



# Cost of Living Support Package



Helping our staff get the support they need

## Cost of Living

We know the rising costs of living is impacting staff, so as an organisation an additional support package has been developed for staff to access.

This guide will give you full information on all of the support available under this initiative.

Following the Trust wide survey asking staff to take 2 minutes to give feedback on what options could be introduced that would be most helpful to them at this time, the Cost of Living Working Group with full support of the Trust Board, implemented all of the proposed options from the survey with some adjustments.

As much as we would want to do everything to help all staff, we have to remain realistic with the finite budget we have available. Therefore we have had to adjust some of these options to make them accessible to our staff who need extra support the most.

Staff are welcomed to email [costofliving@bedsft.nhs.uk](mailto:costofliving@bedsft.nhs.uk) should they have any queries about the Cost of Living support package.



## Central Bedfordshire

Information on Discretionary Housing Payments, available benefits, help with utility bills and much more



## Luton Borough

Information on employment guidance, available benefits, help with utility bills and more



## Useful tips

Find easy ways to stay in control of your food shop, make it easy to remember what food you have at home and prompts to ensure all the food you've bought is eaten - plus much more.

### 'love food hate waste'

Find out more about good food habits.



## Sainsbury's feed your family for a fiver

Provides budget friendly meal ideas to feed a family of four for under £5.



## Olio

An app that gives you the chance to collect free food locally from people and businesses that do not need it.



## Too Good To Go

Every day, delicious, fresh food goes to waste at cafes, restaurants, hotels, shops and manufacturers, just because it has not sold in time. This app lets you buy and collect this food at a low price so it gets eaten instead of wasted.

## Cost of Living - Useful Resources

### National Support

#### UK Government's Cost of Living Hub

a list of all resources, guidance and support available in one place.



#### Budget Planner Tool

A free planner to help analyse your spending.

#### Living on a squeezed income

Learn how to cut back on costs and see what extra help is available.



#### Debt advice locator tool

If you are struggling with debt, this web page can help point you to the debt advice service that best suits you.

### MoneyHelper

Tel: 07701 342 744 - add this number to your WhatsApp and send the MoneyHelper Service's national support team a message for help with debts, credit questions and pensions guidance.

### Local Support

We know it is easier said than done, but try not to suffer in silence. If you are feeling overwhelmed with your finances, there is always someone to talk to.

There is a wealth of support available from all local councils for residents of Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton Borough.

#### Bedford Borough

Information on local household support grants, free school meals, school holiday vouchers, council tax energy payments and much more



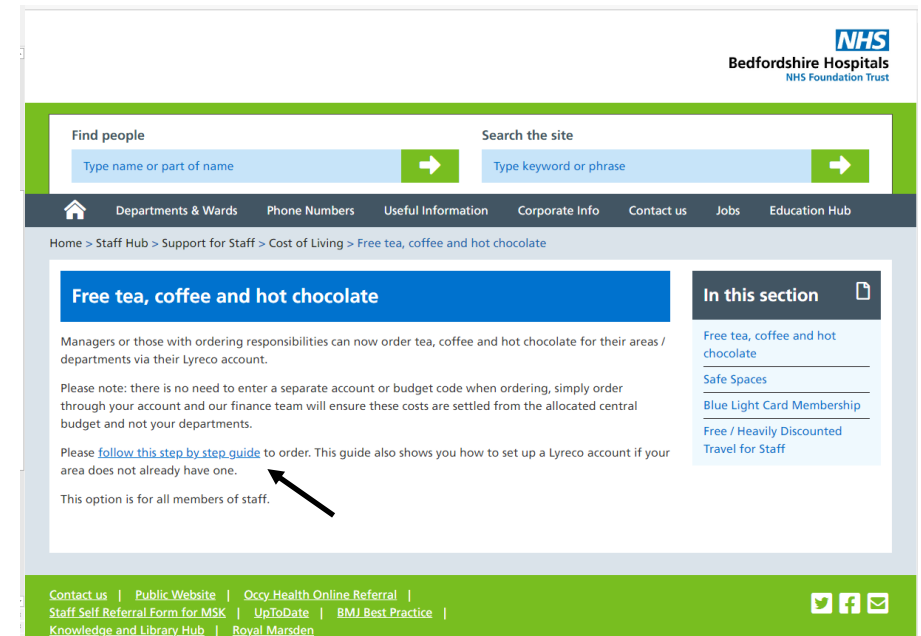
## Free tea, coffee and hot chocolate (all staff)

Managers or those with ordering responsibilities can now order tea, coffee and hot chocolate for their areas / departments via their Lyreco account.

