**SELF-ISOLATION SUPPORT GRANTS   
Frequently Asked Questions – 24 February 2021**

*The information in this document is correct as at the extension of the scheme on 2 February 2021. For claims prior to this date, the appropriate previous version should be used.*

1. **About Self-Isolation Support Grants**
   1. **Why are Self-Isolation Support Grants (SISG) necessary?**

## The Scottish Government has committed to providing a grant of £500 to workers who are in receipt of low income benefits and who will experience reduced earnings as a result of being required to self-isolate to prevent the spread of COVID- 19. This will support those who would otherwise struggle to be able afford to comply with the requirement to self-isolate.

## **What support will the SISG provide?**

## It will provide workers with the financial support they need to meet their basic needs during the 10 day period in which they are unable to work . These payments are designed to help ensure 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. It is not available pending a test result but it is designed to encourage individuals who are eligible for this payment to get tested quickly if they have symptoms. This is important to help stop the transmission of COVID-19 and avoid further economic and societal restrictions.

## **Who is eligible?**

People who:

* have been required to self-isolate by Test and Protect Scotland or equivalent service from elsewhere in the UK; or
* have been notified by the Protect Scotland app (or equivalent app) to self-isolate and this requirement can be individually verified; or
* are the identified appropriate parent or primary carer of a child under 16 who has been required by the Test and Protect Service (or equivalent service) or a school–based Incident Management Team notification to self-isolate
* (from 2 February 2021) are the identified appropriate carer of a person over 16 who has been required by the Test and Protect Service (or equivalent service across the UK), local public health director or a local Incident Management Team notification to self-isolate.

In addition, they must meet the following criteria:

* are employed or self-employed;
* are unable to work from home and will face reduced earnings as a result of self-isolating (we are working with local authorities to ensure that it is as easy as possible for people to demonstrate this); and
* are currently receiving, have been awarded but not yet received a payment of, or have underlying eligibility (would ordinarily be entitled should an application have been made) for Universal Credit or one of the other named benefits based on earnings prior to their isolation period; or
* are an individual who earns less than the Real Living Wage threshold as detailed in the Ready Reckoner table provided by the Scottish Government for this purpose; or
* their household income is less than 25% above the UC level, as detailed in the Ready Reckoner table provided by Scottish Government for this purpose.

Local Authorities will have discretion to make a SISG award to an applicant in exceptional circumstances, where factors beyond the person’s control, mean that they were unable to apply, or unable to demonstrate that they were eligible within the 28 day period e.g. were too ill to make an application within the 28 day period or experienced delays in confirming test and protect status. Where there is evidence of exceptional circumstances, the applicant must have experienced a reduction in earnings as a result of themselves or their child being asked to self-isolate, currently receive or have underlying eligibility for Universal Credit (as above). If an application is awarded using exceptional circumstances beyond the 28 day period, the financial need must be current.

People who are not eligible for the SISG but who have a low income and are facing financial hardship as a result of self-isolating may still apply to their local authority for a crisis grant through the existing Scottish Welfare Fund.

* 1. **Is the standard payment £500?**

The value of the grant is fixed at £500 regardless of how much income is lost.

* 1. **Which legislative provisions are enabling delivery of the grants?**

The legislative requirements governing the provision of Crisis Grants, set out in the Welfare Funds (Scotland) Regulations 2016, will apply to these awards. The statutory guidance for the Scottish Welfare Fund has been updated to include a new section which provides guidance on dealing with applications for the Self-Isolation Support Grant.

* 1. **Will there be national communications?**

A campaign including Newspaper and Television Radio adverts has been prepared.

Information can be found on the Scottish Government website: <https://www.mygov.scot/scottish-welfare-fund/self-isolation-support-grants/>

Information on the availability of the Grant to people with No Recourse To Public Funds can be found here:

[Migrants' Rights and Entitlements - COVID-19 GUIDANCE | COSLA Strategic Migration Partnership (migrationscotland.org.uk)](http://www.migrationscotland.org.uk/migrants-rights-and-entitlements-0)

We will add information from HMRC in relation to the payments being taxable once this has been provided.

