

POLICY DOCUMENT

Allocation of Placements: Special Circumstances – Guidance for Doctors and Dentists in Training

(Northern Ireland Deanery)

2020 (Version 2.3)
TRG>QMG

Policy Review Schedule

Date first Approved: February 2018

Last Approved: August 2020

Date of Next Review: August 2022

Policy Owner: Senior Education Manager

Amendment Overview

Version	Date	Pages	Comments	Actioned
2017 – 1.1	01/11/2017	10	New policy drafted based on national Foundation guidance and GP and Hospital Specialty training guidance developed by R Campbell	D Hughes
2017 – 1.2	07/12/2017	10	Revised in advance of TRG	D Hughes
2017 – 1.3 2017 – 1.4	03/01/2018 04/01/2018	10	Further revisions following feedback from working group	D Hughes
2018 – 1.5	01/02/2018	10	Submitted to TRG for approval – revisions agreed	D Hughes
2018 – 1.6	08/03/2018	10	Revised and submitted to TRG Approved	D Hughes
2018 – 1.7	18/10/2018	10	Revised following working group meeting and submitted to TRG	D Hughes
2018 – 1.8 2018 – 1.9	05/11/2018 11/11/2018	10	Comments from TRG members incorporated Approved	D Hughes
2019 – 2.0	07/03/2019 11/04/2019	13	Additional info under criterion 2: revisions to National Foundation applications Approved	D Hughes
2019 – 2.1	18/10/2019	5	Minor amendments to General Principles for review at SMC Education Forum.	E Dale
2019 – 2.2	13/03/2020	13	Additional information under criterion 2:	D Hughes
2020 – 2.3	02/07/2020	13	Supplementary info included in application under Criterion 3; Trust OH professional support included under Criterion 2; Approved	D Hughes

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Role of the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency

The Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency (NIMDTA) is an Arm's Length Body sponsored by the Department of Health (DoH) to train postgraduate medical and dental professionals for Northern Ireland. NIMDTA also seeks to serve the government, public and patients of Northern Ireland by providing specialist advice, listening to local needs and having the agility to respond to regional and national requirements.

NIMDTA commissions, promotes and oversees postgraduate medical and dental education and training throughout Northern Ireland. NIMDTA endeavours to attract and appoint individuals of the highest calibre to recognised training posts and programmes. NIMDTA encourages doctors to train and remain in NI so that Health and Social Care (HSC) has a highly competent medical and dental workforce with the essential skills to meet the changing health needs of its population.

NIMDTA organises and delivers the recruitment, selection and allocation of doctors and dentists to foundation, core and specialty training programmes. NIMDTA supports trainees with the aim of maximising their potential to successfully progress, complete training and be appointed to permanent posts in NI. NIMDTA manages the quality of postgraduate medical and dental education in HSC Trusts and in general medical and dental practices through learning and development agreements, the receipt of reports, regular meetings, trainee surveys and inspection visits. It works in close partnership with local education providers to ensure that both the training and supervision of trainees support the delivery of high quality safe patient care. NIMDTA provides trainees with a wide range of opportunities to gain experience in leadership, quality improvement, research and teaching.

NIMDTA recognises and trains clinical and educational supervisors and selects, appoints, trains and develops educational leaders for foundation, core and specialty medical and dental training programmes throughout NI.

NIMDTA is accountable to the General Medical Council (GMC) for ensuring that the standards set by the GMC for medical training, educational structures and processes are achieved. Revalidation is the process by which the GMC confirms that doctors are up to date and fit to practice. The Postgraduate Medical Dean, as the 'Responsible Officer' for doctors in training, has a statutory role in making recommendations to the GMC to support the revalidation of trainees. NIMDTA works to the standards in the COPDEND framework for the Quality Development of postgraduate Dental training in the UK.

NIMDTA enhances the standard and safety of patient care through the organisation and delivery of relevant and valued career development for general medical and dental practitioners and dental care professionals. It also supports the career development of general medical practitioners and the requirements for revalidation through the management and delivery of GP appraisal.

