



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From the Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care*

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Local Authority Leaders
cc: Local Authority Chief Executives

20 September 2020

Dear Leader

SELF-ISOLATION FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19 AND THEIR CLOSE CONTACTS

Thank you for your continuing hard work and effort in helping to tackle the challenges presented by COVID-19. Your role is critical to containing the pandemic and mitigating its effects on individuals, their families and communities. I am writing to inform you about – and ask for your support to implement – planned changes to self-isolation requirements and financial support for people who are required to self-isolate.

Ensuring that people who have been infected and their close contacts isolate is one of our most powerful tools for controlling transmission of COVID-19. By ensuring that people self-isolate when they need to do so, we will reduce transmission of coronavirus in the UK and help prevent family, friends and the community from contracting the virus, as well as helping to protect the NHS and vital public services. Your role in making this work will be critical.

This is why the Government is announcing today that, from 28 September in England, there will be a new legal duty on all those who test positive for COVID-19 or are identified by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact, requiring them to self-isolate. Failure to comply will be an offence carrying a fine of at least £1,000 and up to £10,000 for multiple breaches.

To reinforce the importance of self-isolation and help ensure people have access to the support they need, NHS Test and Trace will work with local authorities to ensure more regular contact with individuals who have to self-isolate. We are asking local authorities to focus on the principle of encouraging, educating and supporting compliance – we know you are already doing a tremendous amount and you will not be expected to enforce the legal requirements. The police will have the power to investigate and fine those who do not follow the rules.

Alongside this new requirement, the government is providing funding for a new Test and Trace Support Payment scheme for people on low incomes who are unable to work while they are self-isolating because they cannot work from home.

We are asking local authorities in England to put in place arrangements to process applications and make these payments. We will work with you to implement these arrangements as quickly as possible and by 12 October at the latest, with eligible individuals who are notified on or after 28 September that they have to self-isolate able to make backdated claims where necessary.

I appreciate that these new arrangements have significant implications for your work, at a time when you are under considerable pressure. I also know that you are uniquely placed to work alongside us to make these vital changes in the interest of local people and wider communities, and we will work with you and ensure that you have the funds and data you need to make this happen. I hope the attached Q&A document is helpful in setting out more detail on what is planned.

I am deeply grateful for the work of local authorities in responding to the challenges posed by COVID-19. By working together across local authorities, NHS Test and Trace, public health and police colleagues to ensure that people self-isolate where necessary, we will make a real difference in tackling the spread of this virus.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matt". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

MATT HANCOCK