* 1. **What other support can people access?**

Local authorities will provide pro-active offers of support to people who are asked to self-isolate through telephone contact. Individuals who require support to self-isolate are referred to services and support mechanisms including access to food, access to essential medication, eligibility for the SISG and any other local services that they require. People who are asked to self-isolate can still call the National Assistance helpline on 0800 111 4000 to speak to their local authority about any support required, and links to local support services and emotional support.

* 1. **How much will this cost?**

The cost of the scheme overall will depend on the number of people who are required to self-isolate. It is difficult for us to forecast this because it depends on the progress of the virus and the actions all of us take to contain it. Our current estimate is that the payments could cost £12 m for the remainder of this financial year. The UK Government has now stated that currently there will be no additional consequential funding on top of consequentials provided to date despite a similar support scheme being announced in England.  We will continue to press them for further support so people will not be forced into hardship because they are doing the right thing by isolating and stopping the transmission of the virus.

The Scottish Government will provide administration funding of £906,500 distributed across local authorities in December 2020, and will fund the £500 self-isolation grant payments in addition to funds already allocated to SWF. Administrative funding for 2021-22 will be agreed. The £500 repayments will be monitored through SWF reporting and will make an initial payment with a reconciliation to actual spend at the end of this financial year.

* 1. **When is the Self-Isolation scheme expected to close?**

It is currently planned that the scheme will be open into the new financial year 2021-22. The scheme will be required to respond to the changes in demand made as a result of outbreak management, economic restrictions, etc.

* 1. **Will this work with the Protect Scotland app?**

We know that the vast majority of people who receive a notification through the Protect Scotland app are also contacted by our Test and Protect team. The Protect Scotland app ensures the anonymity of users by design and a further technological solution has been implemented to enable users of the app who receive notifications to be included within the SISG and other outbound calls offering support measures.

From 10 February people receiving an individually verified notification will be able to generate an individual certificate for SISG purposes. It is not mandatory however so if one is not available an applicant should be asked to provide further information to allow the local authority to individually verify that the applicant is required to isolate.

The SPSO has ruled that, in a case where someone was notified through the app and was able to provide substantial other evidence that they had been required to self-isolate, this person should receive the award.

Anyone contacted by the App who is symptomatic or requires support through the Local Self-Isolation Support Service is asked to self-isolate and arrange a test. At this point, they will be engaged with services and will be included within Test and Protect.

1. **How Will the SISG Scheme Be Administered**
   1. **Who will administer the grants?**

People can apply to their local authority using the existing application processes for the Scottish Welfare Fund. These allow a variety of channels to make an application, depending on the local authority, including applying online and by telephone. During the current pandemic applications by post or in person may not be available.

* 1. **Why not Social Security Scotland?**

The existing Scottish Welfare Fund is administered by local authorities. Other wrap-around support for people who are self-isolating will also be provided by local authorities too – so it makes sense to align both of these forms of support. There is also a clear legal framework already in place for the Welfare Fund which we can use to implement the SISG scheme quickly.

* 1. **Why not administer in the same way as in England?**

There is no existing national provision equivalent to the Scottish Welfare Fund in England, so new arrangements have been necessary there through individual local authorities. The existing infrastructure for the Scottish Welfare Fund will let us put this new support in place quickly, and take advantage of the existing expertise of local authorities in supporting their communities.

* 1. **What are the processing timescales?**

The timescales for processing applications for Crisis Grants set out in legislation will apply to applications for SISG awards. The Scottish Government is content that decisions should be made by the end of the working day following the day on which all of the information required to determine eligibility is received. Local Authorities should, however, obtain their own advice on matters relating to the interpretation of legal obligations.

* 1. **Will there be decision making templates provided for consistency?**

Local authorities can choose to use or adapt their existing SWF templates.

* 1. **Will there be a requirement to give a right of appeal against a decision?**

The existing regulations, guidance and procedures governing reviews of decisions on Scottish Welfare Fund applications will apply to applications for SISG awards.

**2.7 Can applicants for NRPF appeal their decision?**

There is not a formal appeal process as there is for SWF decisions, but legal advice is awaited on how these decisions could be disputed.

* 1. **How will demand for the scheme be monitored, and uptake recorded?**

We will initially collect management information on a weekly basis to gauge demand for this scheme before we begin more formal monthly monitoring. Guidance is being provided to local authorities on the provision of information, based on existing arrangements for SWF data, using a supplementary reporting form which will include details of the numbers of claims made, approved and rejected, and the total value of awards.

