

COVID-19 Notice

Friday 10 April 2020



FRONTLINE STAFF ISSUES

This notice is to provide frontline staff with information regarding the availability of alternative accommodation access to food during the COVID-19 pandemic. You will all appreciate that circumstances are moving at a very fast pace, and further information will be circulated as soon as it becomes available.

CRISIS ACCOMMODATION

The Trust will provide alternative accommodation for staff who meet the relevant criteria as set out below, and are making the voluntary decision to reside close to their work base or away from home.

Demand will determine and priority consideration may be given to staff with home living conditions that include family members who meet one or more of the descriptions set out in Department of Health (DoH) Guidance as follows:

Department of Health (DoH) Guidance

Aged 70 or over; under 70 with an underlying health condition (ie anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds) such as chronic respiratory, heart or kidney disease; chronic neurological conditions, a learning disability or cerebral palsy; diabetes; problems with your spleen; a weakened immune system; over 28 weeks pregnant.

Please refer to the following link for further information:

[Guidance on social distancing for everyone in the UK](#)

Criteria 1 Staff who are not displaying COVID-19 symptoms, but are well, and making the voluntary decision to reside close to their work base to work additional hours or be on call

and / or

Staff who are not displaying COVID-19 symptoms, but are well, and making a request to be accommodated close to their work base or away from their home due to concerns about family members that they live with who are considered high risk/vulnerable to COVID-19 **(based on DoH guidance above)**

Criteria 2 Staff who are displaying COVID-19 symptoms, arrangements have been made for them to be tested and whilst awaiting results, require to be away from home **(based on DoH guidance above)**

Criteria 3 Staff who have tested positive for COVID-19 and require to be isolated away from home **(based on DoH guidance above)**

Crisis Accommodation Team

The Trust has established a Crisis Accommodation Team to manage requests for accommodation and to make appropriate accommodation bookings for those who meet one of the above criteria.

The team operate a rota between 09.00 and 21.00 on a seven day a week basis.

Please note that the team work remotely which means there is no central contact telephone number. **ALL** requests for accommodation and/or queries relating to accommodation (either before you decide to request accommodation or when already residing in accommodation) should be submitted to the team's central email address crisis.accommodation@nias.hscni.net

The person on duty will call you back if your query arrives between the team's operating hours of 09.00 – 21.00. Queries submitted outside of these hours will be responded to when the next shift starts.

How to apply for crisis accommodation

Send an email with your name, phone number and brief details of your request to crisis.accommodation@nias.hscni.net. A member of the team will call you back and take you through a short form to gather some personal details, for example, the best email address to contact you on. They will then book and confirm accommodation for you according to which of the three criteria you fall under.

Length of stay

This will be discussed to ascertain your needs on a case-by-case basis prior to making a booking. For example, for staff who meet the requirements of Criteria 1, you may be requesting accommodation because:

- You wish to reside close to your work base in order to work additional hours or to be on call;
- You need to reside away from your home because a member of your household is required to self-isolate for 14 days;
- You need to reside away from your home because a member of your household is required to self-isolate for 12 weeks.

What to expect

The Trust has access to a limited number of hotels throughout Northern Ireland, given the vast majority of hotels have closed in response to COVID-19 social distancing rules. These hotels have re-opened to support Health & Social Care (HSC) staff and are operating with limited staff.

You will be booked into a single occupancy room on a bed & breakfast basis. Breakfast tends to be 'breakfast in a bag' or a continental breakfast. A limited number of hotels can provide lunch and dinner. You can choose to either eat in the hotel in which case the hotel will recharge the Trust, or buy your meals wherever you choose and claim £20 per day allowance in line with Agenda for Change Terms & Conditions of Service.

Checking out of accommodation / cancelling a booking

Staff who decide to check out of their accommodation earlier than the number of days agreed at the time of booking **MUST** email crisis.accommodation@nias.hscni.net to let the team know. The same rule applies to staff who decide they do not want to take up the accommodation booked for them prior to moving into the accommodation. The Trust must ensure good governance which includes knowing how many staff are in crisis accommodation on a daily basis.

AVAILABILITY OF FOOD IN HOSPITALS FOR NIAS STAFF

The Trust has been working collaboratively with the other Trusts in order to support you to get the food you need during the pandemic. We are very pleased to advise you that NIAS staff are welcome to avail of arrangements for food in each Trust area. We are in the process of identifying opening hours, locations etc. Below is what we know so far: (Please ensure you adhere to the social distancing rules)

Trust	Arrangement	Opening Hours
Belfast	Free food and beverages in canteens and restaurants	
Northern	Free food and beverages	
South Eastern	Free food for collection in Lagan Valley, Ulster and Downe hospitals	Ulster: 07.30 – 14.00 <i>Hot food from 08.30</i> Downe: 09.30 – 14.00 <i>Hot food from 09.30</i> LVH: 09.30 – 14.00 <i>Hot food from 10.00</i>
Southern	Free food and beverages	
Western	Food in Altnagelvin and SWAH restaurants is chargeable. After the restaurants close, staff can access a frozen meal which can be reheated in a microwave on the first floor of each hospital.	

MEAL BOXES

The Trust has been working to identify a provider of meal boxes that can be distributed to local stations for NIAS staff who are mobile and require to take food with them. We are pleased to advise that we have identified a provider and hope to have this initiative available for staff next week. We will let you know when the meal boxes will be available.



LAUNDRY

The Trust have been developing an arrangement to ensure staff residing in crisis accommodation can have clothes laundered in the event laundry facilities are not available. Good progress has been made in this regard and Estates colleagues are finalising on the process. Further information to follow in this regard.

SHOWERING FACILITIES

The Trust have been in engaging with local councils and HSC Trusts to provide additional showering capacity for our staff who require this. We have had very positive feedback in relation to their facilities being made available to NIAS staff. Some Divisions, for example Western Division, are in the process of obtaining additional shower capacity for NIAS staff. If your own station facility is not meeting your needs in this regard, please raise this through your line management and the Trust will seek to provide an alternative for you.

FURTHER UPDATES TO FOLLOW – STAY SAFE EVERYONE!