

## Social Partnership Forum

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### NHS Supply Chain National Uniforms Project Status Update

May 2021

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#### Background

Tower 11 Hotel Services have the responsibility to manage the procurement of Healthcare Uniforms for the NHS in England. The existing contract was originally due to expire in April 2021 but has been extended to April 2023. The annual spend on uniforms is circa £23M.

Unlike Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland there is no national standard or design adopted by NHS in England. The landscape remains complex; uniform design and approach is decided at Trust level and this has led to a proliferation of styles, colours, embroidery and rank identifiers. There are over 30,000 different products used in NHS England, significantly more than Scotland and Wales which have just 54 and 164 respectively.

NHS Supply Chain embarked upon a project in 2019 with the aim of adopting a more centralised approach and developing a standard design and colours for use across the NHS. The project has 5 key objectives

- Patient and Visitor Safety
- Professional Image and Suitability
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Value for Money
- Sustainability

Significant engagement took place with Healthcare Professionals, Representative Bodies and Patients & Visitors during 2019 and early 2020 with the aim of issuing a broad consultation document in March 2020. This was correctly postponed but following detailed discussions with NHS E&I has now been released and remains open for responses until the 31<sup>st</sup> May.

The purpose of this paper and discussion is to provide an update as to the status of the consultation, to request members of the SPF to encourage their members to respond to the consultation so we can hear their views, to seek a response from representative bodies that make up the SPF and to outline the proposed next steps and timescales for this project.

#### The Consultation Paper

The consultation paper makes the case for adopting a standardised national uniform style and colourways based upon the positive feedback we have received to date from our engagement

It is broken down into two parts

1. Whether you agree with a national uniform approach and if so, whether you think it should be made mandatory; meaning all organisations would be required to adopt it.



2. A set of questions which address the garment style and features, including colourways, to help identify the key aspects you feel are necessary for a uniform to be well-designed and fit for purpose.

The consultation document has been updated to ensure we capture any impact that Covid-19 may have on Uniform requirements for example an increased wearing of scrubs

The consultation is not in any way trying to set uniform policy i.e. it makes no attempt to state if and when a uniform should or should not be worn.

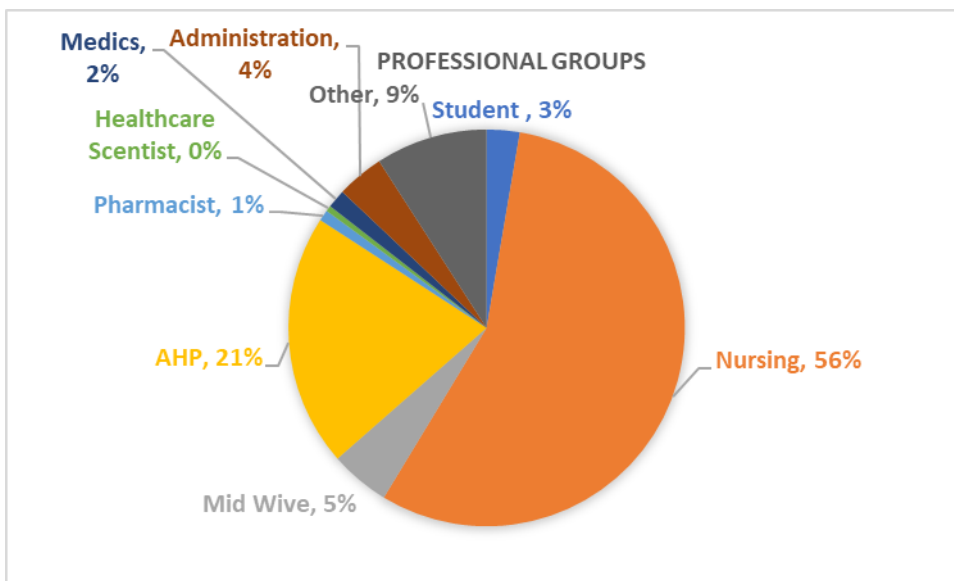
The scope has up to now been focused on Nursing, AHPs and Mid Wives.

An observation of the responses received to date has seen substantial interest from other professions in particularly Healthcare Scientists, Pharmacists and Medics which we will need to consider in the future.

It is not appropriate to share the feedback received until after the consultation closes and all responses whether online, by email or post have been collated and analysed. However, the status of responses as of the 11<sup>th</sup> May can be shared as shown below

There have been 43,114 completed responses broken down by professions as shown in figure 1

Figure 1 – Completed responses by Profession



Nursing and AHPs unsurprisingly make up the majority of the responses, accounting for 77% in total so far. The 9% classified as other is significant, but upon analysis of the profession stated many of these responses can be reclassified as appropriate when the consultation closes.