1. **Applications**

**3.1. Will a national short application form be provided?**

Applications procedures for Scottish Welfare Fund awards are set by local authorities themselves. They can use their existing SWF application processes and forms for SISG awards or develop their own procedures and forms.

**3.2. Do applicants need to apply themselves or can others apply on their behalf?**

It will be possible for others to apply on someone’s behalf, for example if they have a disability which prevents them doing so themselves. Payments will be made to a nominated bank account.

Parents or carers will be able to apply on behalf of a relevant child where it is a child who is required to isolate. In this case, the applicant should confirm via the self-declaration form that they are the parent or primary carer, they meet all the qualifying criteria and they will experience a loss in earnings as a result of staying home to care for the child.

**3.3. Is there a time limit when people can apply?**

Claims must be made within the applicant’s 28 day claim period Where there are exceptional circumstances beyond the person’s control, they may be considered for a SISG provided the financial difficulty remains. Otherwise a claim cannot be made outside of this period. Awards made to meet a financial need which is no longer current would not fall within the purposes for which the Scottish Welfare Fund can be used as set out in legislation.

**3.4. Is there a time limit for those who have been self-isolating from 28 September?**

For this limited group, an application can be accepted until 26th October. After that date they cannot apply retrospectively.

**3.5. Is there a limit on the number of claims that an applicant can make?**

No. Individuals can claim more than once as long as they meet the eligibility criteria for each individual claim, including being asked by Test and Protect to self-isolate each time. The application process should be the same for each claim.

**3.6. If a claim overlaps with another self-isolation period, how is that to be handled, e.g. if an individual is asked to self-isolate again before their first 10 day period of isolation is over?**

A claim cannot be made more than once for the same period if periods of self-isolation overlap. There must a break between one claim period and another. The initial 10 day self-isolation period must be completed first, before a new claim can be made. Any continuous period of more than 10 days will only enable one Self-Isolation Grant. Provision outside that may lie with other social security benefits.

* 1. **If an individual is named as a contact by two different people testing positive, could they make two separate claims?**

An individual will receive £500 for one period of isolation regardless of the number of people they have been in contact with. Only one claim can be made for each isolation period.

* 1. **Will multiple claims from households be allowed?**

Any individual within a household can apply, as long as each individual applicant meets the eligibility criteria. Only one claim per household can be made where a parent or primary carer is looking after a child under 16 or an adult needing care who is required to isolate.

* 1. **Are you expecting a deadline to be set for applicants to provide all the necessary verification?**

It will be in the interest of the applicant, to provide all information required as quickly as possible to enable timeous payment. However, if any information is missing, the Local Authority can contact the applicant or third parties (with the applicant’s agreement) to obtain it.

1. **Eligibility**
   1. **How will people show they are eligible?**

Scottish Welfare Fund teams have access to DWP benefits data already and Local Authorities also have access to the records of all Housing Benefit claimants in their area. We expect this to be able to verify that people are in receipt of the relevant benefits.

Our approach to follow-up support from contact tracing through Test and Protect will also mean that local authorities will have a record of the people who have been told to self-isolate through the Test and Protect programme.

Applicants will be asked to provide a bank statement, proof of employment or self-employment and confirmation that they will experience reduced income during their period of isolation.

Applicants will be asked to confirm that they are the parent or primary carer of a child under 16 or an adult needing care who is required to isolate in addition to meeting the other requirements.

* 1. **How will information be included in the Test & Protect list?**

Eligibility is dependent on an applicant being included on the Test & Protect list. People who are contacted after the list is provided to local authorities each morning will not appear on the list until the next day. Local authorities should check the next day’s list before refusing a claim.

Where a claim has been refused because the applicant is not on the Test & Protect list and it is later established that this was an error or omission, the original decision should be reviewed and a new decision made.

The normal Test & Protect process is that people will receive a phone call and be included on the list to be shared with the local authority. As an interim measure at times of pressure, the process for notifying close contacts may be changed to text notifications. From 2 November this will include a reference code and request for a postcode to enable streaming to the correct local authority.

