



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

www.cymru.gov.uk

All Wales NHS Dress Code *Free to Lead, Free to Care*



Introduction

The All Wales Dress Code was developed to encompass the principles of inspiring confidence, preventing infection and for the safety of the workforce.

The public expect all healthcare workers to project a professional image. Though not all staff may be required to wear a uniform, the requirement to present a smart, professional image applies to everyone.

Securing the confidence of the public is paramount in delivering exemplary health care services. Evidence has shown that the public is concerned about a number of issues relating to the wearing of NHS uniforms and the comportment of NHS staff.

The evidence base for the All Wales Dress Code was developed by the Department of Health in England. *"Uniforms and Workwear: an evidence-based document on the wearing and laundering of uniforms"* was originally published in 2007 and updated in 2010. It is available at <http://www.dh.gov.uk/publications>.

The wearing of an NHS uniform and/or workplace clothing must address key Health and Safety recommendations:

- Adhere to infection prevention and control protocols especially in relation to hand washing techniques
- the identification a corporate image for the individual
- provide a professional image to promote public confidence
- provide the wearer with mobility and comfort
- be resilient to withstand rigorous laundering
- take into account staff safety in relation to situations involving violence and aggression

The dress code specifies the principles that all NHS staff must adhere to and highlights specific expectations for all staff directly involved in the delivery of clinical services. The dress code applies equally across clinical and non-clinical staff working within NHS Wales.

Principles and expectations

PRINCIPLE 1

All staff will be expected to dress in smart (that is, neat and tidy) clean attire in their workplace.

Expectation:

All staff

- Staff must adhere to the NHS Wales Dress Code principles on the wearing and laundering of uniforms/work attire
- Staff must wear their uniforms/work clothes in a manner that will inspire public confidence
- The special needs of pregnant staff must be assessed and advice obtained from their occupational health departments
- The special needs of disabled staff must be assessed and advice obtained from their occupational health departments

Staff working in the clinical environment

- Clean uniform/work attire must be worn for each shift/work day
- Clinical staff must have access to a change of uniform should their uniform be contaminated during their shift/work day
- Where staff launder their own uniforms, written instructions must be adhered to which reflect current best practice guidelines (Appendix 2)
- Staff should use additional protective clothing when anticipating contact with blood and/or bodily fluids in line with their local infection prevention and control policies

PRINCIPLE 2

All staff will present a professional image in the workplace.

Expectation:

Staff working in the clinical environment

- Staff will wear their hair neatly; medium length/long hair must be tied up off the shoulder and secured
- Staff must not wear jewellery except for plain wedding ring/kara/ear studs
- No wrist watches are to be worn under any circumstances in the clinical environment
- Staff with pierced ears may wear one set of stud earrings only
- Staff with new piercings (where the piercing cannot be removed for a specific time period) must cover them with a 'Blue' plaster
- Staff with established body piercings, other than earrings, (one set of studs) should cover them when in the workplace
- Staff with beards must keep the beard neatly trimmed
- Staff must not wear false nails and/or nail varnish
- Staff must keep their finger nails clean and short
- Staff must wear footwear that complies with the relevant health and safety requirements, for example, soft soled for reduced noise, low heeled for manual handling and ease of movement, and closed toes for protection

PRINCIPLE 3

Staff should not socialise outside the workplace or undertake social activities while wearing an identifiable NHS uniform.

Expectation:

Staff working in the clinical environment

- Where changing facilities are available, staff must change out of their uniform at the end of a shift before leaving their place of work
- Where changing facilities are **NOT** available staff should ensure their uniform is covered up before leaving their place of work
- Staff must not wear their uniforms in public places, for example, shops (if staff need to enter public places in the course of their duties they must make every effort to cover their uniforms)
- Staff who are permitted to wear a uniform to and from work, or work in the community setting, must cover their uniform when travelling

PRINCIPLE 4

All clinical staff must wear short sleeves or elbow-length sleeves in the workplace to enable effective hand washing techniques.

