

## PRESS RELEASE

### **NHS Supply Chain's report reveals strong appetite from healthcare professionals in the NHS for the introduction of a consistent national uniform**

23 September 2021

NHS Supply Chain has published a [report](#) detailing the results of their recent seven-week consultation about the potential introduction of a standardised national healthcare uniform for NHS staff working in clinical roles in England.

The organisation requested the views of health and care professionals working in hospital and non-hospital settings across the country on whether a national approach to uniforms should be taken and if so, should all NHS trusts adopt it.

The report shows that of the 51,000 responses received, 82 percent are in favour of the introduction of a consistent uniform across the NHS in England.

When asked if the current situation, where there is no consistent approach to uniforms across the country, results in confusion for patients and visitors 87 percent replied that it did.

The consultation was open to the whole of the NHS workforce. Whilst over half of the responses received were from the nursing professions a substantial number of allied health professionals, midwives, pharmacists and healthcare scientists also gave their views.

The consultation asked a set of questions about the garment style and features, to help identify the key aspects felt necessary for a uniform to be well designed and fit for purpose.

The preferred style of a national uniform design was identified as a smart scrub with 49 percent of respondents in favour of this. The majority of respondents would like to see a dress being offered as an alternative as well. Maintaining the identity of all professions was considered important.

NHS Supply Chain's specialist hotel services procurement function currently offers a uniform contract which provides a compliant framework from which NHS trusts specify the design, style and colours. This has led to significant variation of uniform between different NHS trusts, with many styles, colours, embroidery and rank identifiers which could be reduced to one shared style for all staff groups differentiated by 15 to 20 colours.

Benefits include:

- Improved patient safety, supporting recommendations made in the 2013 Francis Inquiry
- Greater recognition of staff by patients and the public
- Improved view of professionalism in appearance by staff
- Development of a high performing, ethical and sustainable supply chain, with a single NHS brand across the patient care pathway, providing consistency across the whole of the NHS in England
- Offers the ability to plan for and react to increased uniform demand such as those experienced during the coronavirus pandemic.



**Ruth May, Chief Nursing Officer for England** said:

“Patients have told us that contact with several NHS professionals can sometimes feel confusing, so I’m pleased that there is support for a standardised uniform for NHS staff working in clinical roles in England which will help patients and the public easily identify which nursing, midwifery or care professional is providing their care.

“I look forward to the next stage which will see continued engagement across the NHS.”

**Chief Allied Health Professions Officer for England Suzanne Rastrick** added:

“Environmental sustainability is an emerging priority in the upcoming new strategy for the allied health professions and consolidating the huge variety of uniforms currently being supplied is welcomed as a step on this journey.

“I look forward to the final outcomes, which will also offer comfort, practicality, modesty, and strengthened visibility for our allied health professionals as part of the wider healthcare team.”

**Kevin Chidlow, Category Tower Director for NHS Supply Chain: Hotel Services** said:

“The results of this consultation are overwhelmingly positive and support the proposal for the NHS in England to introduce a standardised national uniform design across all settings, where appropriate.

“We’re delighted 50,710 individuals across the NHS as well as their representative bodies took the time to share their views. The quantity and quality of insights received are crucial in helping to shape future uniform design, style, and specification, so thank you to everyone who responded.

“Our aim is to develop a uniform NHS health and care professionals deserve and are proud to wear, and we’ve developed a plan to progress this.

“We’ve used the findings from the consultation to develop the design brief which we are taking to market. The design will evolve during the tender process and will include comprehensive wearer trials and feedback before a final design is agreed. We will continue to engage across the NHS to finalise the design.”

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Picture caption – picture for illustrative purposes only and does not reflect the final design

#### **Notes to editors**

NHS Scotland and NHS Wales introduced a nationally standardised uniform in 2010 and NHS Northern Ireland followed in 2011. NHS Wales currently has 154 product lines and NHS Scotland has 64, compared to 30,000 product lines in England.

The national uniform consultation document set out three options for NHS Supply Chain: Hotel Services’ strategy:



- Continue with the current strategy of uniform designs being set at local trust level
- Source a standard uniform design, but allow trusts to opt in if they choose if the project was not fully adopted on a national basis
- Source a standard uniform design which is implemented across the NHS in England for all trusts.

## About NHS Supply Chain

NHS Supply Chain manages the sourcing, delivery and supply of healthcare products, services and food for NHS trusts and healthcare organisations across England and Wales.

Managing more than 8 million orders per year, across 94,000 order points and under 17,500 locations. NHS Supply Chain delivers over 28 million lines of picked goods to the NHS annually and our systems consolidate orders from over 930 suppliers, saving trusts time and money in removing duplication of overlapping contracts.

NHS Supply Chain aims to deliver savings of £2.4 billion back into the NHS by 2023/2024, leveraging the buying power of the NHS to drive savings and provide a standardised range of clinically assured, quality products at the best value through a range of specialist buying functions. Its aim is to leverage the buying power of the NHS to negotiate the best deals from suppliers and deliver savings back into NHS frontline services.

There are 11 specialist buying functions, known as Category Towers, delivering clinical consumables, capital medical equipment and non-medical products such as food and office solutions. Two enabling services for logistics and supporting technology underpin the model.

Working in partnership with NHS trusts, service providers, and stakeholders, NHS Supply Chain aims to:

- Anchor the business on the needs of the NHS by supporting NHS trusts to deliver safe and excellent patient care and through continuing to build the services the NHS needs.
- Further strengthen the resilience of the supply chain by continuing to invest in key tools and capacity that build resilience and performance, across the end to end supply chain.
- Deliver clinically assured, safe products that support improved outcomes for patients and users.
- Support the NHS objective of becoming the world's first net carbon zero national health system.
- Ensure a high performing workforce and highly efficient organisation.

Oversight and operational management of the model is delivered by the management function, Supply Chain Coordination Limited (SCCL), a limited company, wholly owned by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, SCCL is part of the NHS family.