NIMDTA carries out these roles on behalf of the DoH by focussing on the needs of people (population, trainees, trainers and NIMDTA staff), in partnership with key stakeholders and by paying attention to HSC Values - openness and honesty, compassion, excellence and working together.

1.0 General Principles

NIMDTA recognises that there may be circumstances where a trainee needs to remain within a specific geographical area in Northern Ireland for special family, caring or health circumstances. Where this situation arises a trainee may apply for their special circumstances to be taken into consideration in their allocation to a Training Post. Special provisions relating to training must be considered by Occupational Health. This policy provides guidance for doctors within a Foundation, GP or Specialty Training Programme; dentists within a Foundation, Core or Specialty training programme and for applicants who have been newly appointed to commence a training post in Northern Ireland.

Recognition of special circumstances does not permit a trainee to indicate which specific post they wish to train in but will be used in conjunction with other criteria to assess the needs of the trainee in the context of available Training Posts in Northern Ireland.

Trainees who are currently within a training programme must discuss their request for Special Circumstances with the following:

Foundation:	Foundation Programme Director
General Practice:	Associate Director / Training Programme Director
Hospital Specialty:	Head of School/Training Programme Director
Dental:	Dental Advisor

Less Than Full Time Training (LTFT)

If a trainee wishes to apply for LTFT training, the policy is available at www.nimdtg.gov.uk/trainee-policies-and-guidance.

2.0 Recruitment to Training Programmes

Medical Foundation Training

The recruitment of trainees within the Foundation Training Programme in Northern Ireland is an annual nationally coordinated process by the UK Foundation Programme Office (UKFPO) using the Oriel recruitment portal www.oriel.nhs.uk.

There is a National Process for pre-allocation to undertake Foundation Training at a specific Foundation School on the grounds of special circumstances. For the August 2020 intake, applicants must apply centrally via the [UKFPO](http://www.ukfpo.org.uk) and can only be made based on the applicants' current situation.

Trainees appointed to the Northern Ireland Foundation School are allocated on an annual basis. Trainees are required to preference available placements via the Oriel recruitment portal. The allocation to a sequence of placements is an automated process taking into account assessment scores from Medical Schools, a Situational Judgement Test and the listed preferences.

Approval of a special circumstances application for pre-allocation does not guarantee applicants a specific rotational programme within the pre-allocated foundation school. The Northern Ireland Foundation School (NIFS) team meet with all pre-allocated applicants on an individual basis. If the medical student/trainee's circumstances identify a need to remain within a specific geographical area the process outlined in this policy will then apply.

Hospital Medical Specialty Training

Hospital Specialty Trainees are recruited via nationally delivered, nationally coordinated or locally delivered recruitment processes using the Oriel recruitment portal www.oriel.nhs.uk.

Trainees appointed to a Hospital Specialty Training Programme in Northern Ireland are allocated to Specialty Training Posts on a 6 or 12 month basis by the Specialty Schools. Further information on the allocation process for Hospital Specialty Trainees is available at [www.nimdtg.gov.uk/download/foi/pol_proc/trainee_pol/specialty_trainees/Allocation%20of%20Placements%20Policy%20-%202015%20\(Versions%204%201\).pdf](http://www.nimdtg.gov.uk/download/foi/pol_proc/trainee_pol/specialty_trainees/Allocation%20of%20Placements%20Policy%20-%202015%20(Versions%204%201).pdf). In some specialties training in Northern Ireland is only delivered on one site and therefore special circumstances will not be applicable.

There are a number of specialties involved in nationally delivered or nationally coordinated recruitment processes. Applicants to these specialties are eligible to apply via the [national Special Circumstances process](#) including those applying to Northern Ireland. Successful applicants who meet the national eligibility criteria are pre-allocated to Northern Ireland but not to a specific Trust.

