NEW NHS HOMES SCHEME LAUNCHED BY SHORT TERM LET INDUSTRY TO PROVIDE FREE ACCOMMODATION FOR LONDON'S NHS WORKERS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS

Submitted by: OneOnOne communications
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The UK Short Term Accommodation Association (STAA) is promoting a scheme to offer free accommodation to London's NHS key workers. Together with a number of partners who usually operate in the short term let market, the scheme, called 'NHS Homes', will provide free accommodation and additional services to NHS staff to enable them to stay near the hospitals they work in during the COVID-19 outbreak.

UnderTheDoormat, a London based business that typically provides luxury short term rental accommodation to guests seeking a home stay in London, launched the original scheme earlier this week. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a downturn in its bookings so it switched its attention to working with its customers – the property owners - and partner company Laundryheap, an on-demand laundry and dry cleaning service, to open up homes that might otherwise sit empty over this period to NHS Key Workers. The high level of interest shown in the scheme led CEO, Merilee Karr, to turn this into an industry-wide solution, with the STAA providing one point of contact for the NHS to access homes across many companies in the sector.

The NHS Homes scheme, which can be found at nhshomes.co.uk, is officially launched today with six partners: UnderTheDoormat (https://underthedoormat.com/), Laundryheap (https://www.laundryheap.co.uk/), onefinestay (https://www.onefinestay.com/), Homes & Villas by Marriott International (https://homes-and-villas.marriott.com/), Altido (https://stayaltido.com/) and LoveHomeSwap (https://www.lovehomeswap.com/v2):

• UnderTheDoormat, onefinestay, Altido and LoveHomeSwap will be providing free accommodation in partnership with their property-owners.
• Laundryheap will be delivering clean linen and towels for the medical staff
• Homes & Villa by Marriott International will be providing amenities for guests

The scheme has already secured support from the Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) and at least one NHS Trust in broadcasting the information about the available accommodation.

Karr, who was key in launching the original scheme, is also Chair of the short-term rental trade body the STAA, so has appealed to its members and any property management company in the UK who can help, to join the new NHS Homes scheme.

She commented, "The original scheme has only been running for a couple of days but already demand is outstripping supply. We have had an overwhelming response and we need more homes to help more people across the country. We're currently in the process of hosting staff who are working at a number of hospitals in London including the Royal London, King's College, St Mary's, Guy's, St George's, Charing Cross and Chelsea & Westminster.

"I am delighted that we are able to help the NHS key workers who literally put their lives on the line for us every day and it's great to work together with other incredible companies from across the industry to set up this scheme. We are speaking to companies and property portfolio owners to bring on

more rooms and properties and the additional services that will make stays for NHS workers comfortable. We want to get as many companies on board as possible to make this a truly industry-wide initiative."

The main reasons that NHS staff need accommodation are:
• to protect vulnerable members at their own homes including family members with cancer, elderly parents, etc.
• they're relocating to London to help, having been called into the frontlines from different roles
• some have been evicted either by landlords or effectively asked to leave by flat mates

Laundryheap CEO, Deyan Dimitrov, comments, "The UK's NHS Key Workers need our support more than ever, so we're delighted to be able to offer a helping hand. We hope that our services to provide freshly laundered linens and towels can help ease some of the strain during this difficult period. Our on-demand services operate door-to-door and are contactless, meaning guests can rest assured that their laundry has been taken care of using methods tailored to kill viruses and other harmful germs."

Chris Stephenson, Senior Director, Homes & Villas by Marriott International, said, "We are privileged to be able to join forces with other companies in the short term rental sector to support NHS workers who are on the frontline protecting us all in these very challenging times."

Lavina Liyanage, Chief Markets Officer - City Collection, onefinestay, said, "We feel it is so important that everyone does their part to support each other in these times of crisis. Hospitality is in our DNA so in partnership with our homeowners, we are doing our bit to look after and support NHS Key Workers by opening up available homes for free. It's great that the industry is coming together as one for the common good and we hope to see more businesses pledge their support."

Jeremy Slater, Regional General Manager, Altido, said, "We are really happy to be part of this wonderful initiative. We are sending regular updates to our owners, some of whom have already expressed a desire to get involved in this way. We'll try to sign up as many as we can."

Who to contact:
NHS workers who want to request accommodation and those companies with properties to offer the scheme should go to www.nhshomes.co.uk.

- Ends -

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