

To: Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing
7 June 2021

Test and Trace Self-Isolation Support Payments – Discretionary Scheme Amendment
Director of People

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek approval to increase the earnings limit used in the Test and Trace Self-Isolation Support Payments (TTSP) Discretionary Scheme.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 **That the revised TTSP discretionary policy be approved.**
- 2.2 **That the revised TTSP discretionary policy be considered effective from 17 May 2021 be approved.**

3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 Additional funding for the TTSP discretionary scheme has been made available to Bracknell Forest Council by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).
- 3.2 The current definition of low income used in the TTSP policy requires an applicant to have a weekly income of less than £139.52. The proposed policy would increase the earnings threshold to £384.62 per week and will provide a financial incentive for more people to adhere with the requirement to self-isolate thereby reducing ongoing transmission of Covid.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Maintaining the definition of “low income” in place since commencement of the scheme in October 2020, namely income of less than £139.52 per week.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The TTSP scheme is administered by Bracknell Forest Council on behalf of the DSHC. A payment of £500 may be made to those who are employed or self-employed, who are required to self-isolate, or to care for a child who has been required to self-isolate, cannot work from home and who will lose income as a result.
- 5.2 Applicants in receipt of certain benefits, whilst employed, receive support from the main scheme where criteria are set by DHSC. However, the DHSC recognises that there are some people who may not be in receipt of these benefits but still on a low income and who may be less likely to self-isolate because of financial concerns.
- 5.3 Each Local Authority was required to devise a scheme to support those on a “low income” but not in receipt of the specific benefits. This scheme is known as the TTSP discretionary scheme.

- 5.4 Bracknell Forest Council's current discretionary scheme policy refers to "low income" as earnings of less than £139.52 per week and was based on 16 hours per week income at the National Living Wage for someone aged 25 years or over which is in keeping with other Local Authorities original schemes.
- 5.5 The definition of low income being amended to earnings less than £384.62 per week is based upon the Government figure for the benefit cap of £20,000 for those residents living outside London.
- 5.6 Funding for the cost of the discretionary scheme is provided by DHSC and allocations of funding are based on spend, case rates and prevalence of Covid in the community. If the spend on the discretionary scheme were exceeded, it would fall to be met by Bracknell Forest Council, but funding is available from the Covid Contain Outbreak Management Fund should the allocation be exhausted.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 In the *Covid-19 Response - Spring 2021 (Roadmap)* published on 22nd February 2021, the Government confirmed that the Test and Trace Support Payment will continue into the summer and expanded the Scheme to include parents unable to work if they are caring for children who are self-isolating. The extension of the Scheme has been incorporated into the Government Guidance: *Claiming financial support under the Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme*, which was updated on 12th May 2021. Under the Scheme local authorities are required to administer discretionary payments for those who meet the eligibility criteria, are on low income and will face financial hardship as a result of self-isolating, It is for the Council to determine the low income and financial hardship threshold.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 As the Council is receiving a grant from DHSC for the Discretionary Scheme, therefore, there is no direct financial implication arising from this report

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.3 N/a

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 Not required

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 N/a

Climate Change Implications

- 6.6 The recommendations in Section 2 above are expected to:

Have no impact on emissions of greenhouse gases or the environment

Background Papers

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE (COMMERCIAL)/OFFICIAL SENSITIVE (PERSONAL)

Contact for further information

Sharon Warner Early Help and Communities- 01344 351346

Sharon.Warner@bracknell-forest.gov.uk