

Date 24 August 2026
Your Ref
Our Ref 11768

Enquiries to Richard Mutch
Extension 35687
Direct Line 0131 465 5687
loth.freedomofinformation@nhs.scot
richard.mutch@nhs.scot

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – UNIFORM POLICY

I write in response to your request for information in relation to staff uniforms.

Question:

- Could you please advise whether staff are permitted to wear their uniform when commuting to and from work on public transport, and whether there are any specific guidelines or infection prevention requirements that should be followed?

I would be grateful for any information or relevant policy documents you can provide.

Answer:

I am advised that the Uniform Policy currently advises the following on this issue:

With the exception of Community Staff, as detailed in Section 8.3 below, staff are not permitted to travel between home and work in their uniform and should change once off duty. The wearing of the uniform in public places outside NHS Lothian premises such as supermarkets, restaurants, travelling on public transport (other than NHS Lothian Transport) is not acceptable.

Full policy enclosed for your information.

I hope the information provided helps with your request.

If you are unhappy with our response to your request, you do have the right to request us to review it. Your request should be made within 40 working days of receipt of this letter, and we will reply within 20 working days of receipt. If our decision is unchanged following a review and you remain dissatisfied with this, you then have the right to make a formal complaint to the Scottish Information Commissioner within 6 months of receipt of our review response. You can do this by using the Scottish Information Commissioner's Office online appeals service at www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal. If you remain dissatisfied with the Commissioner's response you then have the option to appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law.

If you require a review of our decision to be carried out, please write to the FOI Reviewer at the email address at the head of this letter. The review will be undertaken by a Reviewer who was not involved in the original decision-making process.

FOI responses (subject to redaction of personal information) may appear on NHS Lothian's Freedom of Information website at: <https://org.nhsllothian.scot/FOI/Pages/default.aspx>

Yours sincerely

ALISON MACDONALD
Executive Director, Nursing
Cc: Chief Executive
Enc.



UNIFORM POLICY

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1. Introduction

This policy sets out the expectations of NHS Lothian in implementing the Uniform requirements of the National Uniform Policy, Dress Code and Laundering Policy CEL 42 (December 2010).

All NHS Lothian employees should present themselves in a way which promotes a positive image of NHS Lothian to patients and members of the public.

All healthcare workers (both clinical and non-clinical) have a responsibility to promote health and safety, and minimise the spread of infection by dressing in an appropriate manner in clinical and non-clinical work settings, and by complying with the standards in this policy which also meet health and safety guidelines.

2. Aims

The Uniform Policy is required in order to:

- Minimise the risk of cross infection;
- Minimise the risk of injury to patients;
- Comply with health and safety regulations;
- Display a corporate image;
- Enhance security on NHS Lothian premises;
- Identify staff.

NHS Lothian considers that the appearance of employees and the way they dress is of significant importance in portraying a professional image to the public and all users of its services, whether patients, visitors, clients or colleagues.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all staff who are required to wear a uniform when working on NHS Lothian premises and when carrying out work on behalf of NHS Lothian, including those with honorary contracts, bank and agency workers, students, volunteers and people on work experience.

NHS Lothian employs people in a vast range of roles and environments. Managers have the responsibility to ensure that staff in their areas meet NHS Lothian standards. Occasionally local or specialist uniform (protective clothing standards) protocols will be needed and these must be approved by the General Manager, Director of Operations and/or relevant Executive Director. Such protocols require to be written in partnership with staff side, and with advice from Infection Prevention and Control and Health & Safety.

4. Diversity and Equality

NHS Lothian recognises and values the diversity of cultures, religions and disabilities of its employees and will take a sensitive approach when this affects uniform requirements. However, there may be circumstances in which there are genuine occupational or clinical reasons as to why the wearing of certain articles

and/or clothing is not permissible, and priority will be given to health and safety, security, and infection control. In circumstances where there is a conflict of interest with any individual member of staff, the line manager should undertake a risk assessment. This policy acknowledges religious and cultural guidance, to ensure that it should not cause either offence or discrimination.

