

Standards of Dress on Trust Business Policy

Board library reference	Document author	Assured by	Review cycle
P085	Head of Health and Safety	Quality and Standards	3 years

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1. Introduction

All staff should be mindful that throughout the working day they are representatives of Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust. Staff attending external events and are representing or who can be associated with the Trust and are attending a formal event will be expected to conform to the guidelines within this policy

A workforce that presents a professional appearance is an important part of the Trust delivering a professional service to our service users and carers. It reinforces belief in a competent organisation, staffed by professional people who know what they are doing and who respect the people they work with. Service users and carers need to feel they can have confidence in the people who care for them and appearance is part of this.

Each person should maintain a professional standard in terms of their conduct and standard of dress at all times. In line with this and in the interests of creating a therapeutic staff and service user interaction, The Department of Health (2007) encourage clinical staff to dress in a manner which is likely to inspire confidence, and research indicates (Lill [2005]) and maintains that patients are more comfortable with conservative clothing.

The Trust recognises the diversity of cultures religions and disabilities of its employees and will take a sensitive approach when this effects dress and uniform requirements. However health and safety, security and infection control considerations where there are these will take precedence. Risk assessments will take place as appropriate.

Standards of dress are essential for delivering infection control safeguards and health & safety risk controls.

2. Purpose or aim

The purpose of this document is to set out the Trust's policy in relation to non-uniform arrangements. This policy should be read in conjunction with food hygiene, health & Safety, and all infection control policies.

The table in [Appendix 1](#) is designed to both make clear explicit requirements and give direction on what constitutes appropriate and non-appropriate dress rather than dictating what can be worn.

All staff must be aware of their responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and appropriate Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust policies, specifically the [Health and Safety Policy](#), the [Food Hygiene Policy](#) and all [Infection Control policies](#).

The objective of this policy is to provide organisational guidance in the following key areas:

2.1 Patient Safety

Effective hygiene and preventing infection are absolutes in all healthcare settings. The clothes that staff wear should facilitate good practice and minimise any risk to patients. Uniforms and work wear should not impede effective hand hygiene, and should not unintentionally come into contact with patients during direct patient care activity. Similarly, nothing should be worn that could compromise patient or staff safety during care or physical interventions such as lifting, mobilising or undertaking PMVA.

2.2 Public Confidence

Patients and the wider public should have complete confidence in the cleanliness and hygiene of their healthcare environment. The way staff dress is an important influence on peoples' overall perceptions of the standards of care they experience. Uniforms and work wear should be clean at all times, professional in appearance and adhere to the guidelines in [Appendix 1](#). In addition, public attitudes indicate it is good practice for staff either to change uniform at work, or to cover their uniforms as they travel to and from work.

Patients, carers and visitors also like to be able to identify the care team. Name badges can help with this identification and are a requirement under the Trust's [Security Policy](#).

Community or in patient staff not required to wear uniform should adhere to the policy guidelines in [Appendix 1](#) to demonstrate a professional appearance and that there is a consistent approach to standards of care.

2.3 Staff Comfort and Safety

As far as possible, subject to the overriding requirements of patient safety and public confidence (refer to [Appendix 1](#)), staff should feel comfortable in their uniforms and work clothing. This includes being able to dress in accordance with their cultural practices.

3. Equality statement

Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP) aims to design and implement policy documents that meet the diverse needs of our service, population and workforce, ensuring that none are placed at a disadvantage over others. It takes into account the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and advances equal opportunities for all. This document has been assessed to ensure that no one receives less favourable treatment on the protected characteristics of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender) or sexual orientation.

In carrying out its functions, the Trust must have due regard to the different needs of different protected equality groups in their area. This applies to all the activities for which the Trust is responsible, including policy development, review and implementation.

4. Policy statement

All staff are required to present themselves in a clean, tidy and smart manner whilst on duty (refer to [Appendix 1](#) for further guidance)

Appearance must be appropriate to the task or area of work and must reflect the professional image of the Trust (refer to [Appendix 1](#) for further guidance).

Ethnic, cultural or religious dress is acknowledged and respected by the Trust but appearance must be appropriate to the task or area of work and follow all health and safety, food hygiene and infection control procedures and standards in place.

