

# National Healthcare Uniform Proposal Workforce Consultation

Summary of Response and Recommendations

Published September 2021



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# Foreword

The NHS in England is a wonderful organisation treasured by the public across the country. At its core are the highly skilled healthcare professionals - nurses, midwives, allied health professionals (AHPs), pharmacists, health care scientists, and medics committed to doing their best every day.

The challenges experienced by these professions have been brought into sharp focus in the last 18 months like never before. The dedication, expertise, resilience, and care given during the pandemic demonstrate the strength and deep passion of the NHS workforce.

When we launched the National Healthcare Uniform Consultation in April, we knew that taking some time out of incredibly busy days and nights might be difficult, we questioned ourselves if this was the right time to issue the consultation.

However, as NHS Supply Chain we have the responsibility to ensure the NHS has a compliant contract in place for uniforms to enable the NHS to provide the fit-for-purpose garments our NHS workforce deserves. Our aim is to develop a uniform that is aligned with this objective.

It was important to us to understand from you, the NHS workforce what you want from a uniform. From our early engagement, we believed that a well-designed national, culturally sensitive uniform would bring major benefits: for patients, staff, and the public. That it can enhance our professional image, it can contribute to developing a sustainable net zero supply chain whilst still providing value for money. Your voices are critical to informing this.

As a result, we launched the consultation in April and have been overwhelmed by the response. Over 50,000 individuals from across the NHS took the time to respond to the consultation. I would like to take this opportunity to thank every one of you for taking the time to share your views. We were pleased to receive responses from many professional representative bodies as well. The quantity and quality of insights received are so important and will help to shape future uniform design, style, and specification.

The evidence laid out in this report shows, there is a strong appetite across the NHS to adopt a national approach. We will develop a plan to progress this, however this is not the end of the consultation phase. We will continue to reach out across the NHS workforce and to representative bodies to ensure any future uniform is one you will be proud to wear.

Thank you once again for all the responses to the consultation and for your continued engagement with this project.

## **Kevin Chidlow**

Category Tower Director Hotel Services  
NHS Supply Chain



# Executive Summary

NHS Supply Chain have the responsibility to ensure that the NHS in England have access to a compliant contract which allows all health and care settings to purchase uniforms for their workforce.

These contracts will shortly expire and must be renewed. Up to now, the decision as to what style or colour of uniform to have, has been agreed locally at each individual trust. This has led to a plethora of different designs, colours and materials across the country. Patients, visitors, and staff are confused with the variety of uniforms and often struggle to identify key healthcare professionals when they need to.

The devolved nations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland took the decision to adopt a standard national approach some time ago. As part of the contract renewal process, NHS Supply Chain wanted to investigate the opportunities and desire for the NHS in England to follow a similar process.

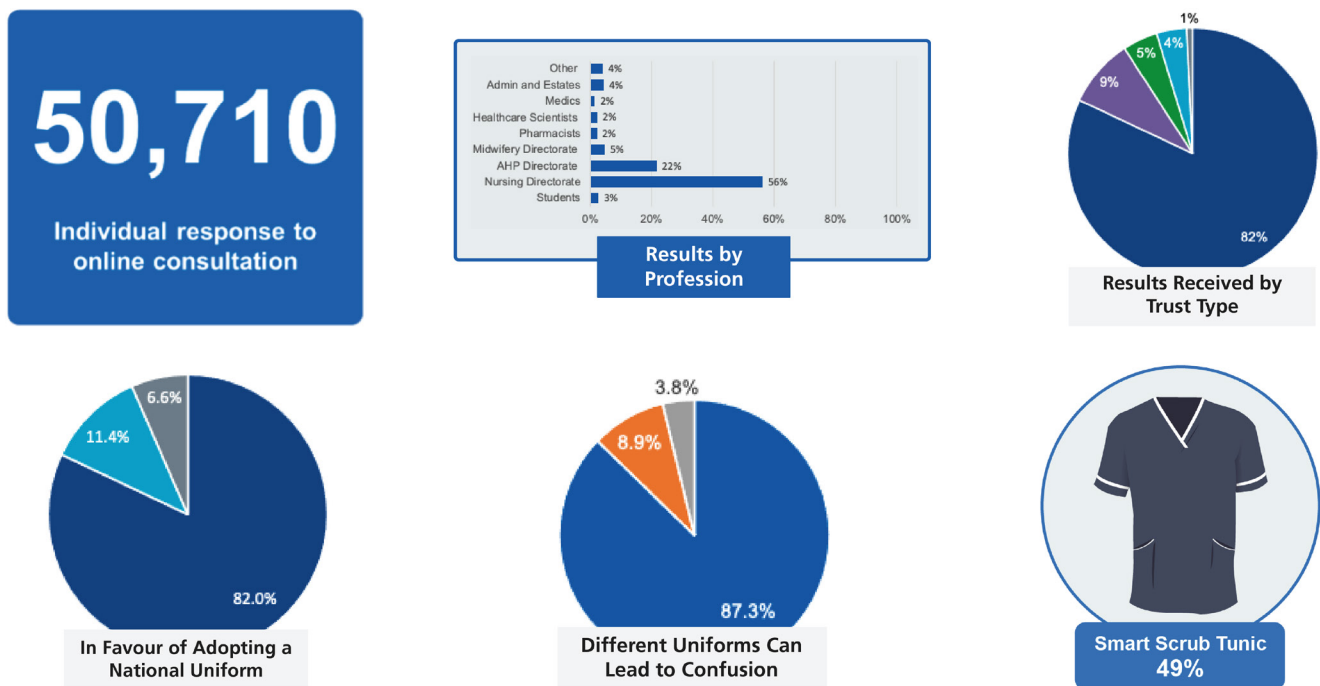
Healthcare professionals from across the country, along with representatives from NHS England & NHS Improvement (NHS E&I), and employee representative bodies were engaged to seek opinions as to whether there was an appetite for this approach. This engagement was positive and in favour of a national uniform. These initial proposals were further tested using targeted surveys to both staff, patients and visitors. Again, these results showed support for a national approach.

Obtaining feedback from across the NHS was of critical importance to this project. This culminated in the issuing of an NHS-wide Consultation on National Healthcare Uniforms. Over 50,000 of you responded and we are grateful for everyone who took time out of your busy lives to share your views.

**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.**

Figure 1 below summarises the main findings

**Figure 1 – National Uniform Consultation – Overall Results Summary**



- 50,710 individuals responded to the consultation as well as several employee representative bodies.
- Most responses were from Nursing staff but all professions – AHPs, Midwives as well as Pharmacists and Healthcare Scientists provided valuable feedback.
- Responses were received from across the NHS in England – all settings, ages, sexes and ethnic groups were represented.

It is clear the NHS workforce think the current approach is confusing for patients and visitors – 87% of respondents say this is the case.

82% of the respondents are in favour of introducing a National Uniform across the NHS in England and of the individuals in favour of this approach 83% stated that it should be adopted by all settings rather than just an option decided locally.

The preferred style of a national uniform design was identified as a smart scrub with a dress being offered as an alternative. Colour was identified as the preferred method of distinguishing between professions. Maintaining the identity of all professions was considered important.