### **How will a parent of a child asked to isolate show that they are eligible?**

### Where a child under 16 has been asked to isolate through Test & Protect or through a school-based Incident Management Team notification, the parent or carer will be eligible for a grant provided they themselves fulfil the other eligibility criteria.

Confirmation that the person applying for the grant has responsibility for the child can be checked with the information held by the local authority in relation to schools. The applicant should confirm by self-declaration that they are the parent or primary carer of that child.

Where there is more than one parent or primary carer in a household, a declaration confirming that at least one of them will be have to reduce their work hours to look after the child will be sufficient to meet that criteria.

Only one payment can be made to a household where a child or children are required to isolate. If more than one adult submits a claim stating that they are caring for that child or children, the local authority can use the information held by them to determine which is the most appropriate claim to progress to payment.

### **How will the carer of an adult asked to isolate show that they are eligible?**

Where a person over the age of 16 has been asked to isolate and a claim has been received from someone acting as a carer, the local authority will first need to check that the person requiring care has been asked isolate.

A determination will then need to be made that it is reasonable that the individual requires care and that the applicant is an appropriate person to provide that care. There is no single methodology to achieve this. For example local authorities can access the information held by Test & Protect, they may have social care records or under 11.26 they may gather further information to assist with this.

Once it is decided that the carer is an appropriate person, they then need to satisfy the other eligibility criteria as normal.

### **If the parents of a child under 16 or the carer of a person over 16 are themselves self-isolating and receiving a SISG, can they also claim for looking after the child or person requiring care who is also asked to self-isolate by Test and Protect or a School Incident Management Team ?**

No. Only one grant can be paid for any one period of isolation, this includes where periods overlap. If the parent or carer is also isolating you should consider whether it would be reasonable for them to provide the care needed while they are self-isolating.

Where a child is isolating, the claim is not made for them but for the adult who is losing earnings to care for them. If neither adult is isolating and one is normally at home (e.g. not working), then it should be established why the parent at work needs to care for the child.

If neither parent is isolating and both are at work, then one of them would be eligible provided they could show there was no reasonable alternative to them losing income, e.g. could they work from home and still care for the child?

### **What if someone has been contacted by the equivalent Test & Protect Services in England, Wales or Northern Ireland?**

SWF guidance para 11.14 provides that the request to self-isolate can come from the equivalent service in the other UK administrations. Further work is being done to support data sharing with the other administrations in these cases.

Applicants could be asked to call the National Contact Tracing Centre within Test and Protect on 0800 030 8012 who may be able to confirm with Test & Trace that he is on their system, for example this process has already been agreed for cross border cases such as in the Dumfries & Galloway outbreak.

It may be difficult for the applicant to provide formal verification from these sources so the information provided should be weighed appropriately. Local authorities should apply the principles contained within SWF Guidance Sections 4.19-25 in making decisions. This includes Section 4.24:

*“The evidence requested should be proportionate to the circumstances of the case. It should only be asked for if essential … If the applicant refuses to give further information, a decision should be made on the basis of information that has been gathered during the initial application.”*

### **What if someone hasn’t been contacted by Test and Protect (or equivalent service), but are self-isolating correctly. Who do they contact to obtain the relevant registration detail and how do they do so?**

Eligibility for payment currently applies only where someone has been formally notified to self-isolate by Test & Protect or through a school-based Incident Management Team (or equivalent service).If an individual has symptoms, they should book a test. If this produces a positive result, they will be contacted by Test & Protect, and asked to self-isolate.

* 1. **What if someone who is self-isolating later finds out they were eligible for the Self-Isolation Support Grant?**

Claims cannot be made outwith the individual’s 28 day claim period unless there are exceptional circumstances beyond the person’s control and their financial need as a result of their self-isolation remains at the date of application.

* 1. **There are now several different ways to assess low income. How do they interact?**

An applicant only needs to satisfy one of the income related criteria detailed at 11.21. Each option should be exhausted before a claim is refused.

Local authorities may wish to consider 11.21(i) before (ii) and (iii) to avoid gathering information and conducting an unnecessary income assessment.

* 1. **What is an exceptional circumstance?**

Local authorities have discretion to make an award in exceptional circumstances beyond the person’s control where an applicant or a child they are responsible for is required to isolate but does not meet all of the other criteria and where there is a clear financial need.

