# Uniform and Dress Code Policy

# For All Health Board Staff

## POLICY INFORMATION

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Employment

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## SUMMARY OF DOCUMENT:

This policy provides guidance on the uniform and appearance requirements for substantive and temporary staff employed by the Health Board. The aim of the policy is to ensure that public confidence as well as health and safety of staff and patients is maintained at all times.

## SCOPE:

This policy will cover all staff groups, those who are required to wear a uniform as part of their employment and those that are exempt.

## TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH:

The All Wales NHS Dress Code (WAG) (opens in a new tab)
354 - Standard Infection Prevention and Precautions Policy (opens in a new tab)
201 - Disciplinary Policy (opens in a new tab)
Name badge I.D. policy
100 -Organisational Induction Policy (opens in a new tab)
154 - Safe management of linen (opens in a new tab)

## PATIENT INFORMATION:

Include links to Patient Information Library

## OWNING GROUP:

Workforce & Organisational Developmental Committee
August 2023

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JOB TITLE:

Lisa Gostling - Director of Workforce & Organisational Development

## REVIEWS AND UPDATES:

Version 1 – New Policy – 06/04/2010
Version 2 – Revised – November 2011
Version 3 – Revised – June 2012
Version 4 – Review Date Extended as No Changes Required – February 2015
Version 5 – Temporary Staff Added: SN/HOD Uniform Added – 22/05/2018
Version 6 – Revised – August 2023

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Uniform, dress code

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# INTRODUCTION

The public expect all NHS staff to project a professional image. The NHS All Wales Dress Code (Free to Lead, Free to Care, WAG 2010) was developed to encompass the principles of inspiring confidence, preventing infection and for the safety of the workforce.

Though not all NHS Health Board staff may be required to wear a uniform, the requirement to present a smart, professional image whilst in work applies to all employees and workers. The NHS All Wales Dress Code therefore applies to all staff – clinical and non-clinical – but it also sets out specific expectations for those staff directly involved in the delivery of clinical services.

# SCOPE

This policy will cover all staff groups (but also includes volunteers, apprentices, bank staff, workers and work experience students), irrespective of whether or not a uniform is worn for work purposes and regardless of whether their role is clinical or non-clinical. Staff **must** ensure they read the Policy and adhere to its principles in full.

# AIM

The aim of this policy is to remind staff of the All-Wales Dress Code principles (opens in a new tab) and ensure they read and understand the need to present a professional image at all times.

# OBJECTIVES

The aim of this document will be achieved by the following objectives:

- Confirming the principles of the All-Wales Dress Code Policy (opens in a new tab) which must be complied with
- Detailing staff uniform and footwear requirements
- Detailing general appearance requirements

# ALL WALES UNIFORMS

Certain groups of staff must wear the designated and approved All Wales uniform at all times whilst on duty. These are set out in Appendix 1.

No substitutes may be purchased as an alternative to the items of uniform issued.

Nurses working in paediatric units may also wear Health Board issued 'child friendly' tabards over their designated uniform (these should be laundered in the same way as their uniform).

## UNIFORM EXEMPTIONS

It is recognised that in some areas, uniforms (even in an in-patient care setting), can be a barrier to establishing therapeutic relationships. Identified exemption areas are:

- Learning Disabilities
- Some Mental Health areas (other than older adult inpatient units)
- Paediatric therapists
- Community midwives
- Agency staff are provided with a uniform from their employing agency and must wear personal identification when on our premises

In roles where a uniform is not worn, staff will still be expected to adhere to the principles of the All-Wales NHS Dress Code.

It is also recognised that some staff may wish to request 100% cotton uniforms, as well as the traditional fabric uniform for a number of reasons (which may or may not be health related). Requests for lighter fabric uniforms can now be made directly to the sewing room, without requiring support from Occupational Health to do so.

## DRESS CODE FOR VOLUNTEERS AND WORK EXPERIENCE STUDENTS

See Appendix 2.

## THEATRE SCRUBS

Standard theatre 'scrub clothing' must only be worn in the designated clinical areas. Scrub clothing and footwear must not be worn outside theatres or clinical areas unless in an emergency situation or where specifically issued as an alternative e.g. when uniform soiled or during infection outbreaks.

