

# RESPONDENT INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION QUESTIONS FORM

## How to Respond to this Consultation

By email to:

[nationaluniformconsultation@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:nationaluniformconsultation@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

In writing to:

Alan Milbourne

Scottish Government Consultation on NHS Uniforms

Health Workforce Directorate

St Andrews House - GR

Regent Road

Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

We do ask that if you choose to write to us by post or email, that you complete and return the Respondent Information and the Consultation Questions Form and the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form which you will find attached or on the website. This will ensure that we treat your response appropriately.

Should you have any queries regarding submitting a response to this consultation, or should you require a copy of the consultation papers in large print or an alternative format please **contact Alan Milbourne on Tel 0131 244 2044 or email [nationaluniformconsultation@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:nationaluniformconsultation@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)**

Please complete the details below and return it with your response. This will help ensure we handle your response appropriately. Thank you for your help.

Name: College of Occupational Therapists

Postal Address:

Elizabeth MacDonald, Policy Officer – Scotland,

College of Occupational Therapists

PO Box 19571

Johnstone

PA91YP

01505 702 022

[elizabeth.macdonald@cot.co.uk](mailto:elizabeth.macdonald@cot.co.uk)

1. Are you responding: (please tick one box)

(a) as an individual? (go to Q2a/b and then Q4)

(b) on behalf of a group/organisation? (go to Q3 and then Q4) **X**

### Individuals

2a. Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Executive library and/or on the Scottish Executive website)?

Yes (go to Q2b below)

No, not at all We will treat your response as confidential

2b. Where *confidentiality is not requested*, we will make your response available to the public on the following basis (please tick one of the following boxes)

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

Yes, make my response available, but not my name or address  
Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

**On behalf of Groups or Organisations**

3. The name and address of your organisation *will be* made available to the public (in the Scottish Executive library and/or on the Scottish Executive website).

Are you also content for your response to be made available?

**Yes**

**Sharing Responses/Future Engagement**

4. We will share your response internally with other Scottish Executive policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for the Scottish Executive to contact you again in the future in relation to this consultation response?

**Yes**

**CONSULTATION: NHS SCOTLAND NATIONAL UNIFORM - SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT  
CONSULTATION ON THE UNIFORM SPECIFICATION**

**Response from the College of Occupational Therapists**

The College of Occupational Therapists (COT) is pleased to provide a response to the consultation on uniform specifications, which has been assisted by COT's Scottish Board.

The COT represents over 28,000 occupational therapists, support workers, and students in the UK, of whom over 3,000 are in Scotland. Occupational therapists work in a variety of settings including the NHS, Local Authority Social Work Services and Housing Departments, schools, primary care settings and a wide range of vocational and employment rehabilitation services including voluntary and private sector.

Occupational Therapists are regulated by the Health Professions Council and work with individuals of all ages with a wide range of occupational problems resulting from physical, mental, social or developmental difficulties. The philosophy of occupational therapy is founded on the concept of occupation / activity being essential to human existence, and to health and wellbeing. Occupation has the potential to restore, maintain and improve physical and mental health and prevent ill health.

**Contact details**

Claire Hedley Health Member College of Occupational Therapists Scottish Board POBox11294 PAISLEY PA3 9AR  claire.hedley@nhs.net	Elizabeth MacDonald Policy Officer - Scotland College of Occupational Therapists PO Box 19571 Johnstone PA9 1YP 01505 702 022  elizabeth.macdonald@cot.co.uk
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## **CONSULTATION: NHS SCOTLAND NATIONAL UNIFORM - SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON THE UNIFORM SPECIFICATION**

**Question 1** - In your view, do you consider there is a need for greater simplicity and more consistency in uniforms across Scotland? If not, why not?

Occupational therapy staff believe there is no need to change their uniform. There is already a consistent uniform across Scotland of green trousers and white tunic with trim for occupational therapists, which is worn in most hospitals and has been for many years.

However, they do point out that existing uniforms are not hard wearing and need to be frequently replaced. Therefore, good quality, hard wearing garments are essential.

Occupational therapists report their current uniform helps patients and staff clarify and identify the roles of the different staff groups.

They feel that professionals have different roles and having different uniforms assists both the public and patients to recognise these roles. Introducing a single uniform would actually increase confusion and each profession should, therefore, stick to separate uniforms. Appropriate, clearly written name badges and introductions should be sufficient

In the same way that ambulance men and police men do not wear the same uniform even though they are the “emergency services,” occupational therapists wish to maintain their own uniform even though they are Allied Health Professionals (AHPs).

**Question 2** - In your view, is the style of the tunic appropriate?

Occupational therapists feel the proposed tunic is unsuitable and inappropriate for the following reasons:

- It is unsuitable for the type of work therapists regularly carry out, e.g. bending, lifting, handling patients etc.
- It is neither smart nor professional due to lack of collar.
- The tunic suggested is unattractive, shapeless and unflattering and has been described by some as “horrible”. Therefore, it will do little to promote a positive self-image, and ‘feel good’ factor amongst the staff.
- The current uniform worn by staff is appropriate, though polo shirts might provide suitable alternatives.
- Existing tunics worn by occupational therapy staff in some hospitals looks more professional.