This policy is based on the principles and guidelines in the Equality Act 2010, and also the rights of individuals to express themselves freely. NHS Lothian reserves the right to review and amend this policy at any time with appropriate consultation, following changes to legislation or guidelines.

5. Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene is the single most important measure one can take to minimise the spread of infection to vulnerable patients.

The 'bare below the elbows' clinical policy applies when treating patients, and provides healthcare workers with a highly visible way to:

- Demonstrate their commitment to good infection prevention and control practice;
- Highlight their determination to reduce Healthcare Associated Infections (HAI's) and their potential transmission, thus contributing to improved patient safety;
- Effectively comply with good hand hygiene technique.

6. General Guidance

The impact of Healthcare Associated Infection (HAI) on patients in terms of morbidity and mortality cannot be overstated, and the safety of patients in relation to HAI is a clear priority for NHS Lothian. Uniform and hygiene in the clinical setting are integral to the control and prevention of HAI. This policy is specifically based on the uniform related principles, directions and guidelines as stated in the Health Protection Scotland, Model Infection Control Policies (2009) and National Uniform Policy, Dress Code and Laundering Policy (2010). References including evidence base are given at the end of this document.

All healthcare workers have a responsibility to minimise the spread of infection by dressing in the appropriate manner in the clinical setting, and by complying with the policy or local protocols.

All employees are supplied with an identity security badge that must be worn and visible at all times when on duty or acting in an official capacity representing NHS Lothian. University and non NHS Lothian staff, visiting clinical staff, and contractors must also wear identity security badges.

All staff who are required to wear a uniform are required to comply with the principles and requirements of the Uniform policy. Failure to adhere to the policy may result in investigation under the NHSScotland Workforce Policy Investigation Process.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that the policy is adhered to at all times in

respect of the employees they manage.

Senior managers are also responsible for ensuring compliance, that there are sufficient resources for implementation, and for agreeing local protocol.

7. Allowance on the grounds of religious or cultural beliefs

The wearing of certain clothing/items for cultural or religious reasons is in most circumstances accepted by NHS Lothian, providing that the health and safety, infection control and security of patients or staff are not compromised.

Staff who wear facial coverings for religious reasons are required to remove these while on duty. This is to ensure that the member of staff is identifiable, and to enhance engagement and communication with patients, visitors and colleagues.

Jilbabs are permitted provided that they do not affect health and safety, or prevent the employee from doing their job effectively.

Headwear: Turbans and kippots, veils (Christian or Niqab) and Hijabs are permitted on religious grounds. The latter should be shoulder length and must be worn unadorned and secured neatly and should not cover the face.

8. Specific Guidance

8.1 All Uniformed staff

All staff who are required to wear a uniform should do so in accordance with the National Uniform Policy, Dress Code and Laundering Policy (see Appendix 1). The uniforms issued must not be altered or added to by the individual. NHS Lothian employees will be provided with the appropriate national uniform. It is not permissible to develop an alternative uniform for any staff groups that are included within this policy. Full time members of staff will be provided with a minimum of 5 tunics or polo shirts and 3 pairs of trousers. Issue will be based on number of days worked. If alterations are required, these alterations should be undertaken by sewing room staff. Staff leaving NHS Lothian or changing their role must return their uniforms to the sewing room.

Uniforms should be clean, changed daily and worn in a presentable fashion. Staff should pay attention to their personal hygiene. In the event of contamination with blood or body fluids uniforms should be changed immediately. All staff should have a spare uniform available should their uniform become soiled during the course of duty. The wearing of scrubs is only permitted in designated areas, and they should not be worn as an alternative to the uniform provided. A separate protocol is attached for wearing of scrubs (see Appendix 2).

Staff are not permitted to smoke in uniform (please see Section 10). With the exception of Community Staff, as detailed in Section 8.3 below, staff are not permitted to travel between home and work in their uniform and should change once off duty. The wearing of the uniform in public places outside NHS Lothian premises such as supermarkets, restaurants, travelling on public transport (other

than NHS Lothian Transport) is not acceptable.

Staff must comply with NHS Lothian policies at all times while at work and it is essential that all staff adhere to standard infection control precautions while in uniform, for example, the wearing of an apron whilst carrying out clinical tasks.