This uniform must be fit for purpose, high quality, and reflect the needs of the diverse NHS workforce. The requirement for patients and visitors to be able to identify appropriate professions is a priority.

It is recommended that NHS Supply Chain embark upon a sourcing process for a National Healthcare Uniform. This process will enable continued engagement across NHS professions, with NHS E&I and employee representative bodies. This will ensure that any future uniform meets the needs of the entire NHS workforce.

# The Consultation

NHS Supply Chain issued a consultation document on 12 April 2021 to allow the NHS workforce to provide their opinions and feedback as to whether the NHS in England should adopt a single national uniform style.

The consultation was open for seven weeks and encouraged responses from both individuals, organisations, and representative bodies. Responses could be provided online, by email or by post.

The consultation questions were broken down into two areas:

1. Whether the workforce agree with a national uniform approach and if so, whether it should be made mandatory; meaning for those in the workforce that already wear a uniform, the organisation they work within would be required to adopt the national design.
2. A set of questions which addressed the garment style and features, to help identify the key features necessary for a uniform to be well-designed and fit for purpose.

A national approach will minimise the creation of bespoke garments. Additional embroidery and local branding increases delivery times, and adds cost and complexity, which we aim to avoid where possible. The uniforms must be well designed, use quality materials and be adaptable for the evolving demands of a modern, diverse, and inclusive health service.

The consultation provided a summary of the current approach to healthcare uniforms and emphasised the differences between the NHS in England and the approach taken in NHS Wales and NHS Scotland who have already adopted and implemented a National Healthcare Uniform.

The proposal set out five areas which individually provide strong reasons for adopting such an approach, but when taken together provide a compelling argument for the introduction of a national uniform, these are:

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

The defined scope of the project referred to in the consultation was limited to Healthcare Assistants, Nurses, Midwives and Allied Health Professionals. However, the consultation was open to the whole of the NHS workforce. A number of professions expressed concern that they had not been considered and requested to be included in the project scope in the future. Members of the Pharmacy and Healthcare Scientists professions responded in significant numbers and their feedback is highlighted within this document.

The proposal referred to the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the type of uniforms worn across the NHS. In particular the increased adoption of scrubs with seven times more scrubs being purchased compared to the previous year (between March and May 2020). Many professions across the NHS who would not typically wear a uniform, began to adopt scrubs. The consultation set out to establish whether the pandemic had any significant effect on the attitude to uniform adoption and style choice.

NHS Supply Chain set out results from the engagement which had taken place prior to the issue of the NHS workforce consultation, these results included the view of both patients and visitors as well as representatives from across the NHS. This engagement showed that there was a broad consensus in agreement with adopting the **strategy of a national approach to healthcare uniform design**.

The consultation contained a summary of this engagement. It stated that the introduction of a National Healthcare Uniform would be of benefit to patients, visitors, and healthcare professionals and that it would provide better value for money. There was interest in the need to reaffirm the NHS brand and create a concise national identity, and the importance of being able to differentiate between roles. A broad consensus was reached on style. The preference expressed previously was for a two-piece uniform, based on the scrub but with added style features and improved fitting – the consultation referred to this as a ‘smart scrub tunic’.

All information received as part of this consultation – including personal information – may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

# Responses to the Consultation

Unsurprisingly the majority of responses to the consultation were received via the online survey with a total of 50,710 responses being submitted. It was also possible for respondents to provide feedback via email, 83 individuals chose to make comments using this method.

The consultation invited responses from appropriate representative bodies, and we were pleased to receive responses from five such organisations.

Figure 2 – National Uniform Consultation – volume of results received

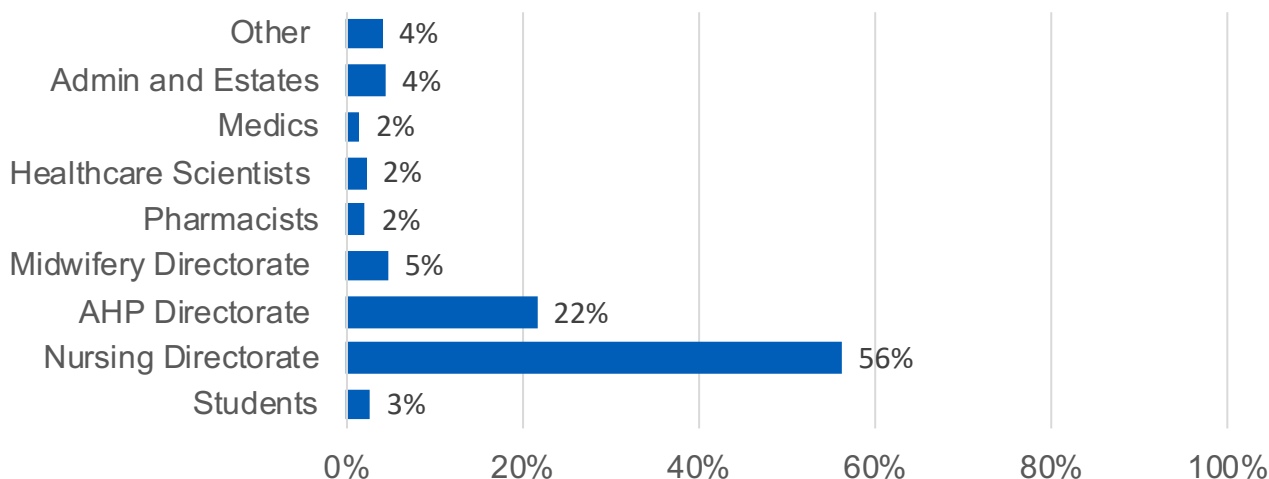


Included in the consultation were questions designed to provide better insight into the profession, age, gender, ethnicity, and employing trust of the individual. This has enabled NHS Supply Chain to segment the responses according to demographic and professional characteristics and to identify any significant trends or differences.

The number of responses received broken down by these characteristics are shown below:

## Profession

Figure 3 – National Uniform Consultation – % of results received by profession



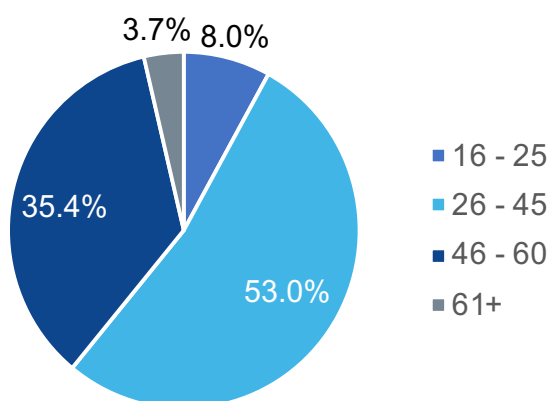


The responses received represent all professions across the NHS and are reflective of the size of those professions. The highest number of responses were received from the Nursing profession followed by AHPs and Midwives.