There will be times when staff will be engaged in clinical activity that will require Personal Protective Equipment such as aprons and gloves; these are provided by the Trust at no cost to the employee. However staff are reminded that for clinical activity involving body contact, bodily fluids or sterile equipment, they must be "bare below the elbow" to ensure effective hand washing and therefore be able to roll back any sleeves. (Refer to Infection control policies on OurSpace).

Anyone whose appearance is contrary to the guidance may be asked by the senior person on duty to change into appropriate clothing or remove items not in accordance with this guidance or not engage in work as the case may be, or to leave the premises and not to return until appropriately dressed. Any time lost due to leaving the premises will not be paid and the disciplinary process may also be invoked.

The requirements of this policy may be modified and extended by other policies where there is a regulatory requirement (i.e. food hygiene) and these will be detailed within those policies.

There are some activities where the code will not apply fully – such as in undertaking physical exercise where appropriate clothing will need to be worn or when out in the sun where head protection will need to be worn. Further guidance is given in the last section of [Appendix 1](#).

5. Scope

This policy deals with people management issues and not clinical principles (these are dealt with in specific policies and procedures on food hygiene and infection control). It applies to all employees of the Trust. It also applies to other workers carrying out their duties as part of other AWP teams, for example, agency staff or local authority employees working in integrated teams.

This policy covers all settings, teams and workers within the Trust without exception whether they are clinical settings or not. It applies equally to offsite working.

This policy is giving guidance and direction on what constitutes inappropriate dress and does not intend to dictate what staff can wear.

This policy applies to all posts within the Trust, regardless of seniority.

This policy applies to the following categories of persons who undertake activity within the Trust:

- All employees
- Those with a licence to practice
- Agency workers
- Volunteers
- Contractors carrying out work/activity on behalf of AWP, including those working under NHS Service Level Agreements
- Students on placement within the Trust
- Seconded staff
- Non-executive Directors
- Service user reps and carer reps

6. Definitions

6.1 Clinical Activity

Clinical activity is defined as any work activity either in a ward, health centre, AWP department or clients home during which a member of staff is in direct contact with the patient/client, their medical equipment or their immediate environment (to include anywhere clinical activity is taking place).

6.2 Infection

An infection is an organism present at a wound/site and causes an inflammatory response, or where an organism is present in a normally sterile site

6.3 PMVA

'PMVA' stands for prevention and management of violence and aggression techniques.

6.4 Uniform

This is clothing of distinctive design worn by members of a particular group as a means of identification.

6.5 PPE

PPE is the abbreviation for Personal protective equipment. PPE typically includes gloves, eye protection, face masks and aprons which protect the employee from sources of infection but also protect service users from cross infection. Shoes for specialist tasks may also be included within PPE (safety shoes) where there are risks specific to that task.

6.6 Due Regard

Having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low

7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 Responsibilities of Line/Ward Managers and Team Leaders

It is the responsibility of the line managers to determine the appropriateness of clothing and ensuring that this policy is adhered to following the notes in [Appendix 1](#). Appropriateness will also depend on the activity and working environment, and in light of risks etc.

The line manager must bring this policy to the attention of their team so that if anyone falls short of the standards expected this can be raised with them at an early opportunity so that workers can correct this.

The information attached in [Appendix 1](#) is designed to both make clear explicit requirements and give direction on what constitutes appropriate and non-appropriate dress rather than dictating what can be worn. It must be a professional, informed judgement and must not be based on personal opinion.

Any concerns regarding dress code or appearance of staff (e.g. clothing, logos footwear, jewellery or body piercing) should be discussed with staff in the first instance. The manager should maintain a record of the conversation regarding standards of dress.

Where the teams' local protocol determines that uniforms are mandatory, they will be worn. The Trust will provide these uniforms for staff.

7.2 Responsibilities of Individual Employees

It is the responsibility of all persons to present themselves in a professional manner with regard to the appropriateness of clothing, footwear and jewellery as described in this policy.

All staff are expected to uphold the principles of this policy and should seek advice from their line manager should they be concerned about the suitability of any attire.

All staff must be aware of their responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and appropriate Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust policies, specifically the [Health and Safety Policy](#), the [Food Hygiene Policy](#) and all [Infection Control policies](#).