Expectation:

Staff working in the clinical environment

- Staff will comply with the above in order to ensure that correct hand hygiene can be performed before contact with patients

PRINCIPLE 5

All staff must wear clear identification at all times.

Expectation:

All staff

- Staff must wear identification (for example, a security coded name badge) that includes their title, name and profession at all times, in line with their local policies, for example, a Lone Worker Policy
- Staff identification must be clearly visible

PRINCIPLE 6

Staff who wear their own clothing for work should not wear any clothing that is likely to cause a safety hazard.

Expectation:

All staff

- Staff should not wear any loose clothing that may compromise their health and safety in the work place
- Footwear should be comfortable and practical for the role undertaken

Implementation and monitoring

The All Wales NHS Dress Code will replace any local policy in order to ensure equity and parity across all healthcare organisations. Compliance will be monitored through local agreement at a local level.

In line with the Welsh Assembly Government Inclusive Policy Guidelines this document will be reviewed in December 2012.

References

Department of Health (2010) "Uniforms and Workwear: an evidence-based document on the wearing and laundering of uniforms"

Department of Health (2006) Safety First: a report for patients and healthcare managers DoH: London

Health and Safety Commission (2000) Securing Health Together HSE: London

HMSO (1974) Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 HMSO: London

HMSO (1992) Manual Handling Operations Regulations HMSO: London

HMSO (1999) Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations
HMSO: London

HMSO (2002) Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations
HMSO: London

HMSO (2002) Personal Protective Equipment Regulations
HMSO: London

HMSO (2006) Health Act 2006 Code of Practice HMSO: London

Jacob, G (2007) Uniforms and Workwear. An evidence base for developing local policy
Department of Health, London

NHS Borders (2004) Dress Code/Uniforms Policy

Royal College of Nursing (2009) Guidance on uniforms and work wear

Royal College of Nursing (2005) Wipe It Out. RCN Campaign on MRSA. Guidance on uniforms and clothing worn in the delivery of patient care Royal College of Nursing: London

Appendix 1

Supporting information

Good Practice	Rationale	Supporting Information and /or additional comments
Wear short sleeves or roll the sleeves to elbow length before carrying out clinical procedures	Cuffs become heavily contaminated and are more likely to come into contact with patients They may act as a vehicle for transmitting infection Long sleeves or cuffs prevent effective hand washing and compromise patient safety	Some staff working in an outdoor environment, for example, ambulance personnel, paramedics and others delivering emergency care, may be exempt from this requirement
Dress in a manner which is likely to inspire public confidence	People may use general appearance as a proxy measure of competence and professional practice	
Clinical staff who do not wear a uniform should not wear any loose clothing such as unsecured ties, draped scarves, headdress or similar items	This type of clothing may make contact with the patient and their environment during clinical procedures and may be a vehicle for transmitting infection	This type of clothing could have staff safety implications. A risk assessment should be carried out.
Where changing facilities are provided clinical staff who wear a uniform must change out of their uniform before leaving the workplace Staff who are permitted to wear a clinical uniform to and from work should have it covered up when travelling	There is no current evidence of an infection risk caused by travelling in uniform, but patient confidence in the health and social care staff may be undermined Staff may be vulnerable to attack if seen off site in uniform	This does not apply to staff who are permitted to travel during the course of their duties, for example, community staff