Consideration should be given to the individual circumstances to determine whether it would be unreasonable to apply the criteria rigidly in their particular situation. It is expected that these cases will be very uncommon.

Examples where the difficulty is as a result of something beyond their control could be e.g.

* although medical opinion confirms likely Covid infection, it has not been possible to obtain a test because it is confirmed that there is none available because of limited access to testing facilities in rural locations
* the individual has no means of making an application during the isolation period due to disability or access to the internet and has no means of support to do so
* the individual is too unwell to submit an application and cannot instruct someone to apply on their behalf
* there is a delay in confirming isolation status through the Test and Protect service
* the parent of a disabled young person aged 17 who is still included in their parent’s benefit claim and who cannot isolate alone

Further guidance on particular cases can be requested from the Scottish Government.

* 1. **Can an applicant who is furloughed under the existing Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme claim an SISG payment?**

Yes, provided their furlough pay is less than their normal 100% salary and as long as they meet all of the other eligibility requirements for the Self-Isolation Support Grant Scheme.

* 1. **Is someone who is on sick leave from work and receiving Statutory Sick Pay eligible for the SISG payment?**

Applicants will be able to receive the £500 SISG payment on top of SSP, provided they total pay is less than 100% of their normal salary and they meet all of the SISG eligibility criteria.

* 1. **Would any potential National Lockdown have an impact on the SISG?**

Eligibility is based on an individual being required to self-isolate as part of Test & Protect. Any arrangements as part of a national lockdown would have no impact on this.

* 1. **How will this scheme interact with the Social Care Support Fund?**

It is expected that care staff included within the SCSF would be paid during a period of self-isolation and so there would be no loss of income for SISG purposes. Further clarification will be provided on this.

* 1. **If someone has been overseas, and on return is required to quarantine for 10 days will they be able to make a Self-Isolation Grant claim?**

The Self-Isolation Support Grant does not cover people who are self-isolating after returning to the UK from abroad, unless they have tested positive for coronavirus or have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by the Test and Protect Service.

* 1. **Are students eligible for the SISG payments?**

Provided that a student meets all of the SISG eligibility criteria, including working and meeting the low income criteria, they can apply.

* 1. **Can discretionary payments be made to people not in employment/self-employment?**

Only people working or self-employed are eligible for a SISG. Discretionary support for people facing urgent financial difficulties in Scotland, who do not meet the eligibility criteria for an SISG award, can be provided through the existing Scottish Welfare Fund scheme.

* 1. **Will an SISG award have any impact on other benefits the applicant may be receiving?**

Any benefits that an applicant is receiving, or has applied for should be unaffected. This includes Universal Credit and any legacy benefits.

These payments will be subject to income tax, but they will not be subject to National Insurance Contributions (NICS). HMRC will require some data from local authorities to tax the payments. We will provide further operational guidance setting out how this information will be shared with HMRC.

* 1. **Have the pilot schemes in England encountered any difficulties in people supplying evidence due to them being confined at home?**

Information from the English scheme shows this has not been an issue in their pilot as individuals have uploaded information electronically.

Local authorities can put arrangements in place to enable this where possible. As some applicants will be unable to access a scanner, this should include accepting photographs of documents in lieu of a scan.

This does not mean that local authorities will not encounter difficulties in people supplying evidence as part of the national roll-out. If this issue does arise, a potential solution can be discussed and resolved collectively.

* 1. **Does there have to be an assessment of the family/household makeup?**

Eligibility for applicants who are already in receipt of UC is based on the individual who is asked to self-isolate so it is unnecessary to consider any other household members for these types of claims.

Where a claim is made by the parent or carer of a child who is required to isolate, eligibility is based on their household needs and an assessment needs to take into account the household composition and income.

Where an application is made by someone who is not in receipt of UC and you are considering either the underlying eligibility criteria or the UC+25% criteria you will need to consider the wider family/household makeup.

Where an individual application is being considered under the FTE Real Living Wage criteria, there is no need to consider any other household members.

* 1. **If there are more than two children in the household how do we assess the UC + 25% rate?**

To assess a claim on the basis of the UC + 25% route, we will not be applying the UC rules around the 2 child limit. The 3 child household options in the Ready Reckoner should be used for each household with 3 children without applying the UC exemptions rules. For households with 4 children or more an individualised assessment based on the UC criteria will need to be carried out.

