

# **NHS staff praise NHS Homes scheme and share their stories as 2,500 homes across UK pledged for free use by NHS staff during COVID-19 crisis**

Submitted by: OneOnOne communications

Thursday, 30 April 2020

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NHS Homes, the scheme launched by the short-term accommodation sector to offer free homes and amenities to NHS key workers, now has over 2,500 properties available for use across the UK. NHS staff who have used the scheme have expressed their gratitude and homeowners have explained why they have offered their properties to the programme.

The scheme is operated by a number of professional management companies, under the umbrella of trade body the UK Short Term Accommodation Association (STAA). It enables NHS staff to stay in homes near the hospitals they work in for free during the COVID-19 crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a massive downturn in bookings in the short-term rental market, so a number of companies in the sector have joined forces with their customers - homeowners who rent out their properties while they are away – to offer homes to NHS workers to stay in, that would otherwise stay empty. It started with a handful of companies including UnderTheDoormat and onefinestay and has grown in just a few weeks to more than 30, including Sykes Holiday Cottages, with more companies joining every day, from holiday homes companies to serviced apartment businesses.

Merilee Karr, Chair of the STAA and CEO of UnderTheDoormat, said, "It has taken a tremendous amount of hard work to launch this scheme and get it up and running so quickly. I would like to thank everyone involved for their efforts – the property management and hospitality companies, firms offering services and the homeowners who offered their homes to NHS workers for free. The value that the scheme is delivering is clearly demonstrated by the comments we have received from the NHS workers themselves. We couldn't be prouder to be part of an industry that is helping the crisis in such a meaningful way."

NHS workers have expressed their thanks to the NHS Homes scheme, UnderTheDoormat, onefinestay and Altido whose properties they stayed in:

Jayni Tank, Queen Elizabeth Hospital: "I just wanted to say thank you for organising this for me. You can't understand the relief my family and I feel since I'm not going home after a shift, due to their vulnerabilities. It has also meant I was able to volunteer for more weekend work as we are so understaffed."

John Thornton, anaesthetist at Chelsea & Westminster Hospital: "It's a fantastic gesture on your part and very helpful. If one of your family gets sick, you can avoid them and not have to isolate for two weeks."

Sheema Khanum, paediatric nurse at the Royal London Hospital: "I needed to go to work but I wanted to protect my family and was worried about bringing back the virus with me. I emailed NHS Homes and they got back to me really quickly. I moved in two days later. This gave me the peace of mind I needed."

Charlotte Orton, whose husband Tom is an NHS key worker at Charing Cross Hospital: "We have been so

very blessed by onefinestay and the homeowners' incredible generosity; we cannot thank you enough. Tom is just heading off now for a night shift at the hospital. Such extraordinary kindness, we are completely blown away to be honest. We will be praying for you and your team during these difficult times.

Neil Nino Navarra, Barts Health NHS Trust and The London Independent Hospital: "I am so fortunate to be able to stay at one of the lovely homes from onefinestay. I was only hoping to get a basic accommodation but what I got far exceeded my expectations. The flat is beautiful, spacious and it has everything that I need. The best part though is the top-class service that I got from the onefinestay team. I couldn't ask for more and I couldn't thank them enough."

Sophie, nurse at University College Hospital: "I would love to express how grateful I am for having a quiet, calm and clean place to come back to after returning to work on the front line during the pandemic. Mental health is so important especially in times like this and having this space without the worry of cost or infecting family members is invaluable. Really appreciate all of your support during this crazy time!"

Susan Ogden, nurse at Chelsea & Westminster Hospital: "Thank you - that's wonderful news and ample relief for me and my family - please pass my gratitude to the owner"

Dr Somya Agrawal, Royal Marsden Hospital: "It will make life so much easier and can't thank the owner and you all enough."

Janine Scott, nurse at Chelsea & Westminster Hospital: "I really appreciate this and thank you for helping."

Comments from homeowners who pledged their homes through UnderTheDoormat and onefinestay:

Simon Aram, South West London: "After seeing the request from UnderTheDoormat to make properties available for NHS staff I had no hesitation in offering mine. To be able to offer something back to those who are sacrificing so much for our benefit was something I felt compelled to do. I can only hope that in providing them with somewhere to stay, and thus prevent them from potentially exposing loved ones to the virus, has helped ease some of the incredible strain they must be under."

Simon Bell, South London: "When UnderTheDoormat asked us to get involved it just felt like some way of being able to help when we're so far away and so many people are suffering so much worse. It was a no-brainer, a brilliant idea."

Kathleen Wilson, West London: "I got an email from UnderTheDoormat about NHS Homes and thought wow, this is fantastic, I would rather it was utilised than just sitting there empty. Three days later they had it set up and ready. I just wanted to give something back to the NHS."

Harriet Baring, Chelsea: "We are all desperate to help our incredible NHS staff in any way we can. When they are exhausted at the end of their shift, the use of our flat feels like the least we can do. We are so impressed with onefinestay supporting the initiative, we just had to join them."

Nigel & Nicola Forsyth, Primrose Hill: "I think it's the least we can do. As we are fortunate enough to have spare accommodation in the worst hit area of the UK. We cannot think of any group of people who deserve the use of it more than our fabulous, indefatigable NHS."

Some of the companies that are supporting the scheme include UnderTheDoormat, Laundryheap, onefinestay, Homes & Villas by Marriott International, Altido, LoveHomeSwap, Veeve, Air Peace of Mind, Dreams Unlimited, Mason & Fifth, Park Lane City Apartments, Hemmingfords, CityRelay, Portfolio Serviced Apartments, Sykes Holiday Cottages, Piki Insurance, Guardhog and Airlinen.

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](http://www.nhshomes.co.uk).

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