

The impact of financial and other targeted support on rates of self-isolation or quarantine [SPI-B: 16 September 2020]

Key points

1. The effectiveness of the NHS test, trace and isolate system in reducing transmission of SARS-CoV-2 depends critically upon self-isolation of people who may have COVID-19 and their contacts
2. Current rates of full self-isolation are likely very low (<20%) based on self-report. They are particularly low among the youngest and the poorest, thereby likely contributing to inequalities in the impact of COVID-19.
3. Self-isolation rates would likely be improved with the addition of different forms of support. These include:
 - a. Financial support: Ensuring that those required to self-isolate would not experience financial hardship in doing so.
 - b. Tangible, non-financial support: Proactive outreach is needed, to identify and resolve any practical needs that people have (e.g. access to food, care for elderly relatives).
 - c. Information: Improved communication to the general public explaining how and when to self-isolate, and why it helps, would be useful, in addition to more detailed advice for those self-isolating (e.g. a help-line or SMS service).
 - d. Emotional support: For those who need it, access to social support or more formal clinical interventions delivered remotely if possible.
4. Provision of a support package that encompasses these four components – but particularly the first - should be rolled-out and evaluated as a matter of urgency in order to realise the considerable investment made in testing programmes and the potential of testing and self-isolation to contribute to economic recovery and prevention of disease.