Good Practice	Rationale	Supporting Information and /or additional comments
Staff should not go shopping, socialising or undertake similar activities in public when in uniform	There is no current evidence of an infection risk from travelling or shopping in uniform, but patient confidence in health and social care staff may be undermined	There is a public perception (as evidenced by the media) that associates staff wearing uniforms with the spread of infection
Wear clear identifiers; uniform and/or, name or identity badge	Patients wish to know who is caring for them. Name badges and uniforms help them to do this	Identification is important to promote patient and client safety
Staff must change as soon as is practical if uniform or clothes become visibly soiled or contaminated with blood or body fluids	Visible soiling or contamination might be an infection risk, and is also likely to affect patient confidence	Organisations must ensure that there is a local arrangement for this
All staff should secure long hair	Patients generally prefer to be treated by staff with tidy hair and a neat appearance. Long or unsecured hair may make contact with the patient and their environment during clinical procedures and may be a vehicle for transmitting infection	Long hair should be tied back and off the collar
Staff must be issued with a sufficient number of uniforms to allow them to wear a clean uniform each shift Written instructions must be provided to staff who launder their own uniforms; the guidance must reflect current best practice guidelines	A clean uniform should be worn for each shift A sufficient supply of uniforms for the recommended laundry practice should be provided	Providing staff with clear instructions on the cleaning of uniforms means that uniforms will be processed in line with the current recommendations (Appendix 2) Staff who have too few uniforms may be tempted to reduce the frequency of laundering

Good Practice	Rationale	Supporting Information and /or additional comments
Wrist or hand jewellery must not be worn in the clinical environment	Wrist watches must be removed before performing any clinical procedure and to promote good hand hygiene Hand/wrist jewellery can harbour microorganisms and can reduce compliance with hand hygiene	Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. Guideline for Hand Hygiene in Health-Care Settings: Recommendations of the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee and the ICPAC/ SHEA/APIC/IDSA Hand Hygiene Task Force. MMWR 2002;51(No. RR-16)
Clinical staff should keep finger nails short and clean Clinical staff must not wear false nails or nail varnish	Long and/or dirty nails can present a poor appearance and long nails are harder to keep clean. Long and/or dirty nails may be a vehicle for transmitting infection	Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. Guideline for Hand Hygiene in Health-Care Settings: Recommendations of the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee and the ICPAC/ SHEA/APIC/IDSA Hand Hygiene Task Force. MMWR 2002;51(No. RR-16)
Footwear worn in the clinical areas should be suitable for purpose and comply with the relevant health and safety requirements	Closed toe shoes offer protection against spills. Soft soles reduce noise, low heeled to comply with manual handling policies	

October 2010

Appendix 2

Guidance for healthcare staff laundering uniforms/workwear in the home

For staff working in some clinical environments a laundry service is provided by the employing organisation. With the introduction of a national NHS uniform and the instigation of on-site changing facilities for all healthcare staff, the next logical progression will be the reintroduction of laundry services to negate the need for staff to leave the premises with used or contaminated clothing.

Until such services have been reinstated and where currently the employer does not provide such a service it is sensible to issue staff with guidance on how best to launder their uniforms at home.

Such guidance should include:

- Where on-site changing facilities already exist and once they have been made available, staff should remove their uniform on site.
 - For transportation, uniforms should be placed in a clear plastic bag or a water soluble bag suitable for use in domestic washing machines*.
 - Uniforms should be washed at the hottest temperature suitable for the fabric. A wash for 10 minutes at 60°C should remove most micro-organisms**.
 - Ensure that the machine is not overloaded to allow for optimum wash efficiency and dilution factor.
 - Staff should wash their hands after loading the machine.
 - Use of a biological washing agent is preferable.
 - Tumble dry on the hottest temperature as recommended by the manufacturer or air dry thoroughly before ironing on the hottest setting as advised by the manufacturer.
- * *Plastic bags with a water soluble tie and seam, suitable for use in domestic washing machines, clearly labelled for staff use with instructions printed on them, are now available through a Welsh Health Supplies contract. Ideally these should be available for the transportation of all uniforms but as a minimum should be considered for use where uniforms are visibly soiled or during an outbreak of disease. The use of such a bag would negate the need for staff to handle the uniform in the home. The whole bag can be placed safely into the machine. On no account should the soluble bags used by hospital laundries be issued to staff even during an outbreak. They are not suitable for use within a domestic machine where the dilution and temperatures reached are not of the magnitude that can be achieved in a commercial setting.*
- ** *Employing organisations should take into account the manufacturer's washing instructions during the procurement process for uniforms purchased outside of the national contract.*