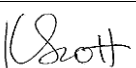
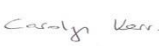




Northern Health and Social Care Trust

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Policy Author(s):	Mrs Eileen McEaney, Director of Nursing and User Experience (including corporate Support Services) Dr Naomi Baldwin, Lead Nurse Infection Prevention & Control	
Responsible Director:	Mrs Eileen McEaney, Director of Nursing and User Experience (including corporate Support Services)	
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Target Audience, ie, specific staff groups	All Trust staff.	
Approved by:	  Co-chairs, Policy, Standards and Guidelines Committee	29 September 2014 <i>Revision to Appendix 1 content September 2015 (3rd bullet point added – see page 10)</i> 31 March 2020 <i>Reviewed with no revisions required.</i>
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NHSCT Vision		
To deliver excellent integrated services in partnership with our community		

Uniform and Dress Code Policy

September 2014 (*minor revision to Appendix 1 content September 2015*)

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1.0 Introduction

The Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT) attaches the highest importance to ensuring that all its employees project a professional and respectful image in keeping with the public's expectation of health and social care staff.

This will be achieved by clearly outlining a code of dress that will project a positive image.

This policy recognises the diversity of cultures, religions and disabilities of Trust staff. However, priority is given to those issues which promote health and safety, security and infection control for patients, service users and staff. This policy has been adapted from the Regional Dress Code Policy produced by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS)

The association between the inappropriate wearing of uniforms and the risk of infection is inextricably linked with public perception. The way in which staff dress and present themselves can send messages to the public which may impact on their perception of their care or treatment. Staff appearance, and how they dress, is therefore of significant importance in portraying a professional image to all users of Trust services.

This policy defines an acceptable dress code for all clinical and non-clinical staff in the Northern Health & Social Care Trust (NHSCT).

Purpose

To provide a standard dress code policy for all NHSCT staff employed in acute hospital and all community settings/facilities/domiciliary care regardless of whether or not a uniform is worn.

Scope of this policy

This policy applies to all NHSCT staff, employed by, or contracted on behalf of NHSCT, including students and others on placement in Trust facilities.

This policy must be adhered to at all times whilst working. Non-adherence may be considered as misconduct and may result in disciplinary actions in accordance with Trust Disciplinary Procedures.

2.0 Responsibilities

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for ensuring infection prevention and control is a core part of the Trusts governance and patient safety programmes.

Trust Board

The Board has collective responsibility for ensuring that appropriate and effective policies are in place to minimise the risks of healthcare associated infections.

Director of Infection Prevention & Control

It is the responsibility of the Director of Infection Prevention & Control to oversee the development and implementation of Infection Prevention and Control policies/protocols.

Infection Prevention & Control Team

It is the responsibility of the Infection Prevention & Control Team to ensure this policy is reviewed and amended at the review date or prior to this.

Service Managers

It is the responsibility of managers to ensure that staff are informed and reminded that this **Trust policy is based on a Regional Uniform Policy** and ensure staff comply with key principles and wearing of correct uniform provided by the Trust.

Staff

It is the responsibility of staff / manager to ensure that they each comply with the key principles of this Trust Policy. Where uniform is provided, staff must also ensure that they **comply** with wearing the **correct full uniform** provided in line with the Trust and Regional Uniform Policy.

3.0 Policy Statement

The Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety introduced a Regional Dress Code for all Health and Social Care staff as part of his new measures to improve patient safety and to reduce the spread of health care associated infections.

This policy meets the requirements set out in ‘Changing the Culture’: A strategy for the prevention and control of healthcare associated infections in Northern Ireland.

4.0 Key Policy Principles for All Trust staff

Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT) staff will at all times dress in a clean and tidy manner which is likely to inspire public confidence, as patients, relatives and visitors use appearance as a proxy measure of competence and professional practice. All staff are expected to exhibit and maintain a personal appearance (including personal hygiene and cleanliness) that would be considered acceptable to the general public.