* 1. **What would be considered as ‘loss of earnings? Will this include overtime?**

Where an employee is unable to work their planned hours because of the requirement to self-isolate and cannot work from home, a reduction in expected earnings will enable a payment to be made. The payment is not linked to the level of reduction.

* 1. **What would be considered ‘income is such that they would be entitled to one of the following benefits should an application be made’?**

The following table is an example to help decision makers understand the current UC equivalent entitlement levels at a glance. It shows the UC rates for Perth & Kinross Council area. A reference table is available, in the spreadsheet attached separately, to adapt this to the relevant Local Housing Allowance levels for each local authority.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Household composition** | **UC Applicable Amount\*** | **Earned income amount where UC would not be paid** |
| **Single earned income** | **£808.77 (£187/week)** | **£1283.76 (£296/week)** |
| **Couple earned income** | **£992.92 (£229/week)** | **£1576.06 (£363.71/week)** |
| **Lone parent (one child)\*\*** | **£1189.78 (£274.56/week)** | **£2180.54 (£503.20/week)** |
| **Couple (one child)\*\*** | **£1373.93 (£317.06/week)** | **£2472.84 (£570.66/week)** |

*\*These figures are based on UC Applicable Amounts using the appropriate LHA rate for the household circumstances.*

*\*\*increase the UCAA by £385.41 (£88.94/week) for each additional child and on top of this amount, add on a further £400.29 (£92.37/week) for each disabled child.*

* 1. **For people not on a relevant benefit, what period over which should the income be assessed?**

The assessment should be in line with the normal UC requirements and based on earnings/income prior to the individual’s isolation period and not based on the period of isolation itself.

* 1. **For people not already on a relevant benefit, how do we apply the ready reckoner?**

the Ready Reckoner has been developed to align with the eligibility criteria for low income. This provides an easy way to see if an individual’s own personal earnings, or their household’s overall income are at a level that would make them eligible.

There is no need to carry out a UC calculation as the relevant elements (adult, child, housing, work allowance) have already been taken into account. This is a simplified version of the UC calculation which treats all forms of income equally, other than those which are disregarded (see 4.26 below). Income should simply be added together and measured against the relevant threshold in the table.

* 1. **How should income that does not come from earnings be treated?**

The normal UC disregard rules around non-earned income should be used to decide whether income should be taken into account or not. This includes those benefits which are normally taken into account in full (e.g. Carer’s Allowance, ESA/IB, Retirement Pension) and those that are completely disregarded (e.g. Child Benefit, PIP, SWF payments, Scottish Social Security Grants and payments).

Other types of income will have specific rules so these should be checked e.g.:

* Maintenance payments
* Employment and training schemes
* Student loans and grants
* Occupational pensions
* Insurance schemes
* Compensation payments
  1. **Is income to be assessed gross or net of tax and NI?**

If you are applying the UC+25% rule then the normal UC income assessment rules apply.

If you are applying the individual Real Living Wage rule, then gross income would be the basis of the assessment.

* 1. **If the Real Living Wage criteria is being applied, does the person’s hourly rate need to be confirmed?**

An amount based on the full time equivalent of the Real Living Wage is being included with the Ready Reckoner as a proxy for ‘low income’ and this toll should be used to check eligibility. There is no requirement that the individual’s actual hourly rate is at or below the accepted hourly level of the RLW.

* 1. **Does the UC + 25% rule take into account the local housing costs element?**

The ready reckoner provides a table for each local authority which take into account the UC housing costs element applied in that area. This rate has been taken as a proxy for housing costs for home owners therefore there is no need to carry out a different assessment in these cases.

* 1. **Are savings and capital to be included in the assessment?**

Being required to make use of any savings or capital to support the impact of a reduction in earned income is not a requirement of the SISG.

Eligibility is based in part on receipt of or eligibility for Universal Credit or a legacy benefit. Savings and capital will already have been included in the assessment for the purposes of calculating eligibility for that benefit so there is no requirement for it to be done again for SISG where there is an existing benefit award.