It is important to consider the neckline so that it is not too low and open. Occupational therapists are often leaning forward and bending down in front of patients and this style of open neckline can cause bras to be exposed.

**Question 3 - We anticipate that although staff will require various protective clothing, this tunic will meet the needs of all staff. In your view, are there any groups who require a custom specification for their tunic, and if so, why?)**

N/A

**Question 4 - In your view, what factors, including comfort, durability, cost etc., are most important when selecting a fabric for the tunics and trousers?**

Occupational therapists believe the most important factors for fabric selection are, in no particular order:

- Comfort
- Washable at high temperature
- Easy dry and tumble dry fabrics
- Easy iron and non iron fabrics
- Fabrics that do not attract static
- Fabrics that are suitable for a wide range of size options
- Fabrics that facilitate ease of movement
- Fabrics that hang well to give appropriate cover up for a wide range of body shapes, including maternity wear
- Easy maintenance
- Non staining
- Adaptable for differing temperature conditions, to keep wearer cool when wards are hot
- Non see through - some current fabrics are so thin that outlines of underwear, e.g. bras, can be seen clearly, particularly white
- Not a hindrance to manual handling – some fabrics easily catch on equipment and patients.

**Question 5 - In your view, would you consider silver technology fabric to be suitable for uniforms?**

It is difficult to comment on this question as most occupational therapists have never come across silver technology fabric and feel unable to comment.

However, choosing just one fabric type will not meet the needs of staff who suffer from allergies. Therefore a range of fabrics will be required. We understand that silver technology fabric does not operate effectively unless it is at a high temperature, which would not normally be reached by staff who would wear it.

**Question 6 Do you have any suggestions for other types of fabric that we should consider?**

Occupational therapists would like natural or synthetic fabrics that allow the skin to breathe, but not fabrics that attract static.

**Question 7 - In your view, what factors, including comfort, durability, cost etc., are most important when specifying an NHS Scotland trousers?**

As above in questions 4 and 5 and in addition:

- Well-cut uniforms will help ensure a decent fit for the infinite shapes and sizes of individuals and also the different styles for men and women.
- Comfort at waistband is essential, and there will need to be options of both fitted and elastic waist bands.
- The option of warm trousers. Occupational therapists carry out home assessments all year and these are needed in winter.
- Uniforms will need to be durable. They often have to last for several years and this should be taken into account in production.
- Maternity trousers should be available.
- Uniform should not be unisex, as these would be shapeless and ill fitting.

**Question 8 - In your view, of the options outlined, which is the most appropriate colour scheme for tunics of clinical staff?**

**Option 1  Option 2  Option 3  None of these  And why?**

Occupational therapy staff do not feel the options suggested are suitable. Reasons given are as follows:

- The existing colour scheme is appropriate and familiar to patients, public and staff.
- Lilac is an inappropriate colour for male staff.
- Colour coding staff according to grade is unhelpful and potentially will lead to confusion. Furthermore, Agenda for Change has withdrawn the distinguishable grades amongst AHPs. Therefore colour relating to grading is irrelevant.
- Within occupational therapy different grades can have increased responsibility. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain who would wear dark blue. For example, would it be the Head Occupational Therapist who does 20% clinical or clinical specialist work, or the Team Leader? These therapists have additional clinical and / or management and supervision responsibilities. These proposals will not help patients who see a lot of people "in charge" to easily identify who does what or who is responsible for what.
- Patients have rarely expressed concern regarding colour schemes and not knowing who staff are.
- AHP staff should be easily distinguishable from nursing staff and this will not be achieved by having varying shades of blue.

**Question 9 - In your view, is there a more appropriate colour scheme for clinical staff? If so, please detail your proposed scheme.**

Occupational therapists believe there is a need to distinguish between professional groups and suggest different trimmings on a white tunic (as current uniforms).

It is wholly appropriate to have AHP colours that are nationally recognised e.g. white and green for occupational therapists, blue and white for physiotherapists.

Too many clinical staff in shades of blue will be more likely to cause and increase confusion as no one will be easily identifiable to either to patients or staff. Differing colour schemes allow easy recognition for staff and the public.

**Question 10 - In your view, of the options outlined, which is the most appropriate colour scheme for tunics of non-clinical staff?**

**Option 4      Option 5      Neither of these      And why?**

N/A

**Question 11 - In your view, is there a more appropriate colour scheme for non-clinical staff? If so, please detail your proposed scheme.**

N/A

**Question 12- In your view, what needs to be considered in terms of specifying a uniform for dental staff, and why?**

N/A

**Question 13 In your view, what needs to be considered in terms of specifying a uniform for pharmacy staff, and why?**

N/A

**Question 14 In your view, is the porter uniform appropriate?**

N/A

**Question 15 In your view, is it important to distinguish senior porters by means of another uniform? If so, why, and please suggest how this might be done?**

N/A

**Question 16** In your view, is the security guard uniform appropriate?

N/A

**Question 17** In your view, is it important to distinguish senior security guards by means of another uniform? If so, why, and please suggest how this might be done?