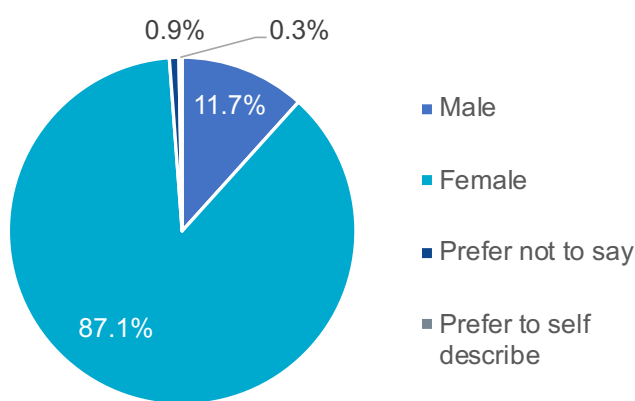
A substantial volume of responses were received from Pharmacists and Healthcare Scientists – over 2,000 in total. It was possible to classify the results for these professions as well as Nurses, Midwives and AHPs – these are included in this document.

## Age and Gender

**Figure 4 – National Uniform Consultation – % of results received by age**



**Figure 5 - National Uniform Consultation – % of results received by gender**

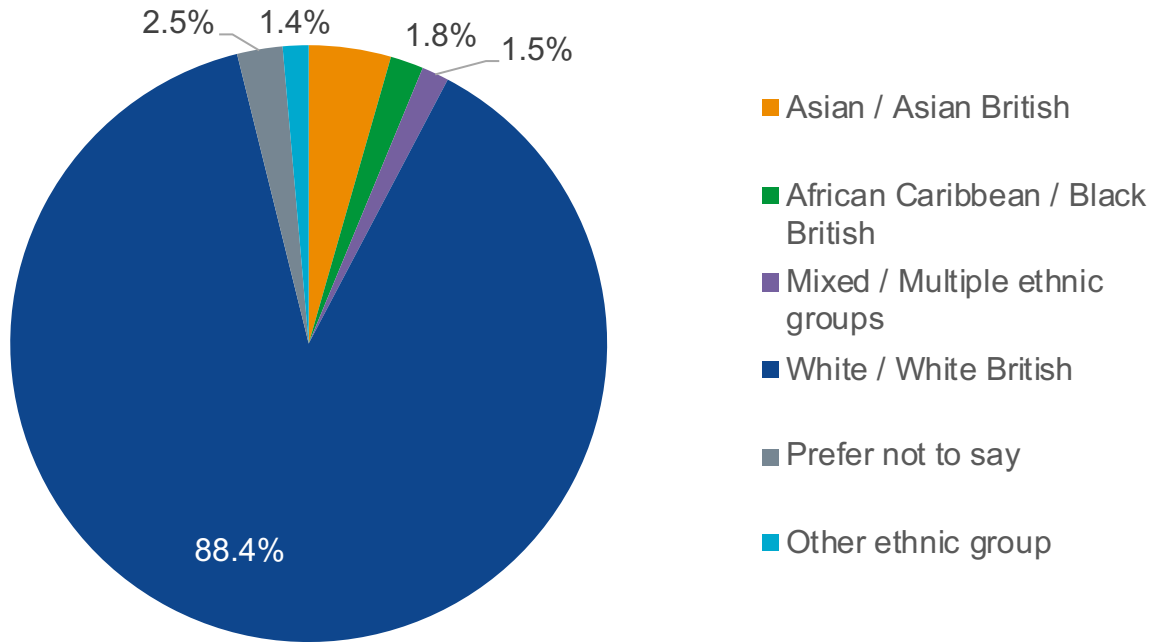


Figures 4 and 5 show responses by age and gender and are reasonably well aligned to the demographics of the NHS workforce and represent views from right across the NHS demographic.

Over half of respondents (53%) are aged between 26 and 60.

87% of the responses are from women, which compared to 77% in the overall NHS workforce demographic is a slight over representation, but not significantly so. Over 11% of the responses are from males.

Figure 6 – National Uniform Consultation – % of results received by ethnic group

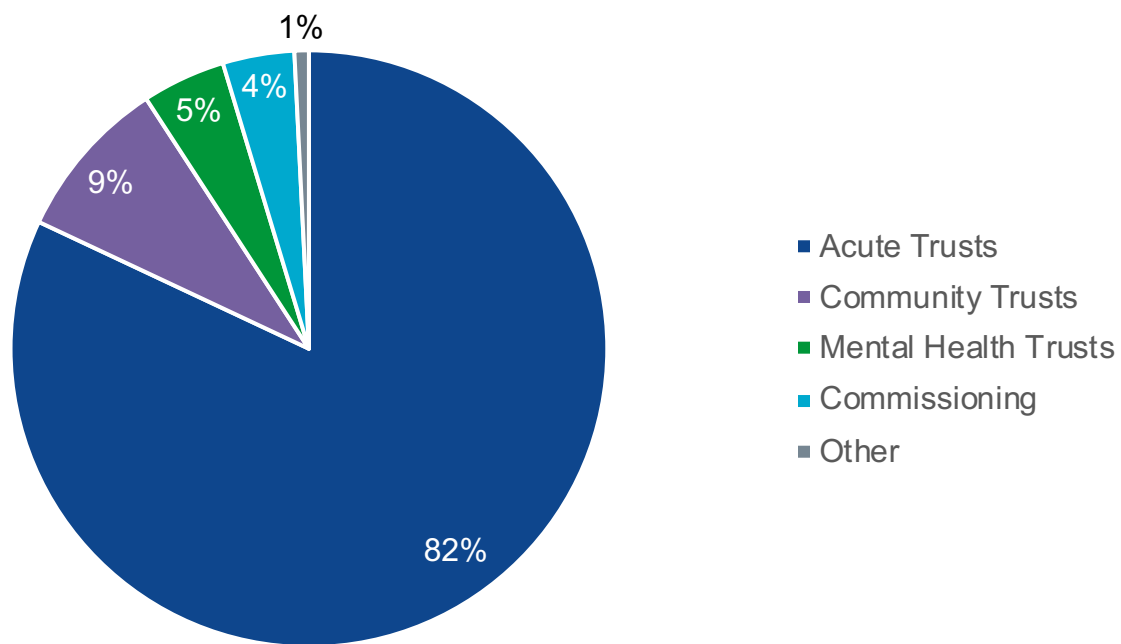


The NHS workforce is diverse, and it is imperative that the consultation received insight from across the workforce. The uniform design will be inclusive, ensure equality and reflect the diverse nature of the NHS. Figure 6 above shows that 88% of the responses are from White / White British individuals. This is in comparison to the 78% representation of White / White British across the NHS workforce, which is a higher representation of the overall NHS workforce demographic. However, a substantial number of the responses – over 5,000 – are from other ethnic groups, providing a significant representation of views.

The consultation received a collective response from NHS Muslim Women which has led to some specific and highly beneficial engagement with this representative body. This engagement will continue throughout the project to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of our approach.

## NHS Trusts

Figure 7 – National Uniform Consultation – % of results received trust type



82% of responses to the consultation were from individuals working in Acute settings, this reflects the composition of the NHS workforce, mirroring the workplace of most individuals. Community and Mental Health are well represented and any differences between these settings in the response will be highlighted throughout this report.

