



# Dress Code Policy

## Document Summary

To promote opportunities for flexible working and give clear guidance on the application process and criteria for accepting flexible work

<b>POLICY NUMBER</b>	POL/004/014
<b>DATE RATIFIED</b>	June 2016
<b>DATE IMPLEMENTED</b>	June 2016
<b>NEXT REVIEW DATE</b>	May 2018
<b>ACCOUNTABLE DIRECTOR</b>	Director of Workforce and OD
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## Important Note:

**The Intranet version of this document is the only version that is maintained.**

Any printed copies should therefore be viewed as “uncontrolled” and, as such, may not necessarily contain the latest updates and amendments.





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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this document is to set out the Trust's policy with regard to staff uniforms and to clarify the situation in relation to non-uniform arrangements. This Policy is general guidance and does not cover all situations. Please refer to your line manager in the first instance. Should a query remain refer to the HR Department.

The Trust is committed to fair and equitable treatment of all members of staff irrespective of age, gender, marital status, disability, race, colour, national/ethnic origins, religion or sexual orientation and will therefore respect an individual's preference or requirement for customary dress, to be worn for cultural or religious reasons, subject to the minimisation of health, safety and infection risks. Deviations from standard practice are to be discussed with the line manager. For Trust's responsibilities and commitments under the Equality and Human Rights legislation, please refer to The Trusts Equality & Diversity Policy.

## **2. SCOPE**

This policy applies to all staff employed by Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, as well as locums, agency staff, volunteers, students, contractors and employees of other organisations that provide services to the Trust.

This policy does not cover hand hygiene, the use of personal protective equipment, or laundry.

## **3. STATEMENT OF INTENT**

This policy aims to indicate standards of dress expected of employees of the Trust, based upon the objectives of patient safety, public confidence and staff comfort.

Staff have a responsibility to minimise the risk of infection, injury and ill health to patients, other persons and themselves whilst at work. Therefore risks associated with items of clothing or accessories must be considered, as part of a risk assessment process, in relation to activities being carried out whether clinical or non-clinical.

Studies have shown that presentation and appearance have a large impact upon public perceptions of competence, hygiene and skill in the NHS and it can influence perceptions of the quality of care received. Employees are required to present a positive professional image in order to encourage patient and public confidence in the Trust and its workforce. A clean, tidy, modest and smart appearance encourages a high standard of behaviour and appearance, and engenders self-confidence among the workforce. Employees should also demonstrate sensitivity to the needs of the service users, other employees and the sphere of work, and avoid wearing anything which could be construed as inappropriate, provocative or offensive.



Staff should as far as possible be comfortable in their uniforms and work clothes. Work wear should be safe, fit for purpose, and appropriate to the duties undertaken. Uniforms should be suited to the demands made upon staff, and cultural practices should be accommodated where possible to ensure employees feel comfortable.

Members of staff working on behalf of the Trust are required to enhance the profile of the Trust's services. The clothes worn should promote dignity and professionalism, and demonstrate a positive image at all times.

#### 4. DEFINITIONS

A **uniform** is clothing which is purchased and supplied for staff to wear when they are on duty. It applies to traditional clothing such as tunics and corporate work wear such as shirts/blouses.

**Direct patient care** – when staff are working directly with patients in any clinical or home setting. For a more detailed definition, see [Appendix A](#).

All clothing and equipment provided remains the property of the Trust. These should be returned to your Line Manager when leaving the Trust.

### 5 DUTIES

#### 5.1 All Staff

All staff are responsible for implementing and upholding the principles in this policy. If unsure of the suitability of a particular item of clothing for work, the employee should check with their manager.

Failure to uphold and/or adhere to appropriate standards of dress may result in formal disciplinary action being taken.

#### 5.2 Managers

Line managers are responsible for making staff aware of the policy and expectations at the local induction and when changes occur. They should make informal assessments of dress and appearance of staff working within their service/team, based upon the values put forward in the statement of intent, and influenced by indicators of hazard and risk, For example:

- The physical demands necessary within the job such as lifting and handling.
- Any risk of violence or aggression towards staff.
- The degree of direct patient care, requiring awareness of infection prevention issues.
- When uniform is worn managers should ensure sufficient uniforms are available for permanent staff, volunteers, bank or agency staff to ensure that staff can wear a freshly laundered uniform every shift.