N/A

**Question 18** In your view, what are the most important considerations in terms of developing a clerical uniform?

N/A

**Question 19** In your view, is the proposed uniform for clerical staff appropriate?

N/A

**Question 20 In your view, what practical considerations need to be addressed with regard to agency staff uniforms?**

N/A

**Question 21 Do you think that any of the proposals set in this consultation document will raise any specific issues for any of the equality groups (including race, disability, age sexual orientation, gender or religion and belief)?**

Colour coding staff by grade, on their uniforms, could be perceived as discriminating.

**Question 22 Do you have any other comments you would like to make?**

It is interesting to note that the BMA and GMC were consulted about uniforms, but none of the AHP professional bodies appeared to be included – i.e. those that actually wear uniforms. Further to this the consultation questions do not appear to relate to AHPs.

HNC occupational therapy course educators were informed too late about meetings where discussions would take place and were, therefore, excluded from the initial process.

Many occupational therapists believe their uniform is part of their national identity, which can be difficult to maintain at the best of times. Occupational therapists do not wish to lose their professional identity and what the need for this is? Most occupational therapists are proud to wear an occupational therapy uniform and do not wish to wear the same as their AHP colleagues. There is a risk that the public would presume occupational therapists are physiotherapists.

It is not felt that a change to the current uniform is required or necessary, especially at such a time of continued change within the NHS. It would be yet another change for staff to deal with. The consensus is that this is an unnecessary change.

Occupational therapists are concerned there was no mention of jumpers, fleeces or other over garments and concerns have been raised about what consideration would be given to these.

More clarification and education of current uniforms rather than a whole new set of uniforms would be more beneficial and cost effective.

Questions were raised regarding doctors. Will doctors be wearing tunics in the future?

National procurement might ensure cost effectiveness but it also needs to ensure healthy competitions and the potential to introduce new products.

In some services, such as mental health or children's services, wearing a uniform might be inappropriate. For example, within mental health it might be stigmatising for the patient and enhance differences between staff and patients creating a 'them and us' scenario.

## Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form

As part of the consultation on NHSScotland National Uniforms, we are committed to identifying how this policy affects you. We know that sometimes people may have difficulty accessing and using services because they have not been designed to take account of the different needs of people because of their age, gender, race, religion or beliefs, sexual orientation or because of a disability.

We want to know how to improve policies and services to better meet your needs. To help us to do this, we are asking you to tell us more about yourself.

All the information that you give us in this form will remain completely confidential.

If you fill in this form, it will help us to find out how we can improve services. If, however, you do not wish to answer any of the questions, please feel free to tick the 'prefer not to answer' box.

Please return your form along with your responses to the consultation. If you have any questions regarding this form, please contact Alan Milbourne at Health Workforce Directorate at email [nationaluniformconsultation@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:nationaluniformconsultation@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

### 1. Name:

Prefer not to say

### 2. Are you:

Male

Female

### 3. How old are you:

Prefer not to answer

### 4. What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to:

- Church of Scotland
- No religion
- Roman Catholic
- Muslim
- Other Christian
- Buddhist
- Jewish
- Sikh
- Hindu
- Another religion. If another religion, please tell us:

Prefer not to answer

**5. Do you have a health condition or disability that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more that makes it difficult for you to do day-to-day activities: No**

Yes

Prefer not to say

**6 What is your ethnic group? Chose one section from A-E, then tick the box in this section that describes your ethnic background:**

**A. White**

- Scottish  
 English  
 Welsh  
 Any other white background – please tell us:  
:

**B. Mixed**

- Any mixed background – please tell us:

**C. Asian, Asian Scottish, Asian British**

- Indian  
 Pakistani  
 Bangladeshi  
 Chinese  
 Any other Asian background – please tell us:

**D. Black, Black Scottish, Black British**

- Caribbean  
 African  
 Any other Black background – please tell us:

**E. Other**

- Any other background – please tell us:  
 Prefer not to answer

**7. How would you describe your sexual orientation:**

- Bisexual  
 Gay man  
 Heterosexual/straight  
 Lesbian/gay woman

- Other. If other, please tell us:
- Prefer not to say

**8. Which of the following options would you say best describes your current situation (please tick one box only):**

- Self-employed
- Employed full-time
- Employed part-time
- Looking after the home or family
- Unemployed and seeking work
- At school
- In further/higher education
- Government work or training scheme
- Permanently sick or disabled
- Unable to work due to short-term illness or injury
- Other. If other, please tell us:
- Prefer not to answer

**9. What are the first 5 digits of your post code:**

(For example, KA24 – 5XX):

- Prefer not to answer