need 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 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 between 16 and 25 who have additional support needs.

Supporting evidence about the child or young person

Applicants will need to provide either:

- the child's eight-digit NHS Test and Trace 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.

OR

- a screenshot of a young person's NHS COVID-19 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 COVID-19 App.

Local authorities **must not** accept applications without **at least one** of the three pieces of supporting evidence listed above.

Once all evidence has been verified, the local authority should pay the applicant £500. If an applicant meets all the criteria for the Test and Trace Support Payment, they should be paid from the main fund. All Test and Trace Support Payments and discretionary payments should be made within three working days of an eligible application being verified.

Application form

Local authorities will need to amend their application forms to facilitate applications from parents and guardians who have not been told to self-isolate, and to warn applicants that the self-declared information they provide about their child will be checked with the child's education or care setting.

3. Verifying applications

Local authorities are responsible for carrying out checks on applications from parents and guardians. These checks are to ensure that:

- the parent or guardian meets the eligibility criteria for a Test and Trace Support Payment or discretionary payment (excluding their own NHS Test and Trace Account ID number, as they are not required to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace).
- the child or young person who the parent or guardian is caring for is under 15, or is aged between 16 and 25 and has an Education, Health and Care Plan.
- the child or young person who the parent or guardian is caring for was told to self-isolate and did not continue to attend their education or care setting when they should have been self-isolating.

The following checks should be carried out before a payment is made:

- the parent or guardian meets the usual eligibility criteria for a Test and Trace Support Payment or discretionary payment.
- the supporting evidence provided with the application.
- the child or young person's name, age and address on the Searchlight system.

The following check can be carried out before or after a payment is made, depending on the preference of each local authority:

- the child or young person's details with their education or care setting.

Checking that the parent or guardian meets the usual eligibility criteria for a Test and Trace Support Payment or discretionary payment (PRE-PAYMENT)

Local authorities should not check that a parent or guardian has been told to self-isolate and has engaged with NHS Test and Trace. However, the other checks outlined in Section 6 'Pre-payment checks' of *The Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme: Implementation Guide for Local Authorities in England* should be undertaken. This is to confirm that the applicant meets the eligibility criteria for a payment and includes checking:

- the applicant's identity.
- the applicant is employed or self-employed and will lose income because they cannot work from home.
- the applicant is receiving one of the qualifying benefits for the main Test and Trace Support Payment.

- the applicant meets any locally determined eligibility criteria for a discretionary payment.
- the applicant hasn't already received a payment for the self-isolation period in question.

It is recommended that local authorities carry out these checks before carrying out the further checks that are specific to applications from parents and guardians. This will mean that ineligible applications are eliminated as early as possible.

Checking the supporting evidence provided with the application (PRE-PAYMENT)

A child or young person's NHS Test and Trace Account ID number

If an applicant has provided their child or young person's NHS Test and Trace Account ID number (CTAS number) as supporting evidence for their application, local authorities should check this number in the Eligibility Checker in the usual way. This is explained in Section 7 'Obtaining and verifying an NHS Test and Trace Account ID' of *The Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme: Implementation Guide for Local Authorities in England*.

If an applicant has provided a letter or other communication from the child or young person's education or care setting as supporting evidence for their application, local authorities should satisfy themselves that this is genuine.

A communication from a setting or an NHS COVID-19 App screenshot plus evidence of an Education, Health and Care Plan

For their supporting evidence, some applicants will provide either a communication from their child's education or care setting, or an NHS COVID-19 App screenshot plus evidence that the young person has an Education, Health and Care Plan. As an initial check, local authorities should satisfy themselves that this evidence is genuine (while noting that this will also subsequently be checked with the education or care setting).

Checking the child or young person's name, age and address on the Searchlight system (PRE-PAYMENT)

As an initial up-front verification check, local authorities should verify the child or young person's name, address and age against the parent or guardian's benefit/relationship data held on the DWP's Searchlight system before making a payment.

This is an initial check using information that is already available to local authority revenues and benefits teams: not all children and young people will be registered on

Searchlight. Therefore, local authorities should not decline an application if the child or young person cannot be found on Searchlight. Instead, they should make a note of this and verify the child or young person's information with their education or care setting.

Checking the child or young person's details with their education or care setting (PRE-PAYMENT OR POST-PAYMENT)

Once all other checks have been carried out, local authorities should contact the child or young person's education or care setting to verify the self-declared information provided in the parent or guardian's application. This includes checking:

- 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 (if this has been submitted by the applicant).

Local authorities can choose whether to conduct these checks with settings before or after making payments. Each local authority should make this choice according to their own judgement of how they can best protect their own application process against fraudulent claims.

If local authorities choose to conduct checks with settings post-payment, they will need to make a note of any instances where a parent or guardian is found to have fraudulently claimed a £500. Where appropriate, they should seek to recover this money in the usual way.

4. Making payments to successful applicants and reporting information to DHSC

Local authorities should follow the processes set out in Section 8 ‘Making payments’ of *The Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme: Implementation Guide for Local Authorities in England* to pay successful applications from parents and guardians and to report on successful and unsuccessful applications to DHSC.

5. Frequently asked questions

Is this extension of the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme for parents and guardians of children and young people who have tested positive for COVID-19, who have been identified as close contacts, or both?

The extension of the eligibility criteria for the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme allows you to pay parents and guardians who are not 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 COVID-19.

You can already pay parents and guardians of children and young people who have tested positive, provided they live in the same household. This is because they will be counted as household contacts and told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, enabling them to apply for the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme.

My local authority won't have application forms and processes in place on 8 March 2021 to allow applications from parents and guardians.

We know that local authorities need time to put arrangements in place to support this extension. DHSC will support you to make these changes. Parents and guardians in your area whose child or young person's period of self-isolation began on or after 8 March 2021 will be able to make a backdated application.

Can I pay parents and guardians of children and young people who are self-isolating with symptoms?

No. This extension is for parents and guardians who are self-isolating because they have been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. **You should not pay applicants if the child or young person is self-isolating with symptoms.**

If the child or young person subsequently tests positive for COVID-19, parents and guardians in the same household will be classed as household contacts and be required to self-isolate – meaning they can then claim for the payment in the usual way, provided they meet all the eligibility criteria.

Can I pay parents and guardians who have to take time off work because the education or care setting has closed?

No. You can only pay parents or guardians who are taking time off work to look after a child or young person who is self-isolating because they have been identified as a recent contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

Can I pay parents and guardians who have a job that can normally be done from home but who need to take time off to care for the child or young person?

No. As with a normal application for a Test and Trace Support Payment or discretionary payment, applicants will need to prove that they have a job that cannot be undertaken from home.

I have an applicant who is unable to find the communication from the education or care setting telling the child or young person to self-isolate. Can I still pay them?

You should tell the applicant to contact the education or care setting and ask them to provide another communication confirming that the child or young person was asked to self-isolate on the date stated. You should not accept an application without one of the three pieces of supporting evidence outlined on page 5.

Can I pay an applicant if the child or young person was self-isolating on 8 March 2021 but whose period of self-isolation began before that?

No, applications are open to parents and guardians if the child or young person's first day of self-isolation was 8 March 2021 or later. If the first day of self-isolation was before 8 March 2021, the parent or guardian is not eligible.

What are the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) implications if we have to contact education and care settings to verify the self-declared information that applicants provide?

The GDPR implications for the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme remain the same as they did previously: you should continue to handle applicants' data in accordance with GDPR.

If you use your own privacy notice, you should update this to reflect the applicants' information will be checked with education and care settings. Education and care settings may need to update their own privacy notices and we are working with the Department for Education to support them to do this.