## Representative Bodies

The majority of the responses to the consultation were from individuals. Responses were also welcomed from representative bodies. Five were received from the following:

- NHS Muslim Women
- The Royal College of Midwives (RCM)
- The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP)
- The Royal Pharmaceutical Society
- The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.

The views expressed by representative bodies will be highlighted throughout the report as appropriate.

# Results of the Consultation

The objective of the consultation was to complete a robust and comprehensive stakeholder engagement programme, consulting with a large and diverse group of representatives, present a proposal to the NHS, and record the reaction to it.

The results are summarised in this document.

## Adoption

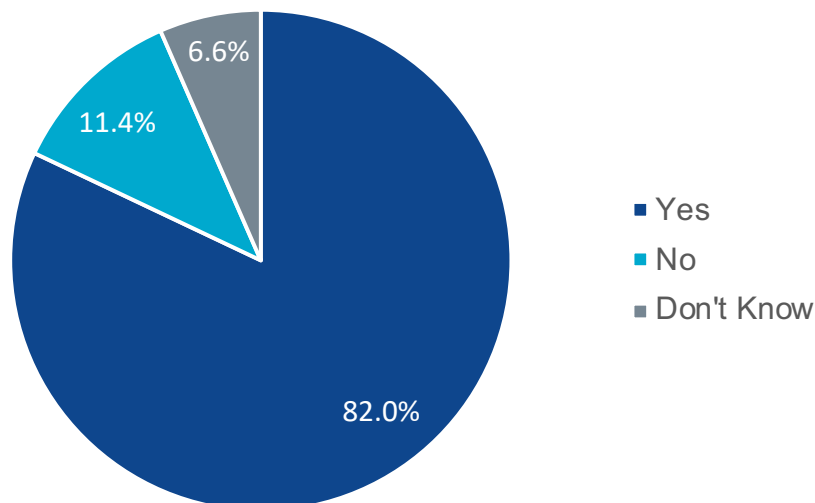
The key question contained in the consultation document was:



**Do you think that a National Healthcare Uniform should be adopted across the NHS in England?**



Figure 8 – National Uniform Consultation – % of results in favour of adopting a national uniform

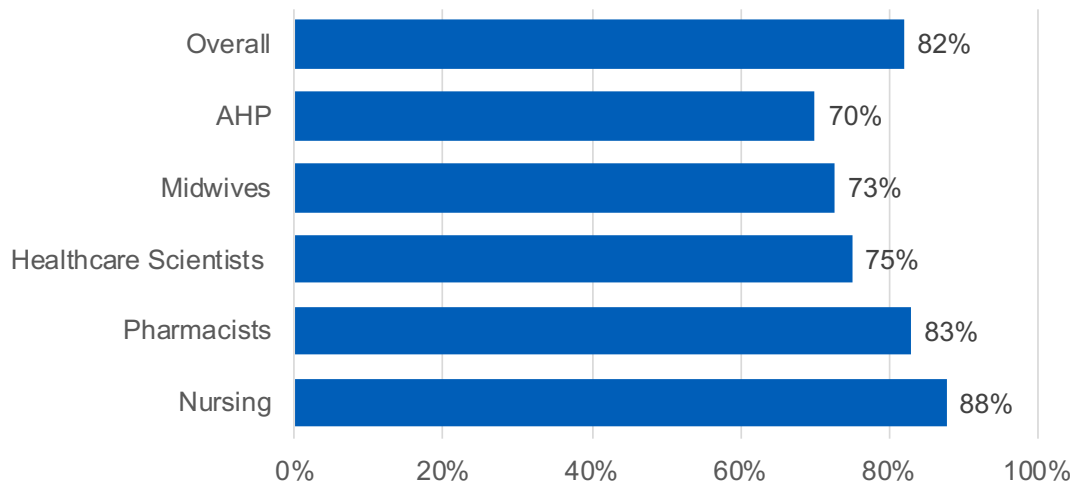


Overwhelmingly, 82% of respondents to the consultation are in favour of the NHS in England adopting a National Healthcare Uniform. 11.4% are not in favour of the process with a further 6.6% not being certain either way.

The results from this question are segmented by profession, trust type and ethnicity below:

## By Profession

**Figure 9 – National Uniform Consultation – % of results in favour of adopting a national uniform by profession**

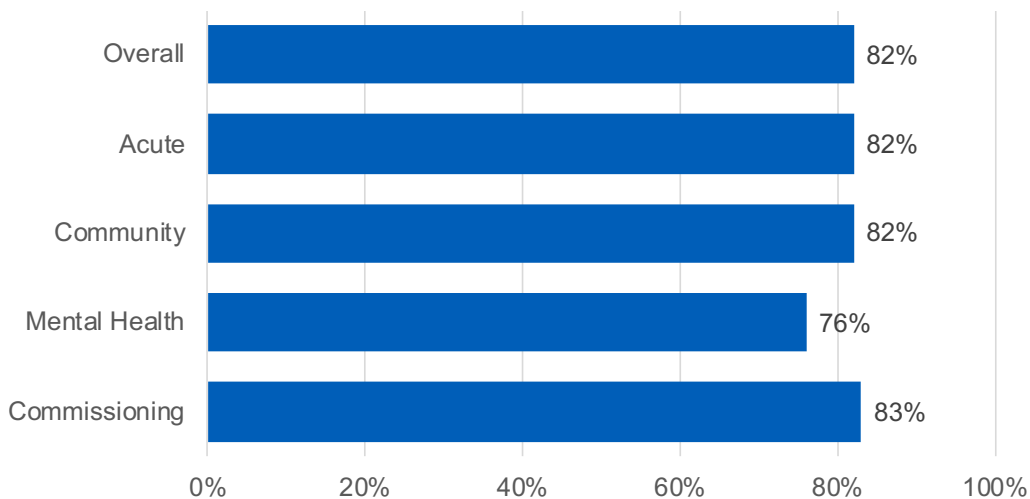


The Nursing professions have the strongest response in favour with 88%. AHP's recorded the lowest level of support for the project, however still had 70% of the workforce in favour.

Alongside the national consultation the RCM completed a parallel survey of their members which they submitted as part of their response to the consultation. This received over 5,000 responses with 74% of respondents agreeing with the national approach, which is in line with the responses received to the national consultation.