Where there is no award and the UC + 25% route is being considered, the normal UC capital rules should not be taken into account.

Para 11.18 specifically exempts SISG from the main SWF provision in para 5.4 which requires an assessment of whether the applicant has savings or capital or some other source of help that they could use instead.

* 1. **What evidence should be requested to prove reduced earnings?**

Applicants will provide a bank statement and proof of employment or, if they are self-employed, evidence of trading such as self-assessment returns, trading income and proof that their business delivers services which cannot be undertaken without social contact. Newly self-employed people may be reporting their earnings on the Universal Credit portal, may not have yet submitted a self-assessment. Applicants will also declare as part of their application that they expect to lose earnings as a result of having to self-isolate. Local authorities should apply the standard of evidence generally required for the SWF and may ask the applicant to provide other information to confirm eligibility.

* 1. **What provisions have been made to minimise Fraud?**

When someone is contacted by Test and Protect and asked to self-isolate they receive a follow-up call from their local authority. This will help to ensure that only those who have been asked to self-isolate will be contacted by their Local Authority. In addition a data-sharing agreement between all 32 Local Authorities has now been approved, which means that it will be possible for Local Authorities to be quickly aware of multiple claims made in more than one authority.

Scottish Welfare Fund teams have access to DWP benefits data already and we expect this to be able to verify that people are in receipt of the relevant benefits. Local Authorities also have access to the records of all Housing Benefit claimants in their area and access.

Applicants are asked to provide confirmation of eligibility through a bank statement, proof of employment or self-employment and confirmation that they will experience reduced earnings during their period of isolation. A decision maker may contact the applicant for more information and check with third parties (subject to the applicant’s agreement) such as employers.

* 1. **Are Self-Isolation Support Grants taxable ?**

HMRC have confirmed that the SISG is taxable. The UK Treasury has confirmed that no National Insurance Charge will be levied.

HMRC require local authorities to complete a monthly spreadsheet containing the award details issued by them for this purpose. If the applicant does not have a NINO or this cannot be found through reasonable efforts e.g. using Searchlight or payslips, the applicant’s details should not be included within the HMRC return as files cannot be actioned by HMRC without a NINO. If the NINO becomes available at a later date, it should then be added to the next monthly return.

HMRC has set up a Mail box for enquiries from Local Authorities on how to provide details of payments from the various schemes:

* General Enquiries and SDES Registration - [**testandtracesupportqueries@hmrc.gov.uk**](mailto:testandtracesupportqueries@hmrc.gov.uk)
* Nil returns - [CNI.Enquiries@hmrc.gov.uk](CNI.Enquiries@hmrc.gov.uk%3e)
  1. **Will those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) be able to claim SISG?**

The Scottish Welfare Fund is specifically listed in immigration rules as not available to those with NRPF so those individuals will not be able to apply for a Self-Isolation Support Grant.

However, we have agreed with Local Authorities that an equivalent discretionary payment can be provided to people with NRPF using provisions in the Public Health (Scotland) Act 2008. The eligibility criteria is the same as those for the SISG award with the exception of the requirement to be in receipt of a low income benefit. Separate guidance is being provided to help local authorities assess applications, including arrangements for assessing low income at the level of those benefits. The discretionary payment provided to eligible individuals with NRPF will also be £500.

* 1. **Will it be necessary to carry out an immigration status check**?

We want to avoid councils undertaking immigration status checks wherever possible. There is advice in the national guidance on establishing immigration status which may assist here but further information will be made available.

* 1. **Should an applicant who is on a Nil award UC at time of applying be treated as on a qualifying benefit?**

There may be more than one reason why an applicant has a nil UC award at the time of application e.g. they have fluctuating earnings. The normal SWF rules should be applied to determine whether someone is still a live UC case. If this cannot be determined, they may still be eligible under the Real Living Wage or UC+25% rules.

