

consider how any essential support can be provided. Any disruptions should be flagged immediately.

23-22. Business continuity plans should be kept under review, with a specific focus on the workforce. Providers should continue to consider how they can increase capacity in the event of staff illness or absence. Providers should also assess their ability to isolate or cohort residents and be ready to do so.

24-23. Legislation has been changed so that workers can start after a barred list check and check of the Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC) register, provided they are appropriately supervised and the normal pre-employment vetting information has been requested. Care homes should encourage new workers to apply for registration with the NISCC and they must do so within 6 months if still working.

25-24. NI Social Care Council (NISCC) registration fees have also been deferred for new applicants.

Discharges from a hospital setting

26-25. As part of the response to COVID-19, the care home sector will play a vital role in accepting those being discharged from hospital – to aid recuperation in non-acute settings, and to enable hospitals to have sufficient beds to treat those who are acutely ill. Residents may also be admitted to a care home from a home setting. Some of these individuals may have COVID-19, whether symptomatic or asymptomatic. We share the concerns of providers who wish to make sure discharges into nursing or social care do not put residents currently in those settings at risk.

27-26. Ideally, patients who are COVID positive or symptomatic, should not be discharged to a care home that has no symptomatic or COVID positive residents unless that home was the patient's previous residence.

27. All patients being discharged from hospital to a care home should be tested for COVID-19, ideally this test will be done 48 hours prior to discharge. In addition those patients/residents who are entering a care home through another route (e.g. from home or from a supported living service) should be tested in advance of their entry in to the care home. Ideally this test will also be done 48 hours prior to entry into the care home. All those being discharged from hospital to care homes should be tested for COVID-19. We will be considering whether this policy should be extended to include testing of those discharged to supported living arrangements and whether those entering care homes from their own home should also be tested.

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