## CATERING STAFF – UNIFORM / DRESS CODE REQUIREMENTS

Specific uniform dress code requirements are set out in Appendix 3.

## FOOTWEAR

Footwear must comply with Manual Handling Operations Regulations and provide the member of staff with adequate support and be suitable to their area of work. Please see Appendix 4 for full details.

## ADVERSE REACTIONS

If staff develop a reaction to the fabric used in any uniform issued by the Health Board, it would be appropriate to refer them to the Occupational Health Department for advice. A 100% cotton uniform is available following an assessment with Occupational Health.

## GENERAL APPEARANCE OF ALL HEALTH BOARD STAFF

The Health Board recognises and values the diversity of its staff. In doing so, it appreciates that some staff may wish to express individuality through their appearance. Whilst the Health Board embraces such self-expression, there still remains a need for all staff to present a highly professional image that inspires confidence in our service users and that is appropriate to the environment in which staff work, (and which must also comply with the NHS All-Wales Dress Code).

The Health Board further recognises that individuals belonging to differing cultural and religious groups may need to observe specific requirements around dress/uniform that constitute an important part of their religious or cultural beliefs. The Health Board will therefore endeavour to ensure that these particular needs are met in addition to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and patients. This will be agreed with the relevant manager following a risk assessment and advice from Workforce Team.

In addition to the above, a number of further principles have been developed by the Health Board and must also be followed. They are set out in Appendix 5.

## INDIVIDUAL DEPARTMENT DRESS CODE/UNIFORM PROTOCOLS:

It is recognised that some Departments may feel it necessary and helpful to develop their own department specific dress code protocol – e.g. to provide any further dress code requirements necessary in that Department, above those already set out above. Those that do must ensure that any such protocol is compliant with this Policy and the All-Wales Dress Code Policy and have a justifiable rationale for any stipulations the protocol contains. Furthermore, such Departmental protocols must be presented in gender neutral language and provide gender neutral dress code/uniform options. It is also recommended that Departments developing their own protocols seek the view of local Staff Side Representatives as part of doing so.

## HOME WORKING / HYBRID WORKING:

The Health Board has seen a significant increase in home or hybrid working in recent years, with virtual meetings from home becoming a normal part of working life for some staff.

As such, it is recognised that staff working from home may wish to dress differently to how they would (or are required to) when they are 'on site' in the workplace. This may be for a number of practical reasons. Whilst this is acceptable, staff are asked to remain mindful when working from home that they are still very much 'on duty'. As such, whilst it may not always be reasonable to expect staff to adhere to the remit of the All-Wales Dress Code Policy and this Health Board Policy in full when home working, staff must still ensure that they dress appropriately for their work commitments when doing so. For example, the wearing of more casual attire may be acceptable for a virtual internal department meeting, but would not be expected to be worn if attending a virtual meeting with an external party (e.g. Welsh Government) or during a virtual internal meeting of a formal nature. In that regard, staff are also asked to ensure their 'background' is professional when undertaking virtual meetings and use an appropriate "background effect" as required.

The key message to remember when working from home is to ensure that the image presented by staff creates the right impression and is appropriate to the work commitments they are undertaking that day. Where this does not occur, staff may be reminded of the standards expected and asked to ensure they adhere to them accordingly.

## PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION

All staff must always wear a form of corporate personal identification whilst on duty. Only identity/name badges issued by the Health Board should be worn and must be bilingual.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

The uniform policy will be brought to the attention of all new staff at induction and will be available on the Health Board intranet.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE holds overall responsibility for the effective management of organisational policies

DIRECTOR OF WORKFORCE & OD has responsibility for ensuring that all employment polices are developed in line with employment legislation and practice and are reviewed and updated as appropriate.

## LINE MANAGERS

It will be the role of the line manager to monitor ongoing compliance with the policy and address any shortfalls with individual members of staff. They will have direct responsibility to ensure that;

- Staff for whom they are responsible for, are issued with the correct uniform.
- Staff who are not issued with a uniform maintain a professional appearance in line with the All-Wales Dress Code and this policy.
- Regular monitoring of the policy and dress code via spot checks and/or audit activities are undertaken.
- Issues of non-compliance are raised with the individual directly at the time and followed up by email or other appropriate record.

