

## A guide to providing accommodation for your internationally recruited workforce

### Contents

Introduction and purpose .....	2
Where to start: planning and partnership working .....	2
Planning .....	2
Escalation and partnership working .....	2
Upon arrival and settling in: short term solutions .....	3
Leasing .....	3
Example: Leasing offsite.....	3
Refurbishments.....	3
Serviced apartments and hotels .....	4
Preparing to stay: longer term solutions .....	4
Private rental market.....	4
Understand your local market and engage with local agents .....	4
Documentation for letting agencies .....	4
Developing a Housing Hub.....	5
Mid-market rental options.....	5
Affordable housing.....	5
Homestay .....	5
Example: Tailor Homestay to your Board .....	6
Further help .....	6

## Introduction and purpose

This resource brings together guidance, contacts and good practice examples to help Boards across Scotland develop a strategy to support the accommodation of their internationally recruited staff.

This resource is part of a package of wider support provided by the Centre for Workforce Supply to enhance the ethical and effective international recruitment of healthcare staff.

Recruitment from outside of the UK to the NHS continues to feature as an important part of the workforce supply strategy of NHS organisations across Scotland. It plays a vital role in growing and developing the healthcare workforce in line with increasing demand as outlined [by the National Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care in Scotland](#) and the [NHS Scotland Recovery Plan](#) post-Covid-19.

Whilst there is a robust recruitment infrastructure in place to support ethical and effective recruitment of international healthcare staff to Scotland, finding short and long term accommodation options for individuals is becoming increasingly difficult due to competing demands on housing stock. High quality housing is essential for newly recruited healthcare staff who require a safe space to adjust to life in Scotland, far from existing support networks of family and friends, while working in a demanding role and studying for the necessary exams to acquire registration to practice in the UK. It is a vital factor in retaining these newly recruited members of the NHS and to attracting future candidates.

This document draws on learning from trusts in the NHS in England and Boards in NHS Scotland about what has worked for them to help identify potential accommodation solutions and provide practice tips on how to take these solutions forward at a local level.

## Where to start: planning and partnership working

### Planning

When thinking about supporting your international recruits, break down the accommodation needs (and therefore the solutions and support required) into both the short and long term and think about when the different cohorts of recruits will arrive and who require housing. Take into account the various personal circumstances and the overall numbers/timescales.

You should ensure that the recruits understand prior to arrival what your Board offers in terms of short term accommodation, including whether it is shared, how long they will be able to stay and what costs (if anything) they will need to pay.

### Escalation and partnership working

The current challenges around accommodation are widely known and unfortunately there is no single option that will solve the issue in our current social and economic climate. Utilising a number of resources through a coordinated approach, involving a variety of stakeholders at a local level will be the most effective way to respond to your workforce/Board's specific needs.

You can escalate the challenges you are facing around accommodation through your Board's governance process to alert to the challenges you face and include whether work in this area is progressing / who the key stakeholders that can help you are.

Don't try to solve the issue alone. Work with your colleagues in your estates, property and development teams to ascertain what accommodation support your Board is already providing and what plans (if any) are in the pipeline. Find out which colleagues are responsible for assisting you to ensure that workforce accommodation needs (including that of international recruits) are considered in any future development plans. Housing international recruits and wider Board staff is not the sole responsibility of one individual within a Board, therefore identifying the right people who can support you will be vital.

## Upon arrival and settling in: short term solutions

Scotland is taking a consistent Once for Scotland approach to ensuring that internationally recruited nurses, midwives and AHPs are provided with accommodation support for a minimum of 3 months of upon arrival in Scotland. There are various different options boards can explore to provide this accommodation:

### Leasing

Your Board can explore leasing purpose built accommodation (the entire building) or certain units within a building. Your estates team may be aware of any existing agreements in this area or if not can assist in exploring this option

If your Board needs support with exploring leasing, they can contact the Central Legal Office, where the contact for leasing is [Tony Allen](#), Senior Solicitor in the commercial property team in NHS National Services Scotland.

### Example: Leasing offsite

The Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust has used this route. Please see slides 11-23 of the NHSE accommodation spotlight session on the 8<sup>th</sup> Nov [here](#) for more information.

### Refurbishments

Boards may consider refurbishment of existing buildings to provide purpose built accommodation for staff. You should liaise with your estates team to understand if any work is ongoing in this area or how this can be progressed further. Three NHS Scotland Boards have already undertaken refurbishment projects and these are NHS Orkney, Shetland and Fife.

Example of Refurbishment: In NHS Fife they had existing onsite accommodation of 5 Blocks with 20 single beds per Block with communal areas. The plan was to bring properties up to a minimum standard that met existing building regulations for onsite accommodation. The refurbished accommodation now houses up to 100 staff including 40 IR nurses. The nurses have their own bedrooms for studying and communal areas for cooking and socialising which has helped with integration. For more detail on this project please contact [Alison Macarthur](#).

