

Government increases support for those self-isolating

- Improved support includes a free medicines delivery service backed by an extra £3.2 million per month, new practical support funding and enhancements to Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme
- New ONS survey reveals nearly 90% of people are self-isolating when asked to

To help people overcome the practical challenges of being asked to self-isolate, government has today (Friday 26 March) announced an extra £12.9 million a month in additional funding to local councils to help them provide people with more support.

This new funding will help local authorities continue to support those who are isolating as we begin to cautiously ease restrictions, going towards food deliveries, help with caring responsibilities and support for people's wellbeing.

On top of this, £3.2 million per month has been allocated to a free medicines delivery service for people who are self-isolating and don't have access to help in collecting their prescription. Community pharmacies and dispensing doctors are already funded to provide a medicines delivery service in instances where shielding advice is in place, and this system is being replicated to cover people who need to self-isolate.

This investment comes on top of increased funding of £20 million per month for local authorities, which covers the cost of discretionary support payments through the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme (TTSP) for people on lower incomes, or facing financial hardship, who cannot work from home.

The TTSP scheme has also recently been expanded to cover parents or guardians who are unable to work because they are caring for a child who is self-isolating. To date, the government has provided more than £176 million of funding to local authorities to meet the costs of the scheme. This will allow local authorities to continue supporting those on low incomes to stay at home and self-isolate when required to do so.

The announcement comes as a new set of statistics published by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) show that 86% of people testing positive for coronavirus are fully complying with self-isolation guidance for their full isolation period.

Data showed 90% of the contacts reached by NHS Test and Trace are fully adhering with the rules, and 97% of NHS COVID-19 app users started to self-isolate within 24 hours of receiving a notification.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

I am delighted that today's statistics show the vast majority of people in this country are doing the right thing and following the rules to help protect the NHS, and save lives.

The government has increased funding for local authorities by over £30 million a month to give financial and practical support to those who have to self-isolate, helping them to avoid spreading the disease to their communities.

Around one in three have the virus without symptoms, so it is vital those who are asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace do so to turn the table on this terrible virus.

The statistics demonstrate that the majority of respondents also fully understood the self-isolation guidance. Of people who did not fully-comply, the most common breaches were to buy food, collect medicines or to attend medical appointments, which today's funding will help Local Authorities to address.

Executive Chair of NHS Test and Trace, Baroness Harding said:

It's extremely encouraging to see that 86% of people testing positive for Covid-19 and 90% of contacts are fully complying with the self-isolation guidance, which is imperative to the success of NHS Test and Trace as we are reaching more people than ever before. The increased support is important to offer additional reassurance to people to come forward for testing and keep breaking the chains of transmission.

Local councils have a fundamental role to play in tackling outbreaks and we are supporting them by giving people the tools they need to stay at home.

It is vital that there are strong local, regional and national partnerships to support people to understand and comply with the guidance and regulations in place that protect their health and save lives.

Background information

See [Coronavirus and self-isolation after testing positive in England: 1 February to 13 February 2021](#).

- This survey was specifically designed to obtain information on people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and who are at the end of their 10-day self-isolation period.
- Estimates presented in this release are based on the 2,552 responses received and are not representative of the population testing positive for COVID-19 on the day of being sampled. Respondents were randomly

sampled through the Contact Tracing and Advice Service (CTAS) database, held by NHS Test and Trace. This list was created by NHS Test and Trace to record information about people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and their contacts.

- The statistics presented are experimental statistics, so care needs to be taken when interpreting them. While the sample was stratified to be regionally representative of the population being sampled, people who did not respond to the survey may have been less adherent than those who did, leading to bias in the results. This has an impact on the level of certainty of this research.
- Future waves of the survey will provide statistics that are weighted to be representative of the population testing positive in the month prior to the survey.

Further background

- Funding unveiled today was set out in the roadmap.
- It is a legal duty to self-isolate if you have been instructed to do so by NHS Test and Trace. Any breaches of self-isolation may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice, ranging from £1000 to £10,000.
- We are working with England's 314 local authorities to monitor the effectiveness of the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme – including any impact on groups who may be ineligible for it.
- In conjunction with the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme, local authorities can make additional discretionary payments to anyone facing financial hardship. Local authorities are responsible for the criteria used for discretionary payments in their area.
- Local authorities set the eligibility criteria for their schemes and over four million people could be eligible for the Test and Trace Support Payment, which is a targeted scheme to help people on low incomes who cannot work from home, if they are required to self-isolate when they test positive or are identified as a contact.
- To be eligible under the expansion to a parent or guardian, applicants must need to take time off work to care for a child who is self-isolating. They do not need to have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, but they must meet all the other eligibility criteria for a Test and Trace Support Payment or discretionary payment.
- More details are available on who is [eligible for the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme](#).
- If an individual is eligible for either the Test and Trace Support Payment or discretionary payment, they will receive the £500 payment as an up-front lump sum on top of any benefits and Statutory Sick Pay that they are currently eligible for.
- When the scheme launched, the government made an initial £50 million available to local authorities to cover the cost of administering the scheme. This included £15 million for discretionary payments to people who fall outside the scope of the main scheme but who will still face hardship if they have to self-isolate. To date, we have released a total of £176 million to local authorities to enable them to continue administering the scheme. This includes £75 million for discretionary payments.

- The Test and Trace Support Payment scheme is for England only. There are equivalent schemes in place in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and we are working closely with the devolved administrations to share learning and monitor the impact of the financial support that is available.
- We need all employers to act responsibly to help their employees work from home wherever possible, and where it isn't to ensure workplaces are COVID-secure. We are also rolling out rapid-testing helping workers who need to leave home for work during lockdown to continue to do so, while quickly identifying those who may be carrying the virus to stop the spread.
- The Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) provides funding to local authorities (LAs) in England to be used for test, trace and contain activity in order to reduce the spread of coronavirus in their area.
- This funding, worth over £225 million per month during the National Lockdown, can be used by English local authorities to fund local coronavirus response public health activities, such as additional contact tracing, testing for hard-to-reach groups, non-financial support for those self-isolating and public health communications.