**Please note:** there is no need to enter a separate account or budget code when ordering, simply order through your account and our finance team will ensure these costs are settled from the allocated central budget and not your departments.

Please follow the step by step guide available on the intranet under Support for Staff, Cost of Living to order. This guide also shows you how to set up a Lyreco account if your area does not already have one.

This option is for all members of staff.



## Blue Light Card Membership (all staff)

As part of the Cost of Living package, the Trust has agreed to reimburse the £4.99 registration/membership fee for 2 years to all staff who sign up to the Blue Light Card (BLC).

Blue Light Card (BLC) provides those in the NHS, emergency services, police, social care sector and armed forces with discounts online and in-store. It has over 2 million members from across the UK and 15,000 brand partners across a range of sectors from leisure, technology, retail to holidays.

### Benefits of BLC

- Members can access exclusive discounts and offers through the BLC website and BLC app
- Offers are available on the go, through a virtual card and allow members to find local offers
- High street offers can be accessed through a physical card
- Services Days – BLC takes over a range of theme parks and attractions, on specific days across the UK, exclusively for our members and their families to enjoy
- Blue Light Tickets – a ballot-based ticketing website for our members to access free tickets from cinema premieres, food festivals to football matches and concerts.

### How to apply for BLC membership and card

- Visit [www.bluelightcard.co.uk](http://www.bluelightcard.co.uk)
- Click 'Register'
- Go to sign up
- Select 'NHS' from the 'Your Service' drop down menu
- Enter your personal details

## Discounts at hospital restaurants (all staff)

In order to provide some assistance during these difficult times, all staff will receive a 25% discount at the Swannery restaurant at Bedford Hospital. Please note: this excludes the pre-packaged boxed sandwiches and wraps. Staff are asked to ensure their hospital ID badges are visible to make it easier for catering staff to identify and apply the discount.

ISS will continue to honour the 10% discount to all staff at the Chiltern restaurant, L&D.



## Safe Spaces (cont'd)

### Free sanitary products

Free sanitary products such as Always pads and Tampax tampons can also be accessed discretely through the Safe Spaces.

### Financial Assistance: Application to the Trust's voluntary benevolent fund – for staff in urgent financial hardship

We have created a fund which staff can apply to if they are facing financial hardship due to something immediate that has happened that has caused this hardship. The application will be available on the staff intranet and in paper form from one of our Safe Spaces shortly. The form is self-explanatory, but if you need support to complete it, then our volunteers will guide staff through how to fill out an application form.

These Grants can be considered for all types of reasons such as, but not limited to, the following – costs such as childcare; travel and general living costs, such as rent, food, and utility costs, clothing and essential food supplies. Consideration can be given for grants to help meet exceptional costs, such as repairs to or replacement of essential household equipment, assistance with reasonable priority debts, and other emergency situations which arise.

Applications are limited to one application in any 12 month period. To apply for this grant, staff need to complete and submit the application form. All forms are reviewed on a by weekly basis by a committee, to ensure that support can be immediate and not dependant on monthly pay dates.

### Emergency food tokens

Our volunteers can also provide food tokens that can be redeemed at either hospital restaurant (with the exception of the Bistro at Bedford).

- You will then receive a verification email

**Please note:** The link in this verification email must be clicked for your account to be activated.

- Log in to your online account and go to 'My card'
- Complete your personal details and provide proof of employment
- Pay the £4.99 fee

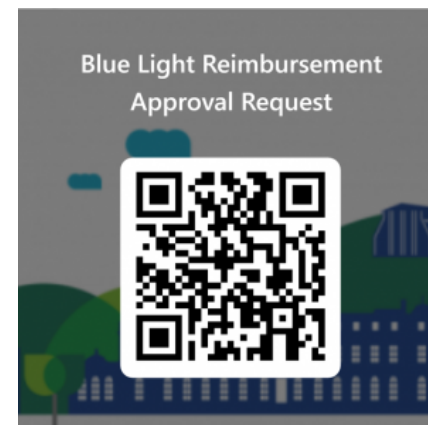
**Please note:** For applications to be approved, members will need to upload a form of ID (under 2MB) showing their name, job role, and employer which will be reviewed/approved by the BLC Customer Care team.