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- Some departments may wish to display posters or other visual aids advertising who wears which uniform, to make it easier for patients to identify staff roles.

Any concerns regarding dress code or appearance of staff including clothing, footwear, jewellery, watches/fitbits, alert bracelets, tattoos, body piercing or general appearance, is to be discussed with the individual in the first instance. A letter confirming this informal discussion will be given to the individual and a copy forwarded to the HR department to be kept in the member of staff's personal file. If the concern raised by the manager constitutes a health and safety risk, the individual will be required to make the appropriate changes immediately.

## **6 POLICY**

### **6.1 General Guidance**

#### **Work wear**

Non-uniformed employees are required to dress in smart casual wear.

Staff should seem to be clean, presentable and professional. Clothing is to be practical and as comfortable as possible to enable staff to perform to the best of their ability.

- Torn clothing is unacceptable.
- Skirts, dresses or shorts are to be knee length or below.
- Trousers are to be smart casual.
- No denim to be worn unless agreed appropriate to the clinical area.
- Underwear/undergarments should not be exposed.
- Midriffs are not to be exposed.
- Necklines are to be discreet.
- Shirts, polo shirts and t-shirts are to be smart in appearance.
- Clothing should not be able to be construed as provocative or offensive, including clothes with inappropriate writing, logos or designs.

#### **Direct Patient Care**

For hygiene and infection prevention reasons, when engaging in direct patient care, staff must be bare below the elbows, and work wear should not come into contact with patients-personal protective equipment should be used. Clothing must have been freshly laundered prior to each shift in order to prevent the spread of infection.

The following points should be followed;

- Clothing should enable staff to carry out all necessary actions, such as bending and reaching, without compromising the dignity of the staff member or patients;
- Ties should not be worn, as these can be infected by pathogens, can accidentally come into contact with patients, and are rarely laundered.
- Staff should not carry pens, scissors or other sharp or hard objects in outside breast pockets, but rather carry them inside clothing or in hip



- pockets. This prevents injury or discomfort to patients.
- Staff should change as soon as possible if clothing becomes visibly soiled or contaminated.
  - Where, for religious reasons, staff wish to cover their forearms disposable sleeves are available for staff providing direct patient care, these should be changed between clinical care activities as you would with any other personal protective equipment i.e gloves or aprons and hand hygiene should be undertaken between each use. Disposable sleeves are available through the NHS Supply Chain <https://www.supplychain.nhs.uk/>

## **Uniform Guidance**

Staff should wear uniforms where provided. These should be clean and fit for purpose, in accordance with the Health and Social Care Act 2008.

- Uniforms should be changed into and out of at work. Although there is no evidence of an infection risk, there is a public perception that wearing uniforms outside clinical environments is unhygienic. However, it is acceptable to wear a uniform while accompanying a patient in the community or as part of your duties visiting patients in the community.
- Uniforms should not be worn in the community when carrying out personal tasks off duty, for example, when shopping.
- Managers are to ensure that there are sufficient uniforms for permanent staff, volunteers, bank and agency staff so that they can be identified as part of the staff team.
- Managers should also ensure that uniforms are replaced in a timely fashion as and when required.
- Uniforms should be transported separately from other items, and clean and dirty uniforms should be transported in different bags, to reduce the risk of cross-contamination.
- Uniforms should be washed at the highest possible temperature and heavily soiled uniforms should be washed separately. For further laundry guidance, refer to the Laundry Policy (POL/001/042/023), or the Department of Health guidance on Uniforms and Workwear.
- Appropriate changing facilities should be clearly identified for staff required to change at work.

## **6.2 Name Badges**

All staff are to wear identification in the form of a clearly displayed trust ID Badge when working so that other staff, patients and family members can see their name and role. This is shown to be helpful for patients and their visitors.

- Staff whose work involves tasks where the wearing of badges could pose a health and safety risk, will be able to carry their identification badge but not display it.
- Lanyards are not to be worn by staff when engaging in direct patient care, as they can be a hazard, and can also become infected by pathogens.
- Badges which are damaged or no longer readable should be replaced quickly. Staff should not wear numerous badges to denote professional



memberships and qualifications. More than one or two look unprofessional and can be a safety hazard.