It is the individuals' responsibility to respond promptly to any issues raised by their line manager.

Staff will abide by their relevant codes of professional conduct at work.

8. Standards

Representatives from trades unions formally recognised by the Trust and management have drawn up this policy in line with relevant UK and European employment legislation.

The Department of Health has published guidance on dress in "[Uniforms and Workwear: an Evidence base for developing local policy](#)" (DOH 2007):

[Personal protective equipment \(PPE\) at work: A brief guide](#) (HSE 2013) INDG174 v 2

9. Laundry Advice

This advice is appropriate to all clothing.

A ten minute wash at 60°C is sufficient to remove most micro-organisms. In tests, the only organisms remaining were a small number (less than 10%) of Clostridium difficile spores. Microbiologists carrying out the research advise that this level of contamination is not cause for concern.

Using detergents means that many organisms can be removed from fabrics at lower temperatures. MRSA is completely removed following a wash at 30°C. DOH (2007)

Furthermore ironing with a steam iron and tumble drying will also kill micro organisms.

The general advice is to wash clothing at the highest temperature appropriate to the clothing.

10. Training

Staff receive awareness training on this policy through their local induction process.

The Trust's overarching policy for training is the [Learning and Development Policy](#) and this should be read in conjunction with this policy. Attached as appendices to that policy are the Trust's learning and development matrices. These matrices describe the minimum statutory, mandatory and required training for all staff groups in respect of Infection Control, Health & Safety and Food Hygiene (see references).

The Learning and Development Policy also describes the Trust's arrangements for training, in particular how there are processes in place to ensure staff receive the training they require and how non-attendance is followed up. These arrangements are further supported by management supervision and appraisal processes.

Staff with specific duties that involve tasks that may give rise to risks will be given specific training and safety instructions relevant to their jobs. Typically these will be domestic staff, cleaning staff, kitchen staff and clinical staff where there are food and infection control risks.

11. Monitoring or Audit

The implementation of this policy will be monitored and evaluated on behalf of the Trust by the Health, Safety, Security and Fire Group and the Infection Control Group through inspections of teams, exception reporting, Infection Control audits, Food Hygiene Audits & H&S risk assessments.

12. Associated and Related Procedural Documents

- [Food Hygiene and Pest Control Policy P002](#)
- [Health and Safety policy P094](#)
- [Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Policy P055](#)
- [AWP Infection Control pages on Ourspace](#)
- [Management of Infection Policy P028](#)
- [Infection Control and Decontamination Strategy](#)

- [Security Policy P040](#)
- [AWP Laundry, Linen & Dress Procedure](#)
- [Hand Hygiene Procedure](#)
- [Policy for the Management of Communicable Diseases](#)
- [Core standards for exercise sessions \(Physiotherapy\)](#)

13. References

DOH 2007 Uniforms and Workwear, an evidence base for developing local policy:
<http://www.dh.gov.uk/publications>

Lill M. M. & Wilkinson T. J. (2005) Judging a book by its cover: descriptive survey of patients' preferences for doctors' appearance and mode of address. *British Medical Journal* 2005; 331; 1524-1527 (24 December)

14. Acknowledgements

- Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust (2008) "Dress Code"
- East Kent hospitals NHS Trust (2007) "Dress Code Policy For all staff and students"
- Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (2014) "Dress Code and Uniform Policy"
- West London Mental Health NHS Trust (2014) "Staff Dress Code".

15. Appendices

15.1 [Appendix 1](#) - Explanatory Notes on Standards of Dress.

Version History				
Version	Date	Revision description	Editor	Status
1.0	4 Oct 2011	Approved by the Quality and Healthcare Governance Committee	PAD	Approved
2.0	6 Nov 2012	Approved by Quality and Safety Committee	PAD	Approved
2.2	25 Apr 2016	Approved by the Health, Safety, Security and Fire Group	PAD	Draft
3.0	11 May 2016	Approved by Quality and Standards Committee	Head of Health and Safety	Approved
3.0	3 April 2019	Extension agreed at GNG to 31 October 2019	GNG	Approved
3.1	3 September 2020	Extended until March 2020	Nursing Director	Approved