For more details about specific forms of ID that will be accepted for individual job roles, please visit [www.bluelightcard.co.uk/contactblc.php](http://www.bluelightcard.co.uk/contactblc.php)

Please ensure you keep your confirmation email as you will need to show this as evidence to your manager to be reimbursed of the £4.99 fee.

### How to get the membership fee reimbursed

All staff need to do is scan the QR code to access the online reimbursement form.



## Free / Heavily Discounted Travel for Staff (all staff)

We have worked in partnership with Stagecoach, Arriva and Thameslink to be able to offer staff free or heavily discounted travel to and from Trust sites on these local bus and rail services. This offer is available initially until end of August 2023\*; with the view to extend this offer, following further negotiations with the travel companies at the end of six months.

\***Please note:** All offers are taxable benefits.



**Please note, Stagecoach offer is available only for tickets purchased for travel between home and Trust sites.**

Bedford staff can now get free bus travel on Stagecoach East Services in Bedfordshire. The following bus tickets are included within this offer that covers Bedford Town and Bedfordshire Plus travel zones.

- Flexi 5 & 10: A bundle of 5 or 10 DayRider tickets, valid for use anytime in 12 months
- 7 Day MegaRider: Valid for 7 days' unlimited consecutive travel within your selected zone
- 28 Day MegaRider: Valid for 28 days' unlimited consecutive travel within your selected zone.

Please contact us at [stafftravel@bedsft.nhs.uk](mailto:stafftravel@bedsft.nhs.uk) to let us know you would like to buy a season ticket. Please provide us the following details:

- Your name
- The postcode from where you usually travel to work

Through the Safe Spaces, staff can access information on:

### **Foodbanks: Access to local foodbanks**

Our volunteers will guide staff through this process, and staff will be given a voucher that they can use at a food bank of their choice. One voucher will provide enough food for three days. There is no limit on these if staff want to keep coming back to the Safe Space for more vouchers, however please note that the foodbank may check in on staff if they have been more than three times, to ensure staff are receiving the help they need.

### **Prescriptions: Assistance with applying for the Government's Annual Prescription Certificate Service**

Our volunteers can signpost staff to the availability of a repayment prescription service. This is a certificate that covers all NHS Prescriptions for a set price. This is currently £108.10 for 12 months or £30.25 for 3 months. If individuals have to pay for their prescriptions its £9.35 per item. So if an individual is on a number of prescribed medications, it could be money saving in the long term. There also may be some individuals who can apply for an exemption see this link: [www.gov.uk/help-nhs-costs](http://www.gov.uk/help-nhs-costs)



**Maureen,  
Safe Spaces  
volunteer**

## Safe Spaces (for those in most need)

Safe Spaces are dedicated areas on both hospital sites where staff who need further support (more than what we are offering to all staff) can go for help. This initiative provides both holistic and practical ways to those members of staff who are really finding things difficult at the moment. It is understood that staff in desperate need of this initiative may feel embarrassed or reluctant to utilise this service, this is why it's very important to clarify that the Safe Spaces are manned by volunteers who will provide private, confidential guidance and support on a 1-to-1 basis.

These spaces will be located at:

- L&D – Staff Wellbeing Room (located at the back of the Chiltern Restaurant, behind the computer area / opposite side to the restaurant entrance)
  - **From the 31 July**, the Safe Space will temporarily be in the **Bereavement office** (located on the staff corridor on the ground floor of the main building)
- Bedford – Quiet Room (off the main corridor next to the General Office)
  - Both spaces will be open for staff to drop-in between **12pm to 2pm** on the following days:
- **L&D – Mondays and Tuesdays**
- **Bedford – Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays**

For those staff who need to access this service outside of these hours and/or based at other Trust sites, you can contact the numbers below for over the phone support. If you get the voicemail, please do leave your name and contact number and someone will get back to you:

- Safe Space contact one – 07990 436025 (main number – Mon to Fri 9am to 5pm )
- Safe Space contact two – 07990 436020 (only during 12pm to 2pm Mon to Fri if main number not answered).

- Assignment / payroll number
- Your work email address
- Your telephone number

Once the information you provided is verified, we will provide you a link.