## Serviced apartments and hotels

If other options do not come to fruition boards may choose to place newly recruited staff in serviced apartments or hotels. You can contact CTM for discounted rates ([nhss@travelctm.com](mailto:nhss@travelctm.com)) or try reaching out to local companies to see if they would be willing to provide a discounted rate in exchange for a rolling / block booking or a reduced service.

## Preparing to stay: longer term solutions

### Private rental market

For most internationally recruited staff, long term accommodation options will mean renting from a private landlord or letting agency.

You should prepare candidates as early as possible, as part of the pastoral support for finding longer term accommodation options.

It might be helpful to create a set of standard documents which Board colleagues can use to support international recruits, this will reduce duplication of effort, but also provide a resource to IRs and wider recruitment staff.

For example, a local guide might be useful in setting out how private rental accommodation options can be sourced and what documentation will be required in advance. CWS are looking at the option of developing a Once for Scotland NHS facing guide to support recruits in sourcing long term accommodation, Until such times the following resources may be helpful:

- [Introduction to Renting a Property in Scotland | s1homes](#)
- [A Guide to Renting Privately in Scotland - Shelter Scotland](#)
- [Renting a home - Citizens Advice Scotland](#)

### Understand your local market and engage with local agents

You can work with your fellow IR colleagues to understand how best to engage with agents in your local area for example development of a standard arrangement or documentation to assist staff secure properties. NHS Golden Jubilee have developed a strong relationship with one of their local agents. For more information please contact [Elaine Barr](#)

In addition, consider what support you can provide candidates for the private rental market e.g., letters of employment, salary sacrifice loans for upfront costs etc.

Relationships can be developed with local letting agents and landlords can be useful to keep ahead of available properties that are coming onto the market.

An example of how this is can be found in slide 24 onwards in the NHSE accommodation spotlight session on the 8<sup>th</sup> Nov [here](#).

### Documentation for letting agencies

Many internationally recruited healthcare staff members will face issues providing letting agencies with the documentation required to secure housing.

An official letter of confirmation of employment from the Board may assist (templates for which can be found [here](#)) however guarantors are often required and this might not be something the Board can support with. [Housing Hand](#) (guarantor & house finding service) can act as a guarantor service. They also offer a house finding service using agencies that are guaranteed to accept Housing Hand as the guarantor. For this process applicants would require 3 months of pay slips, proof of id and a co-signatory. The service costs around £42 a month. They operate throughout Scotland and for the house finding service, have agents listed in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen & Dundee.

## Developing a Housing Hub

In order to deal with the ongoing accommodation challenges and cost of living crisis, the Hampshire & Isle of Wight integrated care system in England used funding from NHS England to develop a housing hub service that supported all the trusts in that geographical area covering numerous hospital sites. Six band 5 housing officers were recruited to work with the Citizens Advice to provide expert advice in housing. They worked with letting agents to source possible properties and provided the candidates with advice on how to apply for them. Further details about how this work can be found in slide 11 of the NHSE Accommodation Spotlight session on the 5th of July [here](#) or by contacting the project manager [Mandy Weldon](#).

## Mid-market rental options

There are a number of mid-market landlords that can provide a more affordable housing option than private rental. Examples of such landlords include Touchstone ([www.touchstoneresi.co.uk](http://www.touchstoneresi.co.uk)) and New Avenue Living ([www.newavenueliving.co.uk](http://www.newavenueliving.co.uk))

You can look to establish a point of contact with these landlords which can and create an opportunity for engagement with your Board colleagues in estates and facilities to try to leverage 'at scale' opportunities with these larger landlords.

## Affordable housing

You should work with local authorities and housing associations to understand options that may be available such as special let agreements or referral schemes and what housing projects are currently underway. Special let agreements are where, after discussion, the allocation policy may be amended based on factors such as the applicant has moved to the area to take up employment as a key worker. You may also be able to influence the types of property and infrastructure such as local transport needs for NHS staff to travel to the hospital.

## Homestay

[Homestay](#) is an online platform offering people the opportunity to stay with a local member of the community in their own home, for a fee, for up to 12 months. It's an affordable accommodation option in either the short or longer term and is suitable for those interested in sharing their living space and experiencing the local community / culture. There is a 7% booking fee to be paid by the guest. It may also be an opportunity for current NHS staff to rent out space in their homes to support them financially during the cost of living crisis currently faced by the UK. You can find out more about Homestay using the resources in the IR Leads Teams folder [here](#) or by contacting the director [Yvonne Finlay](#).

Example: Tailor Homestay to your Board

NHS organisations in the North West of England have created a special NHS to NHS Homestay portal which means only NHS staff in the area can let out and rent via Homestay. For more information on how you can explore this option feel free to contact the project manager [Jodie Golightly](#).

You can also find a presentation recently given by the North West Region project team, a 1-page communication about Homestay and the marketplace terms and conditions [here](#).

## Further help

More detail on the examples in this guide can be found in the resources saved in the IR Leads Teams Accommodation folder [here](#).

If you have any questions about this document, or need further support please contact CWS at [nes.cws@nhs.scot](mailto:nes.cws@nhs.scot).