



Emergency Committee

Report Title:	Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme Policy
Decision to be taken by	Emergency Committee
Lead Director:	David Stevens – Chief Executive
Date of Decision	9 th October 2020
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	 
Key Decision:	Yes
Reason for Urgency/Special Urgency:	On 25th September 2020 the Department of Health and Social Care introduced Test and Trace Support Payments and Discretionary Support Payments for people who are required to self-isolate because they have either tested positive for COVID-19 or have been identified by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact. They want Local Authorities to commence making payments from 12th October 2020. In order to achieve this our discretionary policy needs to be in place.
Exempt Information Ref:	Not exempt
Scrutiny Consultation	None – due to challenging timeframe
Lead Officer:	Ian Dunn Service Manager Revenues and Benefits

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Emergency Committee:

1. Approves the attached Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme Policy.

1 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 During September, in response to Covid-19, the Department for Health and Social Care introduced Test and Trace support payments. These are aimed at helping people who have been financially affected because they are unable to work following an instruction to self-isolate because they have either tested positive for Covid-19 or have been identified by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact.
- 1.2 Revised guidance on the Discretionary Test and Trace support payments was received from Department of Health and Social Care on 30th September 2020 and details of funding on 2nd October 2020. The guidance details qualifying criteria for the discretionary scheme and stipulates that the council must publish their scheme.
- 1.3 This report seeks approval of the Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme Policy which is included in Appendix 1.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

There are no alternative options.

3 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 To approve Sandwell's Discretionary Test and Trace Support payment scheme Policy (appendix 1).

4 IMPLICATION FOR VISION 2030

- 4.1 Payment of these discretionary payments will provide crucial financial support to people who have suffered losses in income because of the pandemic.
- 4.2 Helping people survive the pandemic links directly to Ambition 10.

5 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 The Test and Trace support payments were formally launched by the Department of Health and Social Care on 25th September 2020.
- 5.2 To receive the main (non discretionary) Test & Trace Support Payment of £500, you must:

- have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Test & Trace either because you'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
- be currently receiving Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment & Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit.

5.3 To be considered for the Test and Trace Discretionary Support Payment Scheme of £500 a person must:

- have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Test & Trace on or after 28th September 2020 either because they have 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
- be on a low income
- be suffering financial hardship.

5.4 The Department of Health and Social Care have prescribed the above criteria to Local Authorities. They have advised that the Test and Trace Support Scheme should be available to make applications from 12th October 2020 and support payments should be made within 3 days from the receipt of applications. The scheme will run until the 31st January 2021.

5.5 Sandwell have received funding of £189k for the main Test and Trace Support Scheme and £113k for the Discretionary scheme.

5.6 The Department of Health and Social Care launched the Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme and Discretionary Scheme in September and this report is seeking approval of Sandwell's Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme Policy (appendix 1).

6 THE CURRENT POSITION

6.1 Since the Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme was announced in September 2020, Revenues and Benefits have been working on the procedures and application form to accompany its implementation.

6.2 We are currently waiting for localised access to the Contract Tracing Service to enable staff to verify the NHS contract and trace reference number and the period of isolation.

6.3 The scheme is due to go live in Sandwell on the 12th October 2020.

7 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

Not required.

8 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.3 The Department of Health and Social Care have provided funding for Test and Trace Support Schemes. New burdens funding will also be provided to cover the cost of administration.

9 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

9.3 The Department of Health and Social Care requires councils to publish their Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme. Once the scheme is approved it will be published on www.sandwell.gov.uk.

10 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10.3 Not required.

11 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

11.1 Not required.

12 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

12.1 Not required

13 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

13.1 The Discretionary Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme provides one-off payments of £500 and funding of £133k has been provided by the Department of Health and Social Care for these payments. Total payments must not exceed this amount.

14 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

14.1 Payments will help people survive the impact of the pandemic which directly impacts the wealth of the borough and helps to keep people in employment.

15 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

15.1 None

16 BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 None

17 APPENDICES:

17.1 Appendix 1 – Discretionary Test and Trace Support payment scheme
Policy 2020/21