## Details of how to claim your free bus travel – if using a computer or laptop

- Please click on the link we provide
- Click on the green button to 'Get the Stagecoach Bus App'
- This will reveal a QR code
- Please scan the QR Code provided to download the Stagecoach app on your phone
- When you open the app, it will take you to a page with Corporate Travel
- Click on Continue with Corporate Travel
- Create an account

**Stagecoach** Set your location Sign up / Log in Basket (0) Search

Buy tickets > Plan your journey Maps Timetables Service updates Promos & Offers FAQs & Contact Stagecoach Group

### Discounted bus tickets through your employer

Thanks to the organisation you work for, you now have access to exclusive discounted tickets on the Stagecoach Bus App. This means you can get the bus for less. If you've got a question or you're having problems getting access to your exclusive discounted tickets, check out our FAQs.

Follow these 3 simple steps for discounted tickets, no parking headaches and reducing your carbon footprint.

- 1** Get the Stagecoach Bus App and scan the scheme code  
Click on the button below to get the latest Stagecoach Bus App. If you're on a mobile device you'll be taken directly to the app or, if you haven't downloaded it yet, you will be taken to your device App Store to install. If you're using a desktop, a QR code will be displayed. Scan this with your smartphone to begin the same process.
- 2** Sign up / Log In  
Once installed and opened, you can sign up for a new account or log in to an existing Stagecoach Bus account.
- 3** Get onboard  
Congratulations! You can now plan your journey and buy discounted tickets.

**Get the Stagecoach Bus App**

- Verify your account

- Log in to your account
- Click on the menu button at the top with three lines
- Select 'Get your ticket'
- Choose the appropriate ticket and add to the basket and check out. The price of the ticket should appear as Zero (0)
- The ticket will then be loaded to the app and you simply need to show these to your driver upon boarding.

**Until the end of August 2023, one child, under age of 16 can travel on weekends and bank holidays for free, when travelling with a pass holder.** The pass holder will need their NHS ID badge available to show it to the driver.

### **Details of how to claim your free bus travel – via Team Beds App on a mobile device (No QR Code Required)**

- Open Team Beds App
- Click on Cost of Living icon
- Click on Free / Heavily Discounted Travel for Staff
- Click on the link provided by the staff travel team
- Click on the green button to 'Get the Stagecoach Bus App'
- This takes you into the Corporate Travel screen
- Welcome to 'Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust Corporate Travel'
- Click on the green button to 'Continue with Corporate Travel'
- Continue with screens to create an account and sign up
- From the main menu select 'Get your ticket'
- Select 'Buy Tickets'
- Select location (East, Bedfordshire)
- Choose your free ticket from the options available
- The ticket will then be loaded to the app and you simply need to show these to your driver upon boarding.

**Until the end of August 2023, one child, under age of 16 can travel on weekends and bank holidays for free, when travelling with a pass holder.** The pass holder will need

- your telephone number
  - the destinations of the train ticket you intend purchasing
  - How often are you currently making this journey for work purposes
  - Your postcode
- Once the information you provided is verified, we will provide you a link and a code to access the ticket discount scheme on the Thameslink website. This code can only be used once
  - When using this code, you will be required to pay the cost of the ticket, which is discounted by 50% by Thameslink until 31 August 2023, which will be reimbursed through your payroll, once we have passed your receipt and expense claim form to payroll
  - Complete an [expense claim form](#) to get this payment reimbursed by the Trust
  - Send us the completed expense form with the proof of purchase of your ticket to [stafftravel@bedsft.nhs.uk](mailto:stafftravel@bedsft.nhs.uk)
  - We will verify the information you have provided us, sign off the form and send the information to payroll to reimburse you.

**Please remember, this is a taxable benefit. You will still need to pay tax on this discounted offer.**



**Please note, we will only accept claims for tickets purchased for travel between home and Trust sites.**

### **If you are an existing Thameslink season ticket holder**

Complete an [expense claim form](#) for the purchased ticket. Please contact us at [stafftravel@bedsft.nhs.uk](mailto:stafftravel@bedsft.nhs.uk) with;

- o your name
- o postcode from where you usually travel to work
- o assignment / payroll number
- o your work email address
- o your telephone number
- o Send us the completed expense form with the proof of purchase of your ticket (copy of your ticket and proof of payment) to [stafftravel@bedsft.nhs.uk](mailto:stafftravel@bedsft.nhs.uk)

We will verify the information you have provided us, sign off the form and send the information to payroll to reimburse you. Please note, we will only accept claims for tickets purchased for travel between home and Trust sites. If you should leave or apply for any full or partial refunds against this ticket, those monies are to be returned to the Trust. Please contact this email address if this is the case.