- **All staff** must wear identification name badges whilst working, as provided by the Trust.
- When visiting or working in **all patient clinical areas**, **all staff** must ensure that they comply with the principles of ‘Bare below the Elbow’ to facilitate effective hand hygiene as follows;
 - Sleeves must be short or rolled up;
 - Nails should be short and clean – no nail polish, acrylic/gel/extensions or false nails;
 - Wrist watches must not be worn in clinical areas;
 - No other jewellery should be worn around the wrist apart from medical alert bracelets. These may be worn under exceptional circumstances

following a risk assessment by the staff member's line manager and IPC department;

- No rings with stones should be worn – one plain band is permitted: if a ring is worn it should be manipulated to ensure good hand washing technique.
 - Broken skin must be covered with a waterproof dressing.
-
- In the domiciliary community setting, long sleeved clothing such as cardigans, fleeces or sweaters must be removed or sleeves rolled up, **during the delivery of direct patient/client care.**
 - Uncontrolled (i.e. loose hanging) long hair presents a risk of acquisition and transmission of micro-organisms and must be securely contained by tying back.
 - Pendulous lanyards should be securely fastened or tucked into clothing/uniform.
 - Trust staff not required to wear a uniform must not wear any **loose clothing** such as unsecured ties, unsecured name tags, draped unsecured scarves or similar items.
 - For all formal inpatient settings, where a uniform is not supplied and the worker has contact with the public, dress must be of an appropriate standard to promote confidence in the public and patients expectations. The following items must **not** be worn: denim jeans; shorts; sports tops or bottoms.
 - **In some social and mental health situations** and to facilitate integration with patient groups, staff may wear casual clothing such as denim **as long as it is functional, not torn or distressed.** Staff may wear collared T shirts to comply with bare below the elbow.
 - Excessive exposure of the skin e.g. bare midriffs, scant tops or short skirts may not project a professional image to patients, visitors and health care colleagues and may also place the wearer at risk of direct skin contamination; therefore such apparel is not permitted.
 - Scrub suits/uniforms should be worn by clinical staff when working in clinical areas where there is a high risk of exposure to infections. Each department will have guidance on which area scrub suits should be worn and details of the relevant location of local changing facilities.
 - T-shirts are not acceptable, however T-shirts may be worn under scrub top but must remain tucked in and any long sleeves rolled up.
 - The wearing of white coats is not considered best practice and is no longer acceptable within the Trust.
 - Staff should avoid the wearing of stethoscopes around the neck and ensure stethoscopes are decontaminated before and after any patient contact

5.0 Uniform Laundering and Changing

It must be remembered that scrub suits and uniforms are not fluid resistant and therefore do not offer the wearer any personal protection / are not considered to be Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). **A single use plastic apron** should be worn over the scrub suit or normal clothes, for **all direct close patient contact or direct contact with blood, body fluids, secretions, excretions (except sweat) and contaminated surfaces/equipment**. This applies even when other PPE (e.g. gloves) may not be considered necessary as per existing Trust Infection Prevention and Control guidance.

- A clean uniform/scrub suit must be worn for each shift.
- Staff who are required to wear a uniform will be provided with an adequate number of uniforms by the NHSCT in line with the staff member's normal working rota. The exact number will be decided on a case-by-case basis by the line manager.
- Currently, the Trust does not have facilities for uniform laundering for all staff. In acute facilities where uniform laundering or **autovalet** service does exist, it **must be used**.
- Written instructions, reflecting current best practice, must be provided for staff who have to launder their own uniforms (See Appendix 1 – Advice for Home Laundering Uniforms for NHSCT Staff).
- All Trust staff changing facilities must be kept clean and tidy by those who use them. Clinical items such as dressings, tape, scissors or other sharps must not be left in the changing area. A build-up of clutter, shoes, bags and unclaimed clothing renders the area difficult to clean and is not acceptable. **Personal and shared lockers must be cleaned out regularly by staff.**
- **Where there is access to changing facilities that are provided by the Trust, all staff who wear a uniform must change into and out of uniform at the workplace.**
- **Permission to wear a clinical uniform to and from work** (due to lack of changing facilities) **must be agreed by the staff member's line management**; such staff should, where practical cover their uniform completely when in public view. (This does not apply to staff who are required to travel **during the course of their duties** e.g. community staff, low risk areas). Where this is a recognised lack of changing facilities this will be considered in advance.
- Staff must not go shopping or socialising in uniform or undertake similar activities in public where this is not part of their social/nursing care duties. Where this situation may arise during their duties to accompany patients/clients, then they must cover their uniform tunic completely when in public view.

