

Omicron Update

The COVID-19 pandemic has evolved from isolated outbreaks of the Delta variant to community-wide transmission of the Omicron variant, necessitating a shift in approach for delivering COVID-19 Care in the Community.

Isolation remains the best way to break the chain of transmission. As most people with COVID-19 can expect to only have mild to moderate symptoms, the preferred solution to support COVID-19 is for people isolate in their own home or the location where they got COVID.

Alternative isolation accommodation guidelines

Alternative isolation accommodation is a last resort which can be used to support COVID-19 positive individuals or household contacts to isolate in another accommodation option if they are unable to do so at home or where they are currently located.

Although we appreciate the guidelines set for MIQ are of a high standard, the summary below looks to provide some guidance support Care Coordination Hubs (“Hubs”) secure accommodation provided by Orbit (see the table below).

Identifying and Contracting Alternative Accommodation

- If an individual signals they do not have a suitable place to safely isolate through the online form or via the 0800 COVID-19 Healthline, the Hubs will carry out an assessment and determine whether the COVID-19 case and/or their household contact requires alternative isolation accommodation.
- Hubs are encouraged to have a number of pre-approved accommodation options so positive cases can be placed as quickly and smoothly as possible.

National Alternative Accommodation Service¹ (NAAS)

- NAAS supports Hubs to source fit-for-purpose alternative isolation accommodation, such as local and regional motels, hotels and apartment facilities.
- How to request alternative isolation accommodation is provided on the follow page.

Managed Community Isolation Reserve (“campervans”)

- Using campervans is an option of last resort requested via the Ministry’s COVID-19 Care in the Community team. However, there may be situations where a campervan is an appropriate solution for the individual, whānau or household, and campervans can be deployed.
- As an example, if a Hub receives a request for an older relative who is vulnerable lives in a multigenerational home where everyone has tested positive for COVID-19; however, they are negative. If the living situation means the rest of the COVID-19 positive household is unable to safely isolate away from the older relative, and the older relative does not want to be relocated on their own away from family to alternative accommodation – then a campervan could potentially be deployed to the home. The older person can live in the campervan in the driveway while the family isolates.

¹ The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) is the lead agency for NAAS.

Requesting Alternative Accommodation

Since early February 2022, NAAS has been operational with Orbit providing accommodation sourcing assistance to regions using existing funding.

From 1 April 2022, Orbit will manage the sourcing of accommodation as well as the costs (paid by MBIE). Essentially this means that Orbit will take care of the 'paperwork' and provide the required accommodation and pay for it.

Orbit have an extensive network of accommodation providers and will provide accommodation that meets the MOH guidelines, however each PHU/DHB will need to validate that the accommodation meets the required needs for their region and individual impacted people's needs.

The basic process is as follows:

1. Authorised Hub representatives request accommodation using the following web form [Alternative Accommodation booking request form](#) or ring Orbit on 04 4963288 – this is a 24/7 number.
2. Orbit source options ensuring that the accommodation providers accept upfront that they will be accepting COVID-19 positive case or household contacts.
3. Hub representatives inspect the premises to ensure they meet the needs of the COVID-19 positive case or household contacts.
4. Hub confirms with Orbit that the accommodation is acceptable.
5. Orbit confirms and issues the Hub with confirmation.
6. Hub manages the entry and exit of the COVID-19 positive case or household contacts into the accommodation.

Note:

- Accommodation Options provided by Orbit that are not confirmed within 3 days of being provided, will be considered as not required.
- Hubs are encouraged to accept accommodation that meets the basic MOH guidelines, and not decline to seek a better option as that may place the COVID-19 positive case or household contacts at risk.
- NAAS is an accommodation sourcing service only and supports Hubs to deliver COVID-19 Care in the Community.
- NAAS can only be requested by Hub representatives via Orbit. No member of the public, community providers or organisations contracted by the Hubs can directly access the NAAS.
- Do not contact MBIE or refer anyone to MBIE to request accommodation.
- Block bookings of accommodation, where requested, will generally be no more than 1 month with any provider, unless agreed in advance by the MOH Care in the Community team.
- Existing contracts will remain with Hubs until they expire. Orbit will fund the costs past 1 April 2022 for those who have contracts past 1 April 2022.
- NAAS is currently planned to operate up to 30 June 2022, and continuation / approach will be reviewed closer to the timeframe and is subject to further policy advice.

Summary of key guidance documents to support the sourcing of suitable alternative isolation accommodation

There will be circumstances where a COVID-19 case or household contact is unable to safely self-isolate at home and require support to safely isolate in alternative isolation accommodation. This guidance is not intended to be prescriptive, as the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) encourages Care Coordination Hubs to apply judgement on the needs of their populations, and the appropriateness for the COVID-19 cases to be offered alternative accommodation options. Instances where an accommodation may not be suitable for the case or household contact:

- Lives with someone who is vulnerable, and their health could be at risk if they contract COVID-19.
- Can't safely reside in the same accommodation as a COVID-19 case or household contact even though public health control measures are being followed.
- Lives in crowded accommodation, such as too many people in a room or small accommodation.
- Can't safely return home **and** they don't have any arrangement to safely isolate until they can return home.

Below is a summary of the minimum requirements when choosing a place to serve as an alternate accommodation for COVID-19 cases and household contacts to isolate:

Minimum requirements for Alternative Isolation Accommodations	
Safe and sanitary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to potable running water • Access to running water for personal hygiene • Functional heating and lighting • Functioning sewage disposal system • There is provision for safely disposing of household waste • Access to self-contained toilets and showers (separate areas for positive and non-positive guest) • The property provider must facilitate the cleaning of accommodation once the case has been released²
Space and ventilation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable access to an area for exercise • Opening windows in living areas • No shared ventilation systems between rooms/units for local alternative accommodation
Other facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have access to bed and linen • Kitchenette facilities, sink, fridge, kettle, element, microwave or electric fry pan • If full kitchen facilities are not available meals must be delivered in disposable containers with disposable crockery/cutlery.
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy access for emergency services, and allows for contactless delivery of food, medicine and other needs to support the case safely isolating • Ensuring easy access to premises and facilities for people with disabilities (when required)

² <https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-general-cleaning-and-disinfection-advice>

Alternative Isolation Accommodation

Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cases and household contacts have a reliable means of communication available (eg internet, landline, mobile phone)
Risk of non-compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As this is not an MIQ Facility there are no requirements for security to be engaged. Please apply judgment as to whether security is required if there are high risk cases being placed.