Figure 2 shows the split of responses by sex, with the vast majority of responses being from females. This is a reasonable representation of the NHS though it does underrepresent men slightly



A key aspect of the Uniform design is to ensure it is fit for purpose and culturally sensitive. It is important that views are heard from right across the diverse workforce. Figure 3 shows the current position as regards responses by ethnicity

Figure 2 – Completed responses by Sex

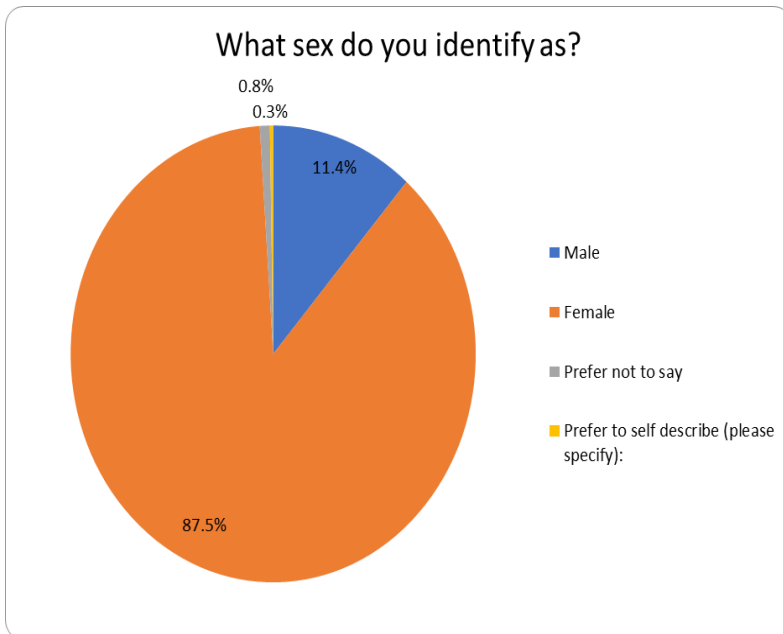
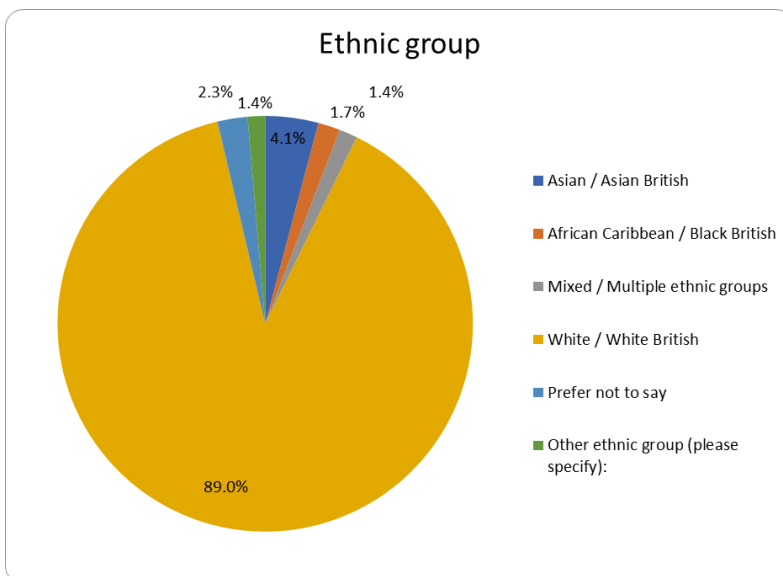


Figure 3 – Completed responses by Ethnic Group



78% of the NHS Workforce is white with approximately 10% Asian and 6% Black so at the moment responses received to date are not completely representative of the workforce. However, there are responses from right across the NHS which will provide excellent insight to inform the project, but it would be better if we receive further submissions from BAME groups over the next couple of weeks.



## Ask of the Social Partnership Forum

This paper is submitted to provide an interim status as regards the active workforce consultation. Your support is requested to continue to publicise the consultation and encourage as many of your members to response before it is due to close on the 31<sup>st</sup> May.

## Next Steps

NHS Supply Chain will analyse the responses of the consultation and present these back during June. We will share the responses via a published document as well as via a series of specific feedback sessions with NHS E&I and Representative Bodies.

The results of the consultation response will be built into the design brief. This will allow us to commence the procurement process, hopefully in July.

The procurement process construct allows us to call for competition without fixing the uniform design. This is important as this approach means we can continue to engage with key stakeholders across the NHS on elements such as professional groupings, colourways and materials throughout the procurement process until final offers are received. The process will include robust garment testing and wash and wearer trials.

We are aiming to complete the procurement process in the first quarter of 2022 and have uniforms available for use from next Spring.

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