

COVID-19 leave and self-isolation support factsheet

Overview: Workers and businesses have responsibilities to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The purpose of the COVID-19 leave and self-isolation scheme is to support workers financially to self-isolate, or while ill with COVID-19, where this is required so that all businesses and workers can do the right thing.

The COVID-19 leave payment scheme will provide support (through employers/to sole traders and the self-employed) for those people unable to work who are in self-isolation, are sick with COVID-19, or caring for others with COVID-19. The payments will be \$585.80 per week for full time and \$350 per week for part time workers.

The payment does not affect any paid leave entitlements that are owed and is available even if an employee is on paid leave for part of the period. It is not available to those who can work from home during the period of self-isolation, and who can be paid normally by their employer.

Estimated total cost: \$126.5 million across the 8 weeks, reflecting an estimated uptake by 27,000 workers every two weeks for the next 8 weeks. This represents a scenario where:

If the numbers of people taking up the scheme were only to average 10,000 over the 8 week period, the cost could fall to \$46.8 million. The numbers could also be higher – this is not a prediction of the prevalence of self-isolation or sickness. It depends on how many people will need to self-isolate or will be sick with COVID-19, and how many in self-isolation will be able to work normally from home.

Payments able to be applied for and received from: Employers will apply for the leave on behalf of any employee who is self-isolating or sick. Payments can be backdated to 17 March, 2020.

Further details: Affected full time workers (those who work more than 20 hours per week) will receive \$585.80 per week, and part time workers (20 hours or less) \$350 per week – the same amount as under the wage subsidy scheme.

The payment is made by MSD to employers, who will then be required to pass it on to the affected employee. MSD will pay on a fortnightly basis once it receives an application.

Other key parameters of the scheme are:

- Eligibility is open to all employees legally working in New Zealand (through their employers), the self-employed, and contractors.
- Eligibility will only be for workers who are not able to work from home.
- The entitlement is for:
 - Those who self-isolate in accordance with public health guidance and who register with Healthline;
 - Those who are ill with COVID-19;
 - Those who cannot work because they are caring for a dependent in either of these circumstances.
- Those who leave New Zealand to travel overseas from 16 March, 2020 will not be eligible for this payment for self-isolation on their return.

Workers taking sick leave before 17 March, 2020 can only access the scheme for time spent on sick leave from 17 March, 2020. It will not be accessible for those who have travelled overseas since 16 March, 2020.

Example

John Smith, a full-time plumber working for *EasyFlow Pipes Ltd*, arrived back from a three-week holiday in Sydney on Tuesday, March 17. Despite feeling well, the Government's self-isolation restrictions meant John had to self-isolate for 14 days.

John had already used his mandatory sick days earlier this year and his employer was not able to cover his wage for 14 days while he was off work. His employer applied to MSD for the sick leave support for John and received a lump sum payment of \$1,171.60 to pass on to John for the two weeks he is in self isolation.

More information on the sick leave scheme, including how to apply, and other support for businesses can be found at www.govt.nz/coronavirus, and www.business.govt.nz.