

POLICY DOCUMENT

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

(Northern Ireland Deanery)

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	03/01/2018	10	Further revisions following feedback from working group	D Hughes
2017 – 1.4	04/01/2018			
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	05/11/2018	10	Comments from TRG members incorporated Approved	D Hughes
2018 – 1.9	11/11/2018			
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
2022 – 2.5	13/06/2022 26/09/2022	13	Reviewed at Training Manager Education Forum	D Hughes

Contents

Policy Review Schedule	2
1.0 General Principles	4
2.0 Eligibility for Special Circumstances within Northern Ireland.....	4
3.0 Mandatory Supporting Evidence.....	5
4.0 Timeline and Process for Submission	6
5.0 Appeal Process	7

Role of the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency

[Role of the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency - Northern Ireland Medical & Dental Training Agency \(nimdta.gov.uk\)](http://nimdta.gov.uk)

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. All applications must be supported by evidence. 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. It may not be possible to facilitate the geographical request if the training needs cannot be met in this area.

2.0 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. Significant caring responsibilities are deemed to be those that are **over and above** what is considered to be the normal responsibilities of a parent.

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.

*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

3.0 Mandatory Supporting Evidence

Criterion 1: The trainee is the sole primary carer for someone who is disabled (expected to be a partner, sibling or parent) or has a significant health issue.

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 Healthcare Professional of the person being cared for, certifying that the trainee is the primary carer of the person they have named and the type and level of the care provided.

Trainees who are part of a group or family which provides care for a person are not eligible to apply under the special circumstances provision.

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.

Trainees are asked to provide a report written by the current medical specialist treating their condition or Trust Occupational Health professional confirming the requirement for ongoing follow up for the condition, frequency of follow up appointments/treatment and if applicable the 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. Significant caring responsibilities are deemed to be those that are over and above what is considered to be the normal responsibilities of a parent.

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 who does not have shared parental responsibility or has a child with a disability. This would normally mean the child/children residing primarily with the trainee.

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 is in addition to the evidence supplied by the GP/Teacher.

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 which is above and beyond the normal responsibilities of a parent and does not have shared parental responsibility.

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 Timeline and Process for Submission

The timeline for applying for Special Circumstances is as follows:

Placement commencement	Application Window*
August (current trainees)	16 January – 17 February
February (current trainees)	1 September – 15 October
Newly appointed trainees	15 March – 30 April

*Applications to be considered for Dental training posts should be completed and returned by email, with supporting evidence by 30 June for Core and Specialty posts and 31 July for Foundation Training posts.

The application for consideration of Special Circumstances, together with the supporting evidence, should be scanned and emailed to specialcircumstances.nimdta@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. Incomplete application forms cannot be considered.

A Special Circumstances panel will be convened to review the anonymised evidence provided by the trainee and supporting evidence.

Each panel will have a minimum of three panel members including a lay representative.

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 Training Manager. 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. Confidential information surrounding the special circumstances criteria and supporting information will not be shared.

5.0 Appeal Process

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

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.

Appendix 1: 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 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. 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: <https://www.nimdtg.gov.uk/download/181203-allocation-of-placements-gp-specialty-training/>

Dental Training

Dental Foundation, Dental Core and Dental Specialty Trainees are recruited via the 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. The recruitment and allocation process for Dental Trainees is available at www.nimdtg.gov.uk/trainee-policies-and-guidance.