## NON COMPLIANCE WITH POLICY

If a member of staff persistently contravenes this policy they are likely to be subject to the Health Board's appropriate Disciplinary Procedure - 201 - Disciplinary Policy (opens in a new tab). Managers must consult with the Workforce & Organisational Development department to seek advice when dealing with such circumstances.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

The wearing of an NHS uniform and/or workplace clothing must address key Health and Safety recommendations. Please see Appendix 6.

## INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL (INCLUDING LAUNDERING)

Uniform or personal clothing is not considered to be personal protective equipment (PPE). Additional items of PPE e.g. disposable plastic aprons, should be put on and removed in line with local infection prevention and control policy i.e. standard and transmission based precautions, and whenever exposure to blood or other body fluid is anticipated.

Staff are responsible for ensuring their uniform/clothing is clean and in good order and should launder their uniforms as directed in Appendix 7.

Staff should not socialise outside the workplace or undertake social activities while wearing an identifiable NHS uniform. Where changing facilities are NOT available staff should ensure their uniform is covered up whilst travelling to and from the 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).

## UNIFORM ALLOWANCE

Uniforms are provided by the Hywel Dda University Health Board for use on duty and remain the property of the Health Board at all times. All line managers are to ensure new employees are fitted for uniforms prior to employment commencing. Staff will be issued with sufficient uniforms to enable them to wear a clean uniform for each shift worked per week (up to a maximum of 5 for full time staff).

## RETURN / RENEWAL OF UNIFORMS

Staff will be responsible for simple repairs to their own uniforms. Renewal of uniforms will be at the discretion of the line manager who will make an assessment of the state of the uniform. Requests for new uniforms will only be accepted if authorised by the line manager and all old uniforms must be returned when the new uniform is issued.

Staff making unauthorised alterations to the standard issue will be required to replace them at their own expense. Any alterations required as a result of occupational health assessment and advice will be undertaken by the Health Board sewing room services.

All staff are required to return their uniform at termination of their employment. It is the responsibility of the designated line manager to ensure that this occurs. All such returned uniforms should then be sent to the linen room by the line manager.

## EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

Hywel Dda University Health Board recognises that equality impacts on all aspects of its day-to-day operations and has produced an equality policy statement to reflect this. All policies and procedures are assessed in accordance with the equality initial screening toolkit, the results for which are monitored centrally.

## APPENDIX 1 - ALL WALES UNIFORM – DESIGNATED UNIFORMS & COLOURS

Certain groups of staff must wear the designated and approved All Wales uniform at all times whilst on duty. The colour code for each group is set out below.

| DESIGNATION | COLOUR |
|---|---|
| Head of Nursing and Senior Nurse | Navy Blue with Red Trim |
| Sister/Charge Nurse | Navy Blue |
| Staff Nurses | Hospital Blue |
| Clinical Nurse Specialists | Royal Blue |
| Midwives – Acute & Community | Postman Blue |
| Nursery Nurse | Aqua |
| Healthcare Support Worker | Bottle Green |
| Student Nurse | Purple |
| Student Midwife | Lilac |
| Hotel Services Staff | Maroon |
| Research Practitioner | Peacock Blue |

## APPENDIX 2 - VOLUNTEERS AND WORK EXPERIENCE STUDENTS

Volunteers are issued with a yellow polo shirt and work experience students are issued with a green polo shirt that they are required to wear.

Volunteers and work experience students must wear black trousers and black closed in shoes (these are not supplied by the Health Board), as well as an ID Badge at all times.

They are required to adhere to the Heath Board's Uniform Policy and the principles of the NHS All Wales Dress Code (Free to Lead, Free to Care, WAG 2010)

## APPENDIX 3 - CATERING STAFF – UNIFORM / DRESS CODE REQUIREMENTS

- Tabards must be worn for food service duties and white plastic aprons for all kitchen cleaning\washing up duties.
- Safety shoes will be provided and must be worn at all times. Trainers, clogs or mules are not permitted.
- Long hair ie longer than collar length, must be worn tied back from the face or kept pinned up. Hair must be kept covered by a hair net and hat at all times. Beards should be kept trimmed and relatively short or the use of a beard net applied.
- No jewellery other than one ring, and 1 small stud earring per ear may be worn in order to minimise the risk of injury and to avoid cross contamination when handling food, and physical contamination of items falling in to food. [Nose studs are permitted providing that the wearer follows strict guidelines in respect of personal hygiene and handwashing]. False nails and false eye lashes are also prohibited when handling or preparing food for the same reason.