### **6.3 Infection Prevention**

Effective hygiene and preventing infection are absolutes in all healthcare settings and staff should demonstrate positive personal hygiene. Although there is no evidence that uniforms and workwear play a direct role in spreading infection, the clothes that staff wear should facilitate good practice and minimise any risk to patients. Maximum contamination of disease-causing bacteria has been found in the areas of greatest hand contact, for example pockets and cuffs allowing the recontamination of washed hands.

Staff who come into contact with bodily fluids **MUST** wear trust provided personal protective equipment (PPE), such as gloves, aprons and masks, as described in the infection prevention policy. Additional measures may be necessary during a declared outbreak of infection to reduce cross infection and further contamination. For example staff may be asked to wear scrubs which will be centrally laundered.

The Trust should be sensitive to customary dress of staff, but any modifications to usual practice which may compromise health and safety or infection prevention measures should be discussed with the line manager and risk assessed.

### **6.4 Jewellery**

Jewellery will be minimal for staff in clinical areas and those providing direct patient care in any setting. Staff must present a professional image and must mitigate the possibility of health and safety or infection prevention risks to patients and staff.

No jewellery, including wrist watches, should be worn on the lower arms or hands in clinical areas or during direct patient care, because these can be a barrier to effective hand hygiene. However, staff may wear a single plain band, such as a wedding ring, but this should be manipulated during hand washing. This ring should not be textured or contain stones.

Necklaces, hooped earrings and rings present potential hazards. Some belts, buckles and jewellery can also restrict movement and may lead to patients being injured during care. One pair of small earring studs are acceptable.

Visible body piercing jewellery is to be removed whilst on duty as for some patients they can be disconcerting or distracting. A small nose-stud is acceptable.

### **6.5 Tattoos**

Wherever possible, especially when staff are engaging with patients, tattoos are to be covered unless the tattoo is below the elbow as this will impede effective hand hygiene which is of primary importance.



## 6.6 Footwear

Footwear must be practical and appropriate to ensure a safe environment for staff and patients.

- Staff engaging in direct patient care or working in a clinical care area should wear full footwear. Shoes closed over the foot and toes offer protection for staff from spills and dropped objects, reducing the threat of injury and contamination. Canvas shoes are not appropriate in a clinical environment.
- Soft soled shoes provide a quieter environment, and are recommended for those in a clinical care area. For those in the community, shoes which are supportive and practical are recommended, to allow the wearer to carry out all their duties effectively and in comfort.
- Stiletto Heels and plastic flip-flops are not acceptable.
- Footwear should be made maintained and kept clean

## 6.7 Hair/nails/make up

Hair is to be styled to enhance a professional image without the need for regular readjustment. Long hair should be tied back and off the collar in direct patient care to prevent hair becoming contaminated during wound care or personal care activities.

Hats should not be worn in clinical areas or when providing direct patient care because they may fall and compromise infection prevention. Turbans or other headwear worn for religious reasons may need to be covered in certain situations.

For hygiene reasons, nails are to be short and clean- no nail should be visible over the end of the finger or thumb when looking at the palm side of the hand. In clinical areas or when providing direct patient care no nail polish, gel, shellac or false nails should be worn, as they can be a barrier to hand hygiene.

Makeup should be kept to a minimum. False eyelashes are not permitted in a clinical role.

## 6.8 Chewing Gum

In order to promote a professional appearance. Staff must refrain from chewing gum whilst on duty or in uniform.

## 7 TRAINING

Training for staff regarding this policy is included in the local induction process.



## 8 MONITORING

The table below outlines the Trusts' monitoring arrangements for this policy/document. The Trust reserves the right to commission additional work or change the monitoring arrangements to meet organisational needs.

Aspect of compliance or effectiveness being monitored	Monitoring method	Individual responsible for the monitoring	Frequency of the monitoring activity	Group / committee which will receive the findings / monitoring report	Group / committee / individual responsible for ensuring that the actions are completed
Staff are appropriately dress for the work they are undertaking	Visible observation of staff appearance within workplace.	Line Manager	Ongoing	N/A	N/A

## 9 REFERENCES/ BIBLIOGRAPHY

Equality Delivery System

(re: Trust's responsibilities and commitments under the Equality and Human Rights legislation).

Department of Health Uniforms and Workwear: Guidance on uniform and workwear policies for NHS organisations. (2010)

NHS Employers guidance on legal matters arising from work wear

RCN Guidance on Uniforms and work wear (2009)

## 10 RELATED TRUST POLICIES

Infection Prevention policy

Health, Safety and Risk policies



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