

# UK trials self-isolation payments in highest risk areas

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The UK government is rolling out a trial of payments to people on low incomes who need to self-isolate due to COVID-19 and cannot work from home. The scheme will start on 1 September and initially apply to eligible people in Blackburn with Darwen, Pendle and Oldham.

Eligible individuals who test positive for COVID-19 will receive £130 for their 10-day self-isolation period. Other members of their household, who must isolate for 14 days, will receive £182. Those advised to self-isolate through the NHS Test and Trace system will also be entitled to a payment of up to £182 (£13 per day), depending on the length of time they must isolate for.

In order to be eligible, an individual must:

- have tested positive for COVID-19 or received a self-isolation notification from NHS Test and Trace;
- have agreed to comply with the notification from NHS Test and Trace and provided contact details to the local authority;
- be employed or self-employed and unable to work from home; and
- be receiving Universal Credit or Working Tax Credit.

The relevant local authority will conduct checks to prevent fraud. These will include employment checks or inspecting evidence of self-employment and welfare check-ins. Eligible individuals will receive payment within 48 hours of providing a notification from NHS Test and Trace and a bank statement.

The government hopes the scheme will encourage compliance with the self-isolation requirements and stop people who are (or may be) infected from going to work because they cannot afford to stay at home. Many have raised concerns that those on low incomes cannot live on statutory sick pay (£95.85 a week). The government's press release does not state whether the new payments are on top of statutory sick pay, but we assume that they are.

The government plans to undertake a rapid review of how the scheme works in the pilot areas. If the scheme effectively reaches vulnerable people, and helps reduce transmission of the virus, they intend to roll it out quickly to other areas with a high number of COVID-19 cases.

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