**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme**

Maidstone Borough Council is supporting the government Test and Trace Support Payment scheme, which is now live.

The Test and Trace Support payment of £500 is to help people who have been told to self-isolate by the NHS.

It is for anyone employed or self-employed on a low income and in receipt of certain benefits who has tested positive for COVID-19 or been in close contact with someone who has tested positive. They will need to be unable to work from home and have received a notification from the NHS to self-isolate.

Stephen McGinnes, Mid Kent Services Director said: “If you’re someone who is on a lower income, who cannot work from home and has lost income as a result of self-isolating, you could get help with this new Test and Trace support payment.

“These payments of £500 are designed to make sure people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and their close contacts self-isolate for the required period to stop the onward spread of the virus.

“They are also designed to encourage individuals who are eligible for this payment to get tested if they have symptoms. This is important to help stop the transmission of COVID-19 and avoid further economic and societal restrictions.

“Do you know someone who might qualify? If so, please let them know and also make sure you tell your friends and family. We are encouraging anyone in Maidstone on a low income who needs financial support while having to self-isolate to apply as soon as possible.”

All applications must be made within 14 days of the end of a self-isolation period and the scheme is open until 31 January 2021. Anyone who is told to self-isolate on or after 28 September will be able to make a backdated claim for payment as long as they have received notification from the NHS.

To apply people need to complete an online self-isolation payment application form which will then be assessed for eligibility: [maidstone.gov.uk/testandtracesupport](https://www.maidstone.gov.uk/testandtracesupport)

For more information about the scheme please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-package-to-support-and-enforce-self-isolation>

The qualifying criteria are:

* have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace either because they’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 and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit.

If you would like further details, please contact the Maidstone Borough Council Communications Team:  email: [communications@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:communications@maidstone.gov.uk) or call:  01622 602560