General Practice Training

Recruitment of trainees to General Practice Training in Northern Ireland is a national process coordinated through the GP National Recruitment Office using the Oriel recruitment portal www.oriel.nhs.uk.

All applicants, including those applying to Northern Ireland, are eligible to apply via the [national Special Circumstances process](#). Successful applicants who meet the national eligibility criteria are pre-allocated to Northern Ireland but not to a specific Trust area group.

Trainees appointed to the 3 year General Practice Specialty Training Programme in Northern Ireland are allocated to a specific Trust area group using the following allocation process: www.nimdtg.gov.uk/download/foi/pol_proc/trainee_pol/gp_trainees/Allocation%20of%20Placements%20Policy%20-%20Updated%202017.pdf

Dental Training

Dental Foundation and Dental Core Trainees are recruited via National Recruitment processes using the Oriel recruitment portal www.oriel.nhs.uk. All applicants, including those applying to Northern Ireland, are eligible to apply via the [national Special Circumstances process](#). Successful applicants who meet the national eligibility criteria are pre-allocated to Northern Ireland but not to a specific location within Northern Ireland. Recruitment to Dental Specialty Training is locally delivered.

The recruitment and allocation process for Dental Trainees is available at www.nimdtg.gov.uk/trainee-policies-and-guidance.

3.0 Eligibility for Special Circumstances within Northern Ireland

In order to be considered for special circumstances, trainees must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- **Criterion 1:** The trainee is the sole **primary carer** for someone who is disabled (as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005; expected to be a partner, sibling or parent) or has a significant health issue.
- **Criterion 2:** The trainee has a medical condition or disability which requires them to remain within a specific geographical area for management of the condition and general health.
- **Criterion 3:** The trainee is a parent or legal guardian with **significant** parental caring responsibilities for a child or children under the age of 18. This would normally mean the child/children residing primarily with the trainee.

There may be other very exceptional circumstances unique to an individual which may require the trainee to remain within a particular geographical area for a period of time. There must be support for their application from their GP or the GP, Consultant or other relevant professional in charge of a relative requiring care, if applicable. This should describe the unique circumstances and why it is recommended that the trainee must remain in a particular geographical location. Requests will be assessed in relation to the unique and individual circumstances including discussion with PSU.

Criterion 1	The trainee is the sole primary carer for someone who is disabled (as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005; expected to be a partner, sibling or parent) or has a significant health issue.
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Definition of 'disability' under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

For the purposes of the Act:

- substantial means neither minor nor trivial
- long term means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months (there are special rules covering recurring or fluctuating conditions)
- normal day-to-day activities include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping
- a normal day-to-day activity must affect one of the 'capacities' listed in the Act which include mobility, manual dexterity, speech, hearing, seeing and memory
- HIV, Cancer and MS are now protected under the Act at the point of diagnosis

If the person they are caring for is not their partner, sibling or parent, trainees will be expected to explain clearly and put a strong case why they are taking on the role of **primary carer** for this person.

If trainees are the primary carer for someone who is disabled they are eligible to apply for special circumstances to remain within the same geographical area as the person they are caring for. In order to be fair both to those with significant caring responsibilities and all other trainees, it is very important that such applications are verified as true.

Criterion 1: Mandatory Supporting Evidence required

Trainees are asked to give details of the person they are caring for and to obtain a written statement confirming their role as primary carer from a General Practitioner or Social Services Professional of the person being cared for, certifying that they are the primary carer of the person they have named and the type and level of the care provided.

The General Practitioner or Social Worker must:

- not be related to the trainee by birth or marriage
- not be in a personal relationship with the trainee
- not live at the same address as the trainee.
- not be a personal friend of the trainee

Trainees are also required to submit a care plan to demonstrate how they will combine the responsibilities of a doctor or dentist in training and be a primary carer and that local support resources have been fully considered. Identifiable details of the individual being cared for are not required as the purpose of the care plan is to demonstrate the level of care being provided by the trainee.