- Staff must change as soon as is practical, if their uniform or clothes become visibly soiled or contaminated with blood or body fluids (See Appendix 1). Visible soiling or contamination may be an infection risk, and is also likely to affect patient confidence.
- Where provided, full uniform must be worn; Staff must not mix uniform with non-uniform items of clothing.
- If make-up and perfume are worn, they must be discrete. This also applies to aftershave / cologne.
- Jewellery from visible body piercings must be removed, apart from **one pair of metal smooth stud earrings that do not extend over the edge of the ear lobe**. Multiple ear piercings may not project a professional image to patients.
- Catering staff and Domestic Assistants are not permitted to wear any earrings when on duty.
- Foot wear, worn in the **clinical area** should be suitable for purpose and comply with the relevant health and safety requirements. (Flat Shoes, toes and heels enclosed).
- **Allied Health Professionals** footwear must be of a dark neutral colour; low heeled with rubber soles. The surface of the shoe must be able to be wiped. Sandals, open-toed/heeled shoes must not be worn.
- **Nursing** footwear must be black, low heeled and with rubber soles. The surface of the shoe must be able to be wiped. Sandals, open-toed/heeled shoes must not be worn.
- **Clogs** can only be worn if designated as essential work wear only and must not be worn outside the designated department.
- If leaving the Operating Theatre/Day Surgery/Endoscopy Departments wearing theatre scrub attire, all such staff members must change into a new set of scrubs when returning to duty in these departments.

6.0 Security

When staff leave the Trust or no longer require the uniform supplied, all items must be returned to the line manager (refer to Protocol for Receipt and Safe Return of Uniform).

On occasions members of the public have impersonated health and social care staff and put the public at risk. If uniforms have been stolen or disappear from lockers, the member of staff is responsible for reporting this to their line manager who will assess the incident, complete an incident form and decide whether the PSNI need to be informed.

7.0 Agency staff

Agency staff are supplied with clinical work wear by their employing agency. Agency staff should be made aware of this policy and will be required to adhere to the infection control and health and safety criteria.

8.0 Monitoring

It is the responsibility of managers to ensure that staff comply with this policy and challenge non-compliance.

9.0 Evidence Base/References

Regional Dress Code Policy and Recommendations on Staff Changing Facilities for Northern Ireland (DHSSPS, 2008).

10.0 Personal and Public Involvement (PPI)/Consultation Process

The policy was widely consulted on and amended on more than one occasion as a result of the feedback received. Consultation took place during its development with Nursing Executive Team (NET), Infection Control, Mental Health, Assistant Directors and a wide range of community based staff and managers.

11.0 Equality, Human Rights & DDA

This policy has been drawn up and reviewed in the light of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) which requires the Trust to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity. It has been screened to identify any adverse impact on the 9 equality categories and no significant differential impacts were identified, therefore, an Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

12.0 Alternative Formats

This document can be made available on request on disc, larger font, Braille, audio-cassette and in other minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English.

13.0 Sources of advice in relation to this document

The Policy Author, responsible Assistant Director or Director as detailed on the policy title page should be contacted with regard to any queries on the content of this policy.

14.0 Policy Sign Off

Naomi Baldwin
Lead Policy Author

26 September 2014

Olive Macleod
Director of Nursing & User Experience

26 September 2014

**ADVICE FOR HOME LAUNDERING OF UNIFORMS
FOR NHSCT STAFF****LAUNDERING**

Transport the used uniform in a closed plastic bag which should be discarded after use. The Trust can provide appropriate bags as necessary. The uniform should be washed directly.

Uniforms should be washed separately at 60-65°C (or at the hottest temperature shown on the manufacturer's label) and exposed to heat through drying in direct sun, or tumble dryer and ironed when dry with a hot iron.

Clean uniforms should be stored separately in a clean plastic bag until ready for use.

PROTECTIVE CLOTHING

Uniforms are not protective clothing. Protective clothing such as plastic aprons or fluid repellent gowns must be worn to protect your uniform from contamination when dealing with blood, body fluids or infected patients.

ACCIDENTAL CONTAMINATION

If contaminated with blood or body fluids, the uniform should be changed as soon as possible. It is advised that a second uniform is available in the event of contamination occurring.

Where a serious contamination of a healthcare worker's clothing by blood or body fluids/substances has occurred:

- Clothing should be removed promptly **while wearing gloves**.
- Clothing should be placed in an alginate/water soluble bag, taking care not to further contaminate anything. This can be done by rolling inward to contain the contamination.
- This should be placed into a red linen bag located in the changing room and then sent to the hospital laundry as 'infected laundry'.
- The healthcare worker's manager/supervisor should be notified and arrangements should be made for healthcare worker to have a shower and be supplied with another uniform or pair of scrubs.

In addition to this advice, any local recommendations of the Trust's Infection Control Team and Occupational Health Department should be observed.

HOSPITAL SCRUBS

Please Note: Hospital scrubs should **never be worn home or laundered at home** and **must** be sent for laundering with the hospital laundry.