

New package to support and enforce self-isolation

People will be required by law to self-isolate from 28 September, supported by payment of £500 for those on lower incomes who cannot work from home and have lost income as a result. New fines for those breaching self-isolation rules will start at £1,000 – bringing this in line with the penalty for breaking quarantine after international travel – but could increase to up to £10,000 for repeat offences and for the most egregious breaches, including for those preventing others from self-isolating.

For example, this could include business owners who threaten self-isolating staff with redundancy if they do not come to work, sending a clear message that this will not be tolerated.

A number of steps will be taken to make sure that people are complying with the rules, these include:

- NHS Test and Trace call handlers making regular contact with those self-isolating, with the ability to escalate any suspicion of non-compliance to Local Authorities and local police;
- Using police resources to check compliance in highest incidence areas and in high-risk groups, based on local intelligence;
- Investigating and prosecuting high-profile and egregious cases of non-compliance; and
- Acting on instances where third parties have identified others who have tested positive, but are not self-isolating.

Recognising that self-isolation is one of the most powerful tools for controlling the transmission of Covid-19, this new Test and Trace Support payment of £500 will ensure that those on low incomes are able to self-isolate without worry about their finances.

Just under 4 million people who are in receipt of benefits in England will be eligible for this payment, which will be available to those who are required to self-isolate from 28 September.

Local Authorities will be working quickly to set up these self-isolation support schemes and we expect them to be in place by 12 October. Those who start to self-isolate from 28 September will receive backdated payments once the scheme is set up in their Local Authority.

This financial support comes as the government places a legal requirement on people to self-isolate when instructed to by NHS Test and Trace and introduces tougher fines for breaking the rules.

Many people are following the rules around self-isolation, but these steps will make sure more do and help ensure the public do not unknowingly spread the virus.

The Prime Minister said:

The best way we can fight this virus is by everyone following the rules and self-isolating if they're at risk of passing on coronavirus. And so nobody underestimates just how important this is, new regulations will mean you are legally obliged to do so if you have the virus or have been asked to do so by NHS Test and Trace.

People who choose to ignore the rules will face significant fines. We need to do all we can to control the spread of this virus, to prevent the most vulnerable people from becoming infected, and to protect the NHS and save lives.

And while most people are doing their absolute level best to comply with the rules, I don't want to see a situation where people don't feel they are financially able to self-isolate.

That's why we're also introducing a new £500 Test and Trace Support payment for those on low incomes who are required by NHS Test and Trace to remain at home to help stop the spread of the virus.