## By Trust Type

**Figure 10 – National Uniform Consultation – % of results in favour of adopting a national uniform by trust type**

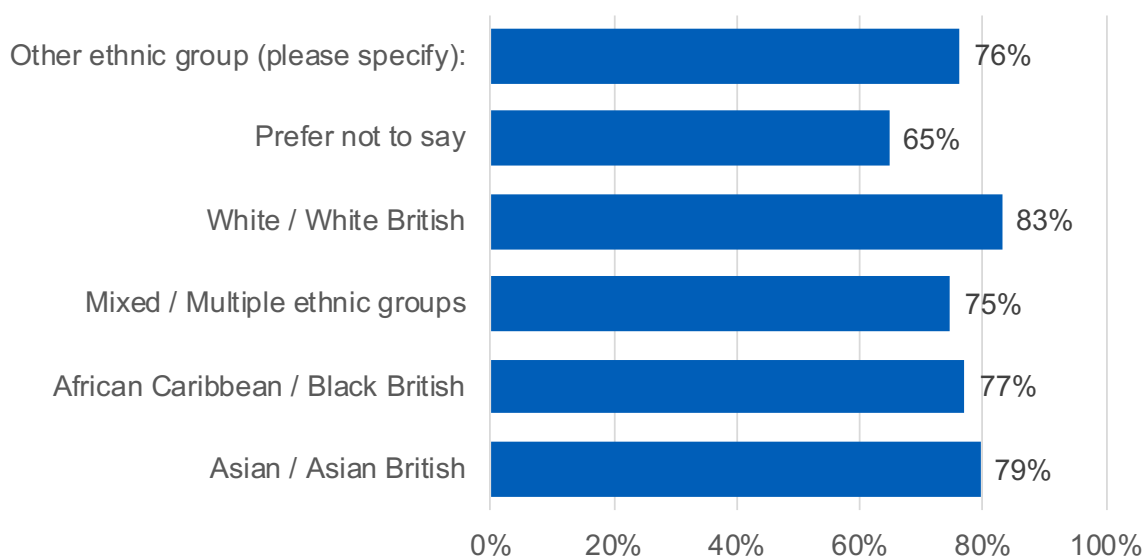


The results from Acute, Community Trusts, and Commissioning reflect the overall results of the consultation.

The NHS workforce within Mental Health Trusts clearly support the approach but the percentage of respondents in favour is slightly lower with 76%.

## By Ethnicity

**Figure 11 – National Uniform Consultation – % of results in favour of adopting a national uniform by ethnic group**



Individuals identifying as White / White British are the group with the strongest support for a national approach where 83% are in favour.

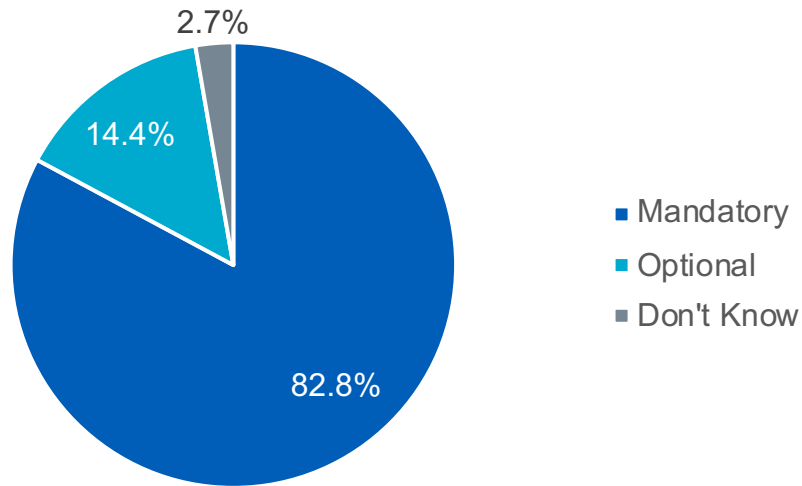
All other groups particularly Asian / Asian British and African Caribbean / Black British are very supportive on a national approach being 80% and 77% in favour respectively.

A follow up question regarding adoption was asked.

“If yes, in your opinion should the implementation be mandatory across the NHS or optional at trust level?”

This question was completed by 41,296 individuals who stated that they were in favour of a national approach. Of those in favour 83% stated the approach should be adopted across the NHS in England; meaning that those currently wearing uniforms would implement the national design, as opposed to having the option to opt in or out on a local level. A full breakdown of responses is shown in Figure 12.

**Figure 12 – National Uniform Consultation – % of results in favour of all trusts adopting a national uniform**

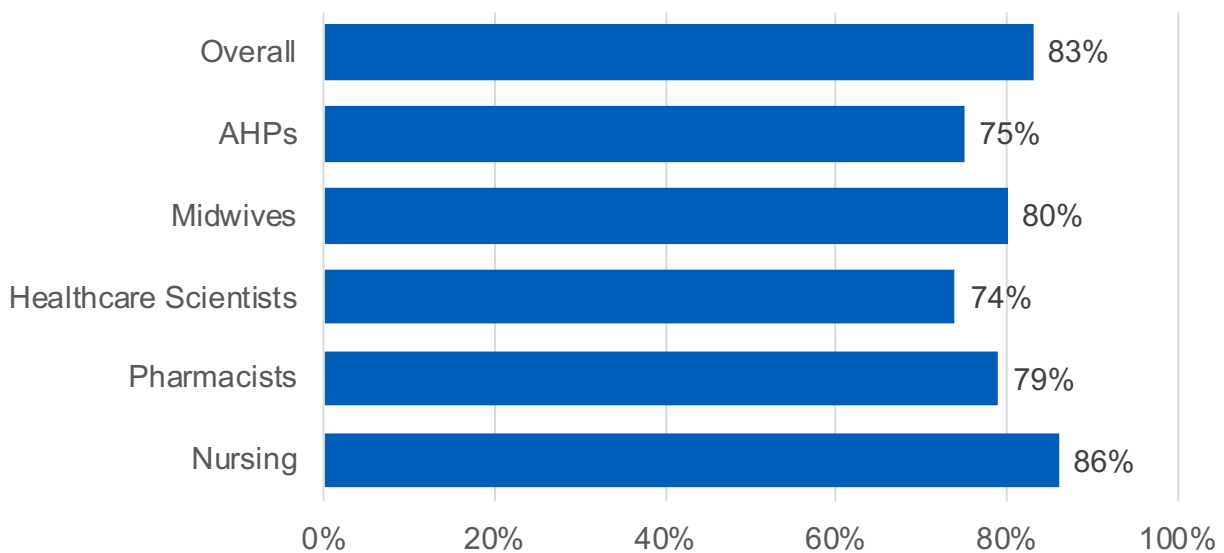


Only 14% of respondents believe that each individual trust should choose whether they follow the national approach or adopt their own standard.

## By Profession

The response to this question presented by profession show a similar profile, in support of a national approach as shown in Figure 13.

**Figure 13 – National Uniform Consultation – % of results in favour of all trusts adopting a national uniform by profession**



Nursing and Midwifery are both strongly in favour of ensuring adoption across the whole of NHS in England with 86% and 80% respectively.

Other professions are supportive with a large majority in favour, however the percentages in favour for AHPs and Healthcare Scientists were slightly lower than the overall average at 75%.

The consultation received a number of comments from individuals who were concerned that they would be expected to wear a uniform in the future when they did not at present. Most healthcare professionals working in the NHS wear a uniform – where this is the case, the intention is to offer a uniform that is well designed, high quality and inclusive for all. We are also aware that there are many clinical settings where it is not deemed appropriate to wear a uniform because of the effect this may have on a patient. It is not the intention of this proposal to change that.