ID badge must be worn so it is visible when on duty and must be securely tucked away when directly treating patients.

8.2 Estates and facilities staff

Some staff within this Directorate have specific clothing requirements and local protocols are in place to meet the need for:

- Personal safety;
- Statutory regulatory requirement;
- Work environment (including outside working);
- Infection control;
- Food hygiene.

8.3 Community staff

Staff working in the community are permitted to travel in uniform to and from work and throughout their working day. Staff should wear a coat or outer garment to cover their uniform, taking account of weather conditions.

It is accepted that staff working in the community will be out and about as part of their duties, in particular staff rehabilitating patients, and therefore will be seen in all manner of public places, indeed wherever the patient may wish to go.

It is acknowledged that some staff when working in the community may be required to visit shops or petrol stations and this is acceptable, however staff should not routinely be seen shopping whilst in uniform.

9. Dress Code

Please refer to Section 6.2.2 of the [NHS Lothian Dress Code Policy](#)

10. Uniforms and the NHS Lothian Smoke Free Policy

Smoking is prohibited on all NHS Lothian grounds, inside NHS Lothian premises and inside NHS Lothian vehicles, please see section 2.0 of the [NHS Lothian Smoke Free Policy](#) for further detail. In addition, staff are not permitted to be seen smoking while recognisable as an NHS Lothian member of staff (this applies to all staff, regardless of whether they wear an assigned uniform).

11. Changing Facilities and Storage of Personal Belongings/ Valuables

NHS Lothian requires staff to change in allocated changing facilities – which include facilities for showering.

Personal staff lockers should be used to store spare uniform and personal belongings/valuables and should be kept clean.

12. Infection Prevention – Laundry Guidance

The risk of uniforms and clothing worn in the clinical area being contaminated with blood or body fluids is dependent on the tasks performed by the healthcare worker. Such contamination carries an inherent risk (albeit low) of transmission of disease. Staff should presume there is some degree of contamination, even on clothing which is not visibly soiled. If uniform is heavily soiled it should not be pulled over head and should where possible, be cut to enable repair, sent to laundry and returned to sewing room.

The following items should be sent to the central laundry to be washed:

- All uniforms in clinical areas where it is known or suspected that there is an infection outbreak;
- All uniforms visibly soiled with blood or body fluids;
- All scrubs.

NB: Where staff have soiled uniforms and do not have access to central laundry facilities the soiled item/items should be laundered separately (please refer to home laundering section)

Staff must ensure that pockets are emptied and any badges removed before items are sent to the laundry.

13. Home Laundering

Where uniforms worn by staff in the clinical area are laundered at home the following guidance must be adhered to:

- Uniforms must not be washed with general household laundry
- Uniforms should be washed as per manufacturers instructions. There is no evidence to suggest that home laundering is a less effective method of laundering used uniform

In some circumstances, if an employee is required to wear specific clothes that require home laundering, the expense may be tax-deductible - please refer to www.hmrc.gov.uk/incometax/relief-tools.htm

14. Monitoring and review

This policy will be monitored and reviewed after a period of three years by the Lothian Partnership Forum.

Appendix 1: National Uniform and Dress Code

CLINICAL STAFF	
All unregistered staff and support workers	Pale sky blue tunic or pale sky blue polo shirt Navy blue trousers Support staff for Allied Health Professionals, Healthcare Scientists, and Pharmacy Technicians can have their department embroidered on their tunic/polo shirt or have the option to wear a non-embroidered tunic/polo shirt.
Registered nursing staff, including dental nurses	Cornflower blue tunic or cornflower blue polo shirt Navy blue trousers
Allied Health Professionals	Mediterranean blue tunic or Mediterranean blue polo shirt Navy blue trousers Allied Health Professionals will have their professional role embroidered on their tunic/polo shirt
Healthcare Scientists, Pharmacy Technicians, Dental Care Professionals including Dental Hygienists	Ocean blue tunic or ocean blue polo shirt Navy blue trousers These staff groups will have their professional role embroidered on their tunic/polo shirt
Senior Charge Nurses/ Community Team Leaders & HAN practitioners	Navy blue tunic or navy blue polo shirt Navy blue trousers
NON-CLINICAL STAFF	
Catering and domestic staff	Mid-green tunic or mid-green polo shirt Navy blue trousers
Catering and domestic supervisors	Dark green tunic or dark green polo shirt Navy blue trousers
Porters	Mid-green polo shirt or mid-green dress shirt/blouse Navy blue trousers
Security Guards	White shirt and clip on tie with military style jumper or black t-shirt and stab vest Black trousers
Administrative and Clerical Staff in clinical location/base	Plain coloured mid-green blouse/dress shirt Navy blue dress trousers

