

**Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Castell-nedd**

**Democratic Services
Gwasanaethau Democrataidd**

Decision Notice

CABINET - URGENCY ACTION , THURSDAY, 19TH NOVEMBER, 2020

Please see below approval of decision as follows:

1. **COVID 19 Self Isolation Support and SSP Enhancement Payments - Urgency Action 27NH**

To enable the Council to make payments to eligible Individuals, social care employers and personal assistants in line with the Welsh Government schemes.

That approval be granted:

That approval be granted for the Council to administer and pay out to eligible applicants the appropriate amount set out in the Welsh Government Self Isolation Support Payment and Statutory Sick Pay Enhancement Schemes.

For Immediate Implementation

Yours sincerely

p.p Chief Executive

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Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Cabinet

17 November 2020

Report of the Director of Finance and Corporate Services – Hywel Jenkins

Matter for Decision:

COVID 19 Self Isolation Support and SSP Enhancement Payments

Wards Affected: All

Purpose of report

1. To enable the Council to make payments to eligible Individuals, social care employers and personal assistants in line with the Welsh Government schemes.

Background and Qualifying Criteria

2. The Welsh Government have announced additional grant funding of £32m to fund payments under their Self Isolation Support Payment and Statutory Sick Pay Enhancement Schemes which will be managed by Local Authorities with costs recoverable via the COVID19 Local Authority Hardship Fund.
3. The aim of these schemes are to provide financial support for those individuals who have either tested Covid positive or need to isolate as they have come into contact with Covid positive people.

Self Isolation Support Payment Scheme

4. The COVID19 Self Isolation Support Payment scheme consists of two separate grants which can be applied for:

If you have been contacted by NHS Wales Test, Trace, Protect service (TTP) and been told to self-isolate, you may be entitled to financial support via:

Self Isolation Support Payment

If you meet all of the eligibility criteria, you are entitled to an Isolation Payment of £500.

- You have been told to self-isolate by NHS Wales, Test, Trace, Protect service (TTP) on or after 23 October 2020.
- You are employed or self-employed.
- You cannot work from home and will lose income as a result.
- You are currently receiving at least one of the following benefits: Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, Income-based Employment and Support Allowance, Income-based Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit.

Or a

Discretionary Payment

You may be eligible for a £500 Discretionary Payment if you meet all of the other eligibility criteria above, but:

- You **Do Not** currently receive Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit.
- You will face financial Hardship as a result of not being able to work while you are self-isolating.

The scheme was launched by the Welsh Government and went live for applications on the Council website on 16 November 2020. Applications must be made within 14 days of being contacted by TTP or receiving a confirmed Covid positive result but claims can be backdated during this initial period to 23 October 2020. Officers will verify entitlement with data from the TTP, DWP and HMRC systems and for some contact with their employer might also be needed. Those individuals who are confirmed as Covid positive will receive one payment of £500, whilst those that have been asked to self-isolate by TTP are entitled to a maximum of 2 payments of £500

provided they are two separate instances that they have been informed to self-isolate by the TTP Service.

Each Authority must adopt the scheme and decide in each individual case when to make a payment.

Statutory Sick Pay Enhancement Scheme

5. The Statutory sick pay enhancement scheme supports care workers who only get statutory sick pay (SSP) when absent or are not eligible for SSP.

It provides funding to allow social care employers to pay eligible workers at full pay if they can't work due to COVID19.

This removes the financial disadvantage to care workers of staying away from work. This will help to protect our most vulnerable citizens. The purpose of the fund is infection control.

The scheme runs from 1 November to 31 March 2021.

To be eligible the individual must be:

- an employee of a registered care home (including children's homes)
- an employee of a domiciliary care service
- an agency care worker or agency nurse (with work booked in with a registered care home or domiciliary care service)
- bank or pool staff booked to undertake a series of shifts
- contracted staff providing daily essential services such as routine catering in care homes and having substantial contact with residents a personal assistant paid through direct payments

The payment of the SSP enhancement to normal pay only applies for the self-isolating period of confirmed Covid positive cases or for those that have been told to self-isolate, currently a maximum of 14 days. An employee with two eligible jobs may claim payments in respect of both part time wages. The payment is for staff on full time, part time or zero hours in eligible roles including care workers and nurses employed in care homes, domiciliary care workers, ancillary staff and managers in care homes, personal assistants and agency staff working in homes. The full details of eligible roles and

grant arrangements will be on the Council website. The employee can inform the employer whether they wish to be paid the SSP Enhancement Payment or will claim the Self Isolation £500 payment – they are not entitled to both.

These payments will be made by the employer who will recover the additional pay, national insurance and pension costs from the Council. Employers are entitled to claim £5 per claim to cover administrative work.

Verification checks will be undertaken and additional information may be sought from the employer prior to reimbursement of grant payment. The Council will be reimbursed for additional costs incurred in managing the grant

Financial Impact

6. Welsh Government has made available £32m on an all Wales basis for these two scheme. The Council will recover the appropriate amount from the Local Authority Hardship Fund via the monthly claim basis. It will also be able to claim for additional costs incurred in managing both grants.
7. The Council will also aim to recover any payments made should it be determined at a later date that the payments to individuals should not have been made due to incorrect or fraudulent information provided by the applicant.

Integrated Impact Assessment

8. Due to the challenging times currently being no IIA has been carried out as members will note that the Council is making available funds being made available in line with the WG Guidance and scheme.

Members will note that the scheme is to pay a grant to eligible individuals as set out in the qualifying criteria mentioned above and made available to applicants when applying for payments.

The approval of the scheme will provide financial assistance to relevant individuals in Neath Port Talbot in line with the Welsh Government grant schemes.

Valleys Community Impacts

9. Individuals and eligible businesses employing care staff across the county Borough are encouraged to apply for these grants. Award will be in line with WG scheme criteria and guidelines.

Workforce impacts

10. There will be additional staff resource time required to review and award the payments under these grant schemes. Revenues, Finance and IT staff have developed the application processes and will administer the payments of these grant schemes. Overtime and additional hours will be worked to deliver these grants for which staff will be paid additional amounts in line with the Council pay, terms and conditions.

Legal impact

11. The Council will manage the grants and application for payments in line with Welsh Government Scheme guidance. All applicants will declare that they have complied with the grant scheme terms and conditions and should it be identified that incorrect or fraudulent claims have been made the Council will pursue recovery.

Risk management

12. There are various verification checks built into the application process to minimise incorrect or invalid payments. The applicants declare that their claim is valid and the Council will pursue recovery of monies paid out should it be determined that payment should not have been made.

Consultation

13. There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendation

14. It is recommended that Members approve that the Council will administer and pay out to eligible applicants the appropriate amount set out in the Welsh Government Self Isolation Support Payment and Statutory Sick Pay Enhancement Schemes

Reason for Urgency

15. Claimants must apply for the £500 self isolation payment within 14 days of being advised to self-isolate and we must authorise payment within 3 days of having a valid claim. As such the Council will need to make payments before the next Cabinet meeting scheduled for 25 November.

Reason for proposed decision

16. To enable the Council to make payments to eligible businesses and individuals in line with the Welsh Government Schemes

Implementation of decision

17. The decision is an urgent one for immediate implementation, subject to the consent of the relevant Scrutiny Chair and is therefore not subject to the call-in procedure.

Appendices

18. None

List of background papers

19. Welsh Government Grant Scheme Guidance for the Self Isolation Support Payment and Statutory Sick Pay Enhancement Schemes

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