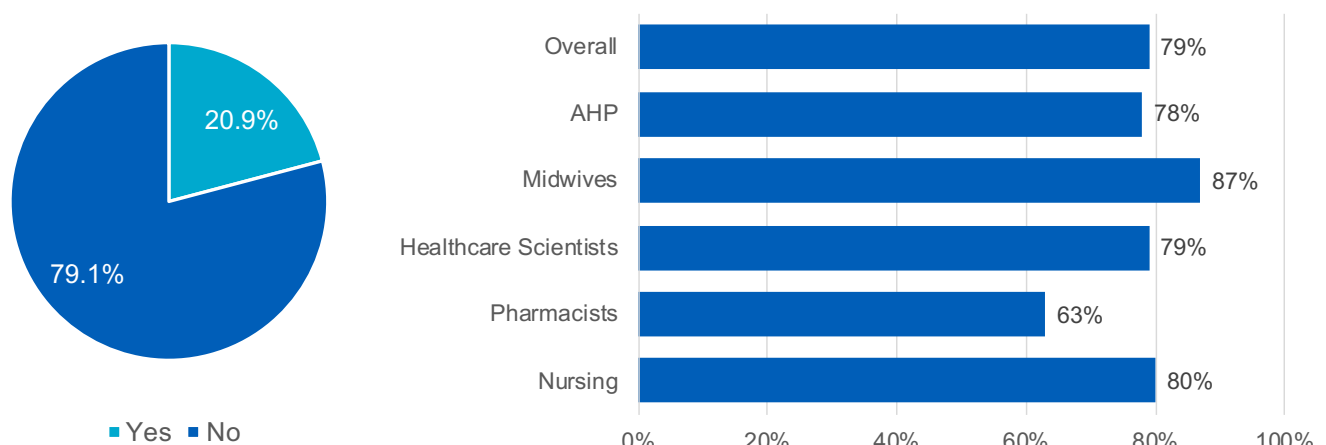
The scope of the project up to now has been on those working in clinical roles and those wearing uniforms at present. In particular healthcare assistants, nurses, midwives, and allied health professionals, together they form the majority of groups wearing uniforms. We appreciate and recognise the importance of uniforms for other clinical and non-clinical roles and will extend the scope to include other professions where appropriate. A clear expression of interest has been noted in the case of Pharmacists and Healthcare Scientists.

## Impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 has had an unprecedented impact on everyone working in the NHS. In respect of uniforms there has been a substantial increase in the wearing of scrubs. The consultation asked whether this situation had perhaps changed individuals' opinions with regards to uniform choices.

“Has your opinion been influenced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?”

**Figure 14 – National Uniform Consultation – % of results stating whether COVID-19 had influenced your opinion about a national approach to uniforms**





The consensus is that COVID-19 has not changed individuals' views when it comes to uniforms, with 79% of respondents stating it had not, with the exception of Pharmacy professionals. Following feedback with representatives from the Pharmacy profession it is believed that the difference in response may be due to the recent adoption of wearing scrubs due to the pandemic, causing the higher level of impact seen through the results of this question.

Respondents were also provided with the opportunity to further explain their choice. 17,561 individuals chose to make a comment, below were identified as key themes throughout:

- Recognition of the increased wearing of scrubs during the pandemic
- Mention of how a national uniform will make it easier for patients to identify staff
- Comments on scrubs being much more comfortable than tunics
- How the wearing of uniforms is better for infection control, especially during the pandemic
- Emphasis on how the pandemic has highlighted the importance of a standardised uniform
- The variety of colour scrubs caused loss of identity across various professions during early stages of the pandemic.

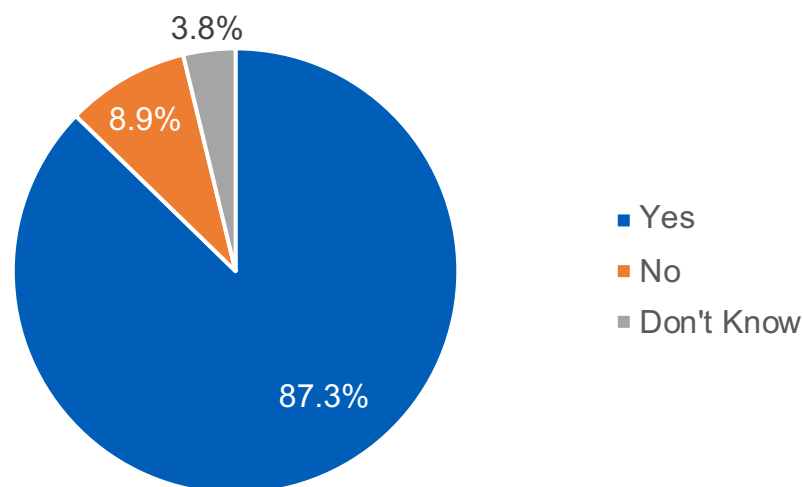
## Patients and Visitors

One of the key objectives of the project is to improve safety and reduce complexity for patients and visitors.

A series of questions were posed in the consultation about the impact the current and possible future approach may have on patients and visitors.

“Can patients & visitors be confused by the different uniforms in use across the NHS in England?”

**Figure 15 – National Uniform Consultation – % of results in stating that different uniforms can lead to confusion**



Over 87% of respondents agreed that patients and visitors can be confused by the different uniform designs currently in use across the NHS in England.

“Would the safety and care of patients and visitors be improved if a National Healthcare Uniform was adopted?”

**Figure 16 – National Uniform Consultation – % of results safety and care would be improved if a national uniform was adopted**

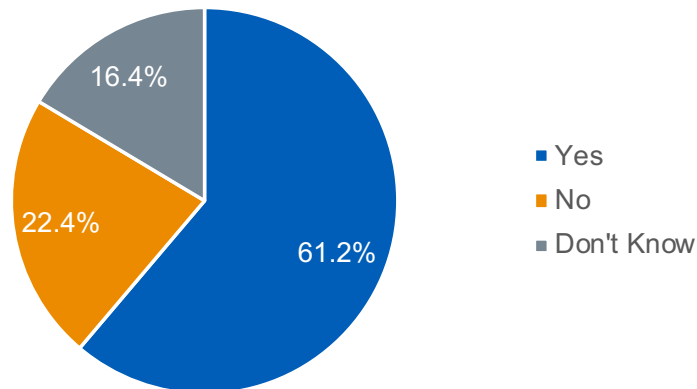
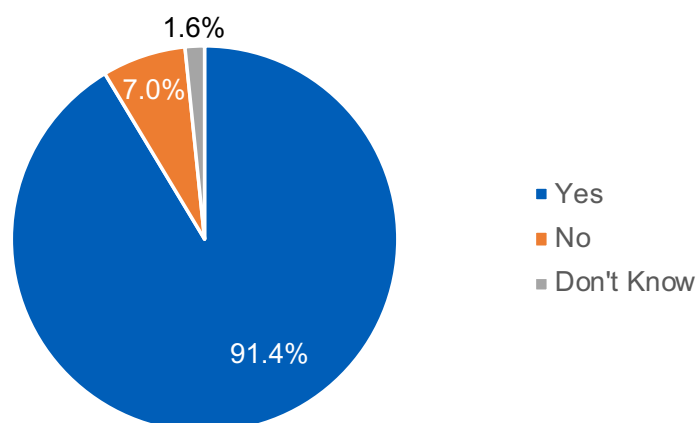


Figure 16 above shows that 61% of respondents think that patient safety would be improved by the adoption of a national approach. Only 22% do not think it would have any benefit with 16% not being clear either way.