### **If you are renewing or intending to apply for a new season ticket (either a monthly or annual season ticket)**

Please contact us at [stafftravel@bedsft.nhs.uk](mailto:stafftravel@bedsft.nhs.uk) to let us know you would like to buy a season ticket

Please provide us the following details;

- o your name
- o postcode from where you usually travel to work
- o assignment / payroll number
- o your work email address

their NHS ID badge available to show it to the driver.



### **Please note Arriva offer is available only for tickets purchased for travel between home and Trust sites.**

Arriva have been offering everyone who works at L&D (Trust employed staff, APCOA and ISS staff) the opportunity to get great value ticket discounts by joining their Employer Travel Club scheme. This scheme allows you to reduce travel costs when you purchase a yearly ticket, which you pay via a monthly direct debit. There are no setup fees or minimum contract required, so you can cancel your payments at any time to stop your ticket, should your circumstances change.

Since March 2023, Arriva and the Trust have been working collaboratively to reduce the travel cost even further and cut the cost of your commute to just **one penny a month until the end of August 2023** for existing Travel Club members. Those who are not yet a member and sign up will be required to pay the full amount of the Direct Debit for the first month and the subsequent payments will be reduced to just 1p until end of September 2023 instead of August 2023 to accommodate the first payment taken in full.

### **Details of how to claim your bus travel for a penny a month**

#### **If you are already a member of the Employer Travel Club scheme**

Send an email to [stafftravel@bedsft.nhs.uk](mailto:stafftravel@bedsft.nhs.uk) and include

- Your name

- The postcode from where you usually travel to work
- Direct debit reference number
- Assignment / payroll number
- Contact details (work email address and your telephone number)
- Confirm that you are an existing Employer Travel Club member
- Request your future payments to be adjusted to 1p a month until the end of August 2023, and we will pass on your request for Arriva to process. Please note, there may be a slight delay in processing this because of the dates of your direct debit. This will be rectified at a later date.

### **If you are not already a member of the travel club scheme**

Join now by going to [www.arrivabus.co.uk/ldhospital](http://www.arrivabus.co.uk/ldhospital), you will need your bank account details.

- Order your ticket online, by choosing your local travel zone, which is appropriate for your home to work, and completing the direct debit application form
- Your direct debit payment will be setup on the current Employer Travel Club at the standard rate
- Once you have done this you will receive a direct debit confirmation email
- Once you receive the confirmation email, send an email to [stafftravel@bedsft.nhs.uk](mailto:stafftravel@bedsft.nhs.uk) and include:
  - your name
  - postcode from where you usually travel to work
  - direct debit reference number
  - assignment / payroll number
  - your work email address
  - your telephone number

We will then pass your information onto Arriva for the payment to be set up for 1p a month. **Please note, the first month will require the full direct debit amount to be paid and subsequent payments will be set for 1p.** There may be a slight delay in processing this because of the dates of your direct debit. This will be rectified at a later date. For example, if you pay the full amount in April 2023, your 1p a month offer will be adjusted to end of September rather than end of August 2023.

Arriva will then send you a bus pass directly to your home address each month and your pass is valid on all Arriva buses, 7 days a week. Depending on the day of your application and setting up direct debit, there may be a slight delay in receiving your ticket.

The ticket holder can also travel with up to two children, under the age of 16 for free on weekends and bank holidays. To take up this offer, you will need to request a paper ticket when applying.

## **ThamesLink**

We are pleased to advise the free travel for staff using Thameslink services travelling to either Bedford or Luton stations from their home address on a season ticket (monthly or annual) is available from 1st March – 31st August 2023.

### **How does this work?**

When purchasing or renewing your season ticket, Thameslink will give you a 50% discount off the full price and you pay the remaining 50%. The Trust will then reimburse you the 50% payment you have made via the normal travel expenses claim process. Please note, Expense Claims are subject to Tax.