NB: Staff may request shorts as an alternative to trousers. Where a request is made a risk assessment should be carried out to ensure the wearing of shorts is

appropriate for the professional group and there is no health and safety or infection prevention and control risk to the staff member(s). Where approved, the shorts must be ordered via the approved supplier on PECOS. Shorts will be considered as part of the uniform allocation outlined in section 8.1.

Appendix 2: Wearing of Scrubs

Coloured scrubs are worn in designated areas such as:

- Neo-natal Unit
- Labour Ward
- EFREC
- Burns Unit
- Endoscopy
- Mortuary
- Critical Care
- Invasive Radiology

It has been agreed by local senior management that staff wearing scrubs should adhere to the principles of the NHSScotland Dress Code.

Within the operating theatres there is a need to:

- Protect staff against contamination from blood and body fluids
- Promote a clean environment
- Minimise risk of cross-infection, cross-contamination

Within the operating theatres:

- All staff will wear scrubs.

The following apply when a member of staff, or contractor, wearing scrubs wishes to leave the operating theatre temporarily:

Leaving the operating theatre:

- Scrubs can be worn without the need to cover up because scrubs are considered uniform.

BUT

- Scrubs and footwear MUST be changed if visibly contaminated.
- Surgical masks and hats MUST be removed, these are personal protective equipment, not uniform.
- Theatre scrubs and theatre footwear MUST NOT be worn outside the hospital building.

On return to the operating theatre:

- The scrubs should be checked for visible contamination and changed if necessary.
- Foot wear should be checked and cleaned of any visible contamination.
- A new hat should be donned before entering the clean area.

Footwear:

- Should be properly fitted and dedicated operating theatre footwear.
- Footwear must be cleaned / decontaminated regularly, when visibly dirty, or when contaminated with blood or body fluids.
- There should be a local policy for the cleaning of shoes.

Surgical face masks (Guidance from Health Protection Scotland (HPS):

- The “scrub team” should wear surgical face masks during all surgical procedures when airborne blood and / or body fluids may be present
- Non-scrubbed members of the theatre team must wear surgical face masks when deemed necessary by an assessment of the risk of exposure to blood and / or body fluids
- Surgical face masks should be worn by healthcare workers when performing invasive spinal procedures such as myelography, lumbar puncture and spinal anaesthesia
- The site or nature of the surgery may define the need for wearing of surgical facemasks or other protection (such as enclosed hood), for example during aerosol generating procedures or implantation of prostheses.
- Masks are single use items and should be removed and disposed of at the end of each case
- Masks should NOT be worn hanging around the neck

Hats:

- Within the operating theatre suite all staff must wear a clean hat which completely covers the hair.
- Hats should be changed on leaving the operating theatre suite, when contaminated with blood or body fluids and at least daily.
- It is recommended that beards be covered with a balaclava like hat / hood.

Other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):

- Protective eyewear (eg visors)
- Aprons
- Gloves

must be readily available in every theatre suite and dental surgery area.

NB: All PPE should be disposed of in the appropriate waste stream. (See Waste Management Policy)

Hospital Sterilisation and Decontamination Unit (HSDU)

- In general the guidelines relating to theatre staff also apply to HSDU staff

working in sterile areas

- The guidelines relating to the wearing of uniform in a clean room environment must be adhered to at all times.
- The HSDU Manager will ensure staff are trained and aware of their responsibilities..