The response to the consultation concerning benefits to patients and visitors reflects previous engagement with the NHS workforce including a patient and visitor survey commissioned by NHS Supply Chain and carried out by a third party provider.

“Do you think that a uniform helps patients, visitors and colleagues to identify the roles of healthcare professionals?”

**Figure 17 – National Uniform Consultation – % of results does a uniform help identify the role of healthcare professionals**



The result clearly shows that a uniform is important in helping patients to identify the roles of healthcare professionals, with over 91% of respondents stating that it does.

Considering all the consultation results concerning patients and visitors together, it is clear that a uniform is very important in helping patients and visitors identify appropriate healthcare professionals. The current situation of multiple uniforms often causes confusion, and the adoption of a single national approach would be of benefit to patients and visitors.

## Professional Image

Another key objective of the project is to use the development of a national approach as a contributor to enhancing the professional image of the NHS workforce. This aim was explored by use of the following question:

“In your opinion would healthcare professionals see a positive impact if a National Healthcare Uniform was adopted across the NHS in England?”

**Figure 18 – National Uniform Consultation – % of results – would a national uniform have a positive impact on healthcare professionals.**

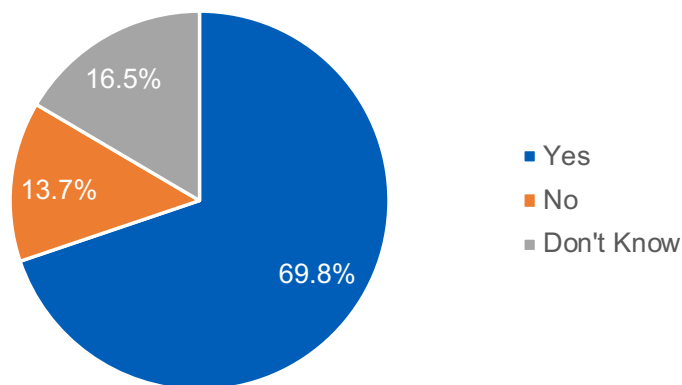
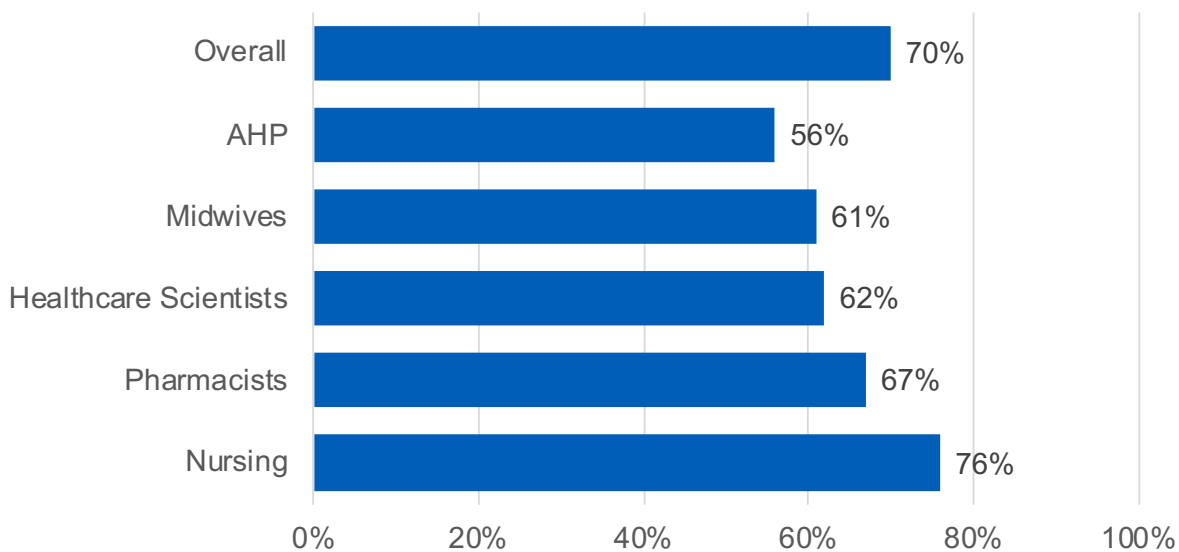


Figure 18 shows there is clear agreement with over 69% stating that a national uniform will have a positive impact.

This position is reflected across the professions as shown below in Figure 19.

**Figure 19 – National Uniform Consultation – % of results – would a national uniform have a positive impact on healthcare professionals – by profession**



Once again Nursing professions agree that a national approach will have a very positive impact with 76% in agreement. 56% of AHPs believe it will create a positive professional impact whilst for all other professions at least 60% believe it will have a positive impact. Specific engagement will take place in the future with all professions and representative bodies. This will help us to understand any specific concerns with the objective of addressing them as the project progresses.

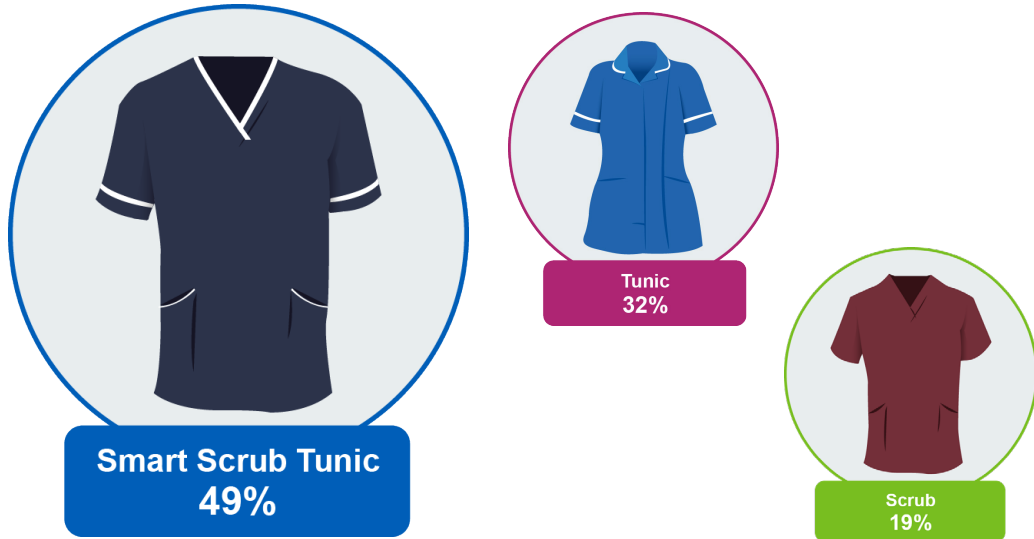
## Style

Ascertaining the preferred uniform style via the consultation is important as this will be built into any future design brief. At present three styles are typically adopted. These three different styles were presented during the consultation – smart scrub, tunic, or scrub. Garments such as shorts, polo shirts, and fleeces were not presented as options as these products only make up a small proportion of requirements but will remain available within a national approach.

### “Which of the following styles do you prefer?”

An illustration was provided for visual purpose only and did not reflect the final design.