* 1. **How do we update the National Contact Tracing Centre (NCTC) List of verifiers?**

Agreed with NCTC that this list can be updated weekly – please provide names to [mirren@cosla.gov.uk](mailto:mirren@cosla.gov.uk) by 10am on Mondays, will be updated on systems for Tuesdays

* 1. **How do we contact NCTC?**

A dedicated mailbox has now been set up for any queries - [nss.nctcScotlandLAqueries@nhs.scot](mailto:nss.nctcScotlandLAqueries@nhs.scot). For busy periods, NCTC are going to look at providing some times where it would be better to get in touch to avoid long waits etc

* 1. **What is the NCTC 2nd Text process?**

Public Health Scotland are testing a solution this week where those contacts who have received a text asking them to isolate receive a 2nd text asking if they require further support, to respond by text with their postcode.  This is planned to be live soon, subject to testing, and will hopefully reduce the number of enquiries into NCTC. Note – this will not resolve the Proximity App issue.

1. **About the Self-Isolation Assistance Service**
   1. **Who will receive this service?**

The service will deliver calls to people who have been contacted by contact tracing teams either as a result of testing positive for Covid-19 or being a close contact of someone that has tested positive. The service will make contact with people who consent to their details being passed to their local authority for this purpose.

To ensure the service is targeted to people most likely to require some form of additional support whilst self-isolating, local authorities will prioritise:

* people who are on the shielding list;
* people aged 70+;
* disabled people;
* people in low income households with children;
* people in receipt of low income benefits; and
* households with children.
  1. **Will everyone contacted by contact tracing teams receive a phone call?**

Given the volumes of positive cases and the linked close contacts, the groups considered most likely to require support will be prioritised as part of this service. Regular engagement between COSLA and the Scottish Government will consider the evidence and analyse the service delivery and continue to refine the service model and to consider whether widening the list of priority groups is required.

The existing National Assistance helpline service will continue to be available for people who are self-isolating and need support. The Self-Isolation Assistance Service is an additional mechanism to ensure that where people may require support to self-isolate, they are referred to services and support that can help them.

* 1. **Are local authorities being asked to enforce compliance with self-isolation guidance as part of this service?**

Absolutely not. This is an additional service there to offer assistance to people we know may require essential practical support whilst they self-isolate. The service prioritises people on the shielding list, disabled people, older people and low income households to ensure that these people are able to access local support services whilst they self-isolate.

The service is not mandatory – people contacted by contact tracers can opt-out of their details being passed to their local authority or, if they opt-in, request no further contact from the service at any time.

Local authority teams are not being asked to enforce compliance with self-isolation as part of this service.

* 1. **How much will this service cost?**

The Scottish Government will fund the administrative cost of local authority staff delivering the outbound phone calls as part of this service. Demand for the service will depend on a number of factors including the demographics of people who are asked to self-isolate and the numbers of people required to self-isolate each day. COSLA and the Scottish Government will consider the early data reported by local authorities and the level of funding will be confirmed in due course to meet the demands of the service.

* 1. **How are the support services funded?**

The support provided through the service will be funded in a range of ways depending on which services are required.

Services provided in line with the existing National Assistance Helpline delivery including essential food and medication will be funded by the Scottish Government.  Where statutory services are required, these are funded from existing local authority budgets.  Clients may also be referred into a range of local services delivered with pre-existing funding.

* 1. **How many people will the service reach?**

The service may deliver up to 1500 phone calls a day, dependent on the numbers of people contacted by contact tracing teams who opt-in to receiving a support call. To ensure the service meets changing demands the service model is intended to be flexible to mitigate some of the pressures caused in situations where the number of people required to self-isolate varies significantly across different local authority areas.

* 1. **Can people still contact the National Assistance Helpline for support?**

Yes – the National Assistance Helpline remains available. The new outbound call service builds on the support currently available through the National Assistance Helpline to ensure that more people self-isolating are able to access the support they may require.

* 1. **Where do local authorities get information on people who are self-isolating from?**

As part of the delivery of this service, NHS National Services Scotland and Public Health Scotland have worked with local authorities to provide a data feed from the contact tracing system to provide the details of people who are self-isolating. When contacted by contact tracers, people will be asked if they want their details passed to local authorities to receive further support. Only if they consent to this will their information be passed to their local authority.

* 1. **How will people delivering the service know what support people need?**

Staff delivering this service will use a knowledge of local services, and the support available through national programmes such as the National Assistance Helpline, to engage with people self-isolating to establish what support they might require. A screening tool has been developed to assist with the initial 30 minute triage calls that will be adapted to each local authority area to reflect the diverse range of local services available in each locality.