# APPENDIX 4 – FOOTWEAR

Footwear must comply with Manual Handling Operations Regulations and provide the member of staff with adequate support and be suitable to their area of work.

In clinical areas footwear must be appropriate, well-fitting with enclosed body and toes and have a stable, non-slip sole. Trainers, sandals, mules, sling backs or shoes with holes in the body of the shoe (allowing ingress of fluids or sharps) are not acceptable.

For staff who are required to wear specific theatre footwear, these will be supplied as part of their uniform issue. It is the responsibility of each individual staff member to ensure their footwear is appropriately cleaned prior to and at the end of every shift. Specific guidance is provided by The Association for Perioperative Practice in that regard.

Similarly where staff are required to care for a patient with a high consequence infectious disease suitable footwear will be supplied in the form of boots or clogs that can be decontaminated after each use.

Trainers are acceptable only in rehabilitation areas due to the physical nature of work in these settings. If trainers are worn they must be clean and in good condition. No brightly coloured trainers are to be worn.

Where a specific medical condition requires a deviation from this guidance a workplace and individual risk assessment must be undertaken jointly by the Occupational Health Department and line manager and a suitable alternative agreed with the employee. Alternatives must be recommended in exceptional circumstances only.

If staff wear inappropriate footwear they may not be covered for any injuries suffered on duty as a result of doing so.

Staff who fail to wear appropriate footwear as set out in this policy may risk being unable to claim sick pay due to an absence that is the result of failing to do so.

## APPENDIX 5 - PRINCIPLES FOR THE GENERAL APPEARANCE OF ALL HEALTH BOARD STAFF

In addition to the All Wales Dress Code Policy, a number of principles have been developed specifically by the Health Board regards the appearance of staff and must also be followed. They are set out below:

- All staff issued with a Health Board uniform who wish to wear cardigans/sweatshirts must ensure that only black or navy are worn and that they are not worn within a clinical environment.
- The use of hair colourants and hair style is an individual choice, as is make up. However staff are asked to ensure that they maintain a professional image at all times whilst at work.
- Skirt and dress length should be no shorter than just above the knee.
- Deodorant, perfume or after shave must be discreet.
- The wearing of shorts is not generally permitted but authority to do so is solely at the discretion of local managers. However tailored shorts may be permissible for some therapists and they should consult their own departmental dress code protocol accordingly). Sports wear should not be worn. Denim jeans should not be worn.
- Garments with logos that could cause offence or may be open to varying interpretation are not to be worn.
- Staff may be required to cover up tattoo designs if they are considered unprofessional, inappropriate and/or offensive, particularly in the context of a health setting. Advice should be sought from their manager and/or local Workforce Team in such instances.

## APPENDIX 6 - HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

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

- Adhere to the principles and practice of safe infection prevention and control including the need to be ‘bare below the elbows’ to facilitate effective hand hygiene
- Provide the wearer with mobility and comfort and promote safe manual handling practices.
- Be resilient to withstand rigorous laundering
- Take into account staff safety in relation to situations involving violence and aggression

Staff who are required to work outside should also be issued with appropriate clothing and/or equipment to support their health and safety when doing so – e.g. “hi-vis” jackets, ice shoes, torches etc.

# APPENDIX 7 – GUIDANCE FOR HEALTHCARE STAFF LAUNDERING UNIFORMS / WORKWEAR IN THE HOME

- Clear instruction in terms of laundering new garments should be given by the sewing room when the uniforms are issued.
- All uniforms should be put through a washing machine cycle prior to first use to minimise any risk of skin irritation.
- Where on-site changing facilities exist staff should change into and remove their uniform on site.
- For transportation, uniforms should be placed in a plastic bag or a water-soluble bag specifically for use in domestic washing machines.
- For clinical based staff uniforms should be washed separately to personal clothing
- Uniforms should be washed at the hottest temperature suitable for the fabric. A wash for 10 minutes at 60$^{o}$ 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.
- Staff may be eligible to claim tax relief for costs resultant from cleaning their uniform and can check their eligibility via this link:
  Claim tax relief for your job expenses: Uniforms, work clothing and tools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) (opens in a new tab)