Figure 20 – National Uniform Consultation – uniform style preference

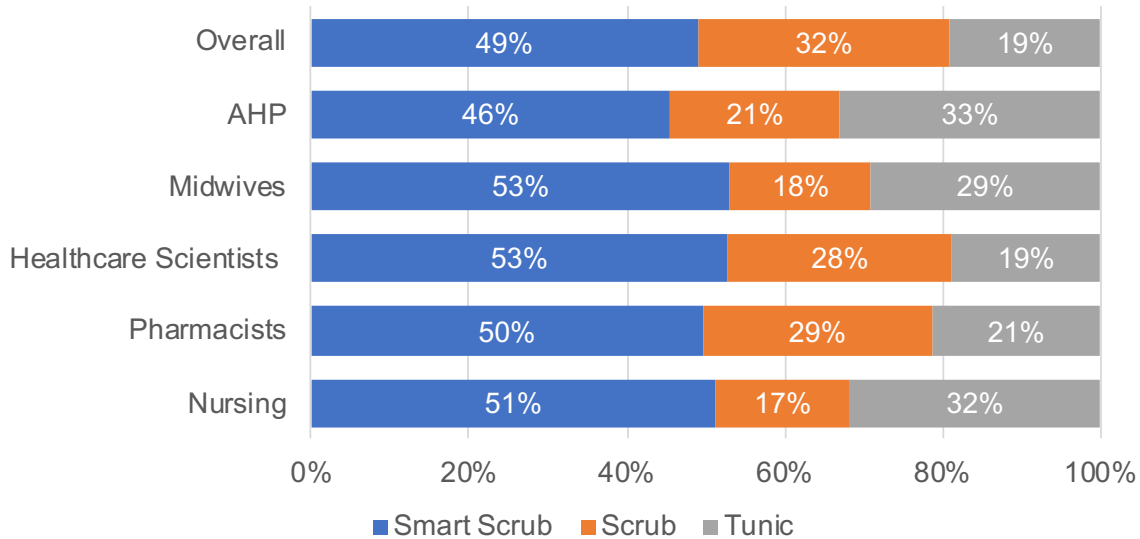


The preferred style is the smart scrub, with nearly half of respondents choosing it as their favourite. This preference has increased compared to pre pandemic engagement.

The preference for this style is shown segmented by profession, trust type and ethnicity of respondents.

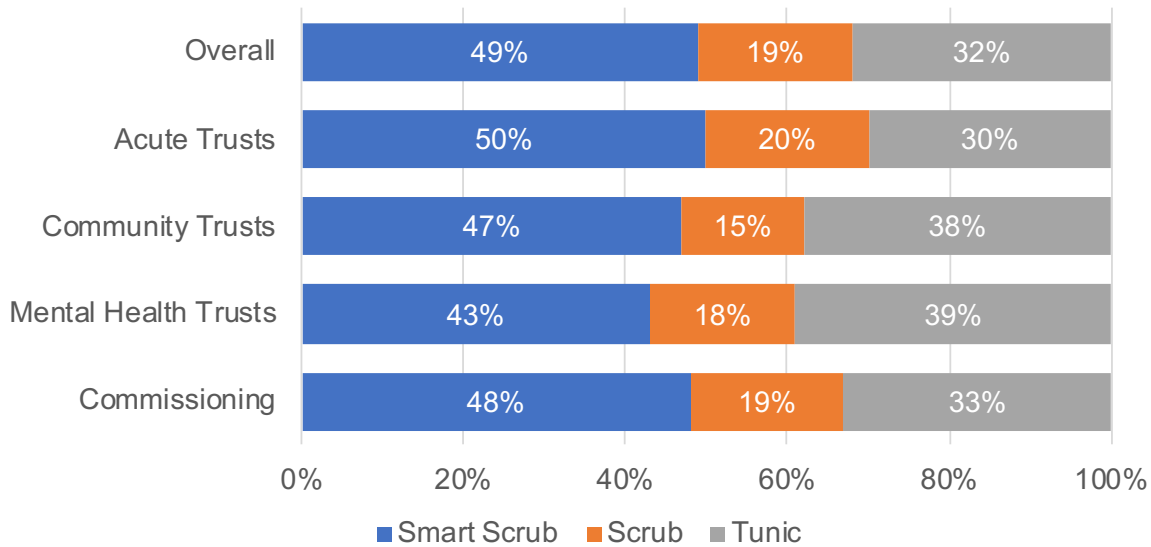
### By Profession

Figure 21 – National Uniform Consultation – uniform style preference by profession



## By Trust Type

Figure 21 – National Uniform Consultation – uniform style preference by trust type

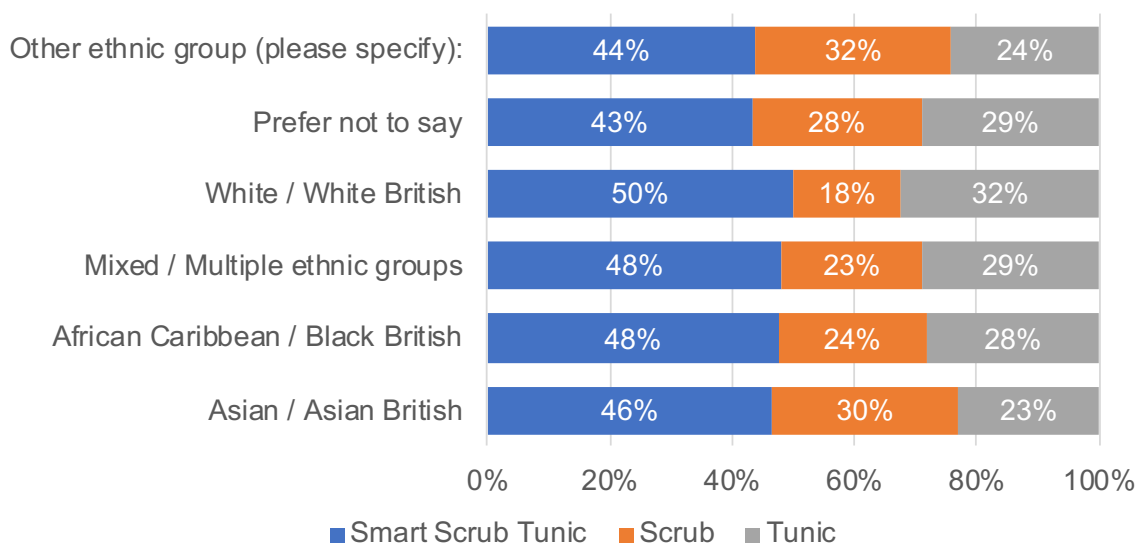


The preferred style across all health care professions and settings is a smart scrub.

Acute settings preference for smart scrubs and scrubs combined is 70% and is the strongest of all settings. There is a lower preference for scrubs in community-based settings and mental health compared to Acute, but these settings are also in favour of the smart scrub style.

## By Ethnicity

Figure 22 – National Uniform Consultation – uniform style preference by ethnic group



The preference for smart scrubs overall and by the individual professions is reflected across all ethnic groups.

