

## Discretionary Self-Isolation Payments Briefing Paper

### Background

In order to encourage individuals to self-isolate and to help stop the transmission of COVID-19 and avoid further economic and societal restrictions, Government have introduced Test and Trace Support Payment (Self-Isolation Payment – SIP) of £500 to individuals if they meet all of the following criteria:

1. 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
2. Are employed or self-employed
3. Are unable to work from home and will lose income as a result
4. Are suffering exceptional financial hardship as they are unable to work and have a limited income
5. 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.

Government also set out the ability for Councils to pay a Discretionary SIP. Although discretionary, points 1-4 above and the points below **must** still be met.

All applicants must make a claim within 14 days of the end of their self-isolation period ending.

People in the same household can each make an individual application to receive the payment, if they each meet the eligibility criteria.

All awards, including discretionary, are to be £500.

All applicants must provide evidence of Test and Trace number, a bank statement, evidence of employment and allow checks on these and employment to be made.

All applicants may make multiple applications if required to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace more than once for different periods.

Data collection and management information requirements are the same for all SIP awards.

## **Discretionary**

In addition to points 1-4 above, to allow applications from:

- individuals in receipt of Council Tax Reduction (CTR)
- individuals who have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)
- where capital held is below £16,000

Using CTR as a base for eligibility follows a similar income vs need assessment in line with the prescribed benefits of UC, HB etc. To devise a separate income and need assessment would take too long within the prescribed timeframe of 12 October 2020 and would be very costly to administer.

Accepting applications from individuals currently excluded from welfare benefits due to NRPF, provides a safety for these individuals. A simple trial calculation of other incomes and need will have to be carried out along the lines of housing benefit entitlement.

## **Timeframe**

Announced 20 September 2020, applications are only effective from 28 September 2020.

Guidance on the main scheme and Discretionary schemes were issued 30 September 2020 and are some areas are still under discussion.

Councils must have a process in place to receive applications and make payments from 12 October 2020 at the latest. Backdating to 28 September 2020 may be done for applicants who are asked to self-isolate from 28 September 2020 but have not been able to do so until the claiming process is enabled.

Current directions are that the scheme will last until 31 January 2021.

## **Funding**

Cambridge City Council has been granted:

- £49,000 for prescribed grants equating to 98 awards at £500
- £29,582.43 for discretionary grants, which would equate to 59

Administration grant has also been made to allow for the processing of both sets of payments.

Funding available for discretionary funding is a fixed envelope to cover the four months to 31 January, which means that it will not be topped up.

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