Criterion 2	The trainee has a medical condition or disability which requires them to remain within a specific geographical area for management of the condition and general health.
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*Definition of 'disability' under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

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- normal day-to-day activities include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping

- a normal day-to-day activity must affect one of the 'capacities' listed in the Act which include mobility, manual dexterity, speech, hearing, seeing and memory
- HIV, Cancer and MS are now protected under the Act at the point of diagnosis

Criterion 2: Mandatory Supporting Evidence required

Trainees are asked to provide a report written by the current medical specialist treating their condition or Trust Occupational Health professional, on headed paper confirming the requirement for ongoing follow up for the condition or health benefits of being in the specified location.

Criterion 3	The trainee is a parent or legal guardian with significant parental caring responsibilities for a child or children under the age of 18. This would normally mean the child/children residing primarily with the trainee.
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Significant caring responsibilities are deemed to be those that are **over and above** what is considered to be the normal responsibilities of a parent eg the trainee is a single parent or has a child with a disability.

It is expected that the child/children of trainees in this category will remain in their present residence.

If the trainee and the child/children do not normally reside together, this should be referred to on the application form, and information supplied as to why the caring responsibilities remain equally significant.

Criterion 3: Mandatory Supporting Evidence required

As part of demonstrating that they have a **significant parental caring responsibility** for a child or children under the age of 18, trainees must submit a completed and signed copy of a statement confirming that they have significant parental caring responsibilities.

This statement must be completed and signed by a General Practitioner or Teacher and must confirm that in their professional capacity they can confirm that the trainee has a significant caring responsibility for a child or children under 18.

The General Practitioner or Teacher must:

- be professionally responsible for the applicant and or their children
- not be related to the trainee by birth or marriage
- not be in a personal relationship with the trainee
- not live at the same address as the trainee.
- not be a personal friend of the trainee

4.0 Process for Submission and Consideration of Applications for Special Circumstances

Trainees who are currently within a training programme must discuss their request for Special Circumstances with:

Foundation:	Foundation Programme Director
General Practice:	Associate Director / Training Programme Director
Hospital Specialty:	Head of School/Training Programme Director
Dental:	Dental Advisor

The application for consideration of Special Circumstances, together with the supporting evidence, should be scanned and emailed to:

Foundation:	foundation.nimmdta@hscni.net
General Practice:	gpspecialtytraining.nimmdta@hscni.net
Hospital Specialty:	specialty.nimmdta@hscni.net
Dental:	dental.nimmdta@hscni.net

The Training Manager or deputy from the relevant department will acknowledge receipt of the application within 5 working days of the application being received. If the application form is not fully completed this will be returned to the trainee for further action.

If the trainee has submitted an application form for special circumstances which relates to their health (Criterion 3), the Foundation School Director (or deputy), Director of Hospital Specialty Training (or deputy), Director of General Practice Education (or deputy) or Dental Dean (or deputy) will meet with the trainee. The Occupational Health report which the trainee has submitted will be reviewed and further advice from Occupational Health may be required to establish as to whether reasonable adjustments need to be made within the relevant Training programme and placement provider.

Any trainee who requires adjustments due to health or a disability will be referred to the Professional Support Unit and offered an appointment. As a minimum consideration will be given to whether her the trainee would benefit from NIMDTA's Transfer of Information process.

A Special Circumstances allocations panel will be convened to review the anonymised evidence provided by the trainee and any recommendations provided by Occupational Health. Panels will be arranged twice per year and the timeline for submission of applications will be made available to trainees in advance.

Each panel will have a minimum of three panel members including a lay representative. In General Practice, this function will be carried out by the Allocations Panel.

The panel will decide if the trainee's application meets the necessary criteria outlined in Section 3.

The outcome of the panel's decision will be communicated to the trainee in writing within 5 working days of the panel meeting taking place by the Head of Department using the template in Appendix 1.

For Hospital Specialty Trainees the outcome of the panel will also be communicated to the Head of School/TPD for this to be considered when completing posting allocations.

5.0 Appeal Process

If a trainee does not agree with the panel decision, an appeal may be made to the Postgraduate Medical Dean. The trainee must clearly outline in writing within 5 working days of receiving the panel decision the reason(s) they do not agree with this decision.

The Postgraduate Medical Dean will arrange for an independent panel to review the evidence provided. The outcome of the appeal will be communicated in writing within 5 working days of the review of the evidence. The decision of this panel is final and there are no further avenues for appeal.

6.0 Collection and Monitoring of Equality Data

Trainees applying for Special Circumstances will be asked to complete a monitoring form (appendix 1). This information is not shared with the panel and will be reviewed by NIMDTA's Professional Support Unit (PSU) to produce statistical information anonymously.

Professional Support Unit Demographic Data Capture Form

NIMDTA Professional Support Unit (PSU) would appreciate your assistance with completion of this demographic data form. As part of our commitment to on-going development of our services, the PSU will use this equality monitoring data to develop a better understanding of our users and to overcome potential barriers in the access of support services. We understand there are some sensitive questions included in this form however this is to ensure that our equality data is complete and in line Northern Ireland Equality Legislation.

All information provided on this form will be stored confidentially in line with the NIMDTA data storage policy and any data analysis will use anonymised information.

Reference:		Country of Birth:	
Medical / Dental School:		Year of Graduation:	
Programme:		Level of Training:	
Foundation School (if applicable)			

1. Is this your first contact with the Professional Support Unit?

Yes No

If no, please tick the appropriate box to indicate resources already accessed via the Professional Support Unit?

Coaching Educational Assessment Mentoring

Occupational Health 1 to 1 Support Meeting Careers Advice

2. Gender	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>	I prefer not to specify <input type="checkbox"/>
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3. Dependants *Do you look after or give support on a daily / weekly / monthly basis to a family member, friend or neighbour belonging to one of the following groups:*

- a dependant child or young person? Yes No
- an adult with a long-term physical or mental health problem? Yes No
- a dependant elderly person? Yes No

4. Ethnicity *Please tick the appropriate box to indicate your ethnic origin:*

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| White - British <input type="checkbox"/> | White - Irish <input type="checkbox"/> | Any other white background <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mixed White & Black Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/> | Mixed White & Black African <input type="checkbox"/> | Mixed White & Asian <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Any other Mixed Background <input type="checkbox"/> | Asian or Asian British – Indian <input type="checkbox"/> | Asian or Asian British – Pakistani <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi <input type="checkbox"/> | Any other Asian background <input type="checkbox"/> | Black or Black British – Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Black or Black British – African <input type="checkbox"/> | Any other Black background <input type="checkbox"/> | Chinese <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Any other ethnic group <input type="checkbox"/> | I do not wish to disclose my ethnicity <input type="checkbox"/> | |

5. Disability *Are your day to day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last at least 12 months? (please include problems related to old age)*

Yes, limited a lot Yes, limited a little No

I do not wish to disclose whether or not I have a disability

If Yes, please specify the nature of your disability:

6. Marital Status *Please select an option which best describes your marital status:*

Co-habiting Divorced Married / Civil Partnership

Separated Single Widowed

I do not wish to disclose my marital status

7. Sexual Orientation *Please select an option which best describes your sexuality:*

Bisexual Gay Heterosexual

Lesbian I do not wish to disclose my sexual orientation

8. Political Opinion *Please select an option which best describes your political opinion:*

Broadly Unionist Broadly Nationalist Other

I do not wish to disclose my political opinion

9. Religion *Please select an option which best describes your religion or belief:*

Atheism Buddhism Christianity

Hinduism Islam Jainism

Judaism Sikhism Other

I do not wish to disclose my religious belief

10. Community Background *Please select an option which best describes your community background:*

Protestant Roman Catholic Neither

I do not wish to disclose my community background

11. Date of Birth

Thank you for taking the time to provide this information. Please return the form to:

Professional Support at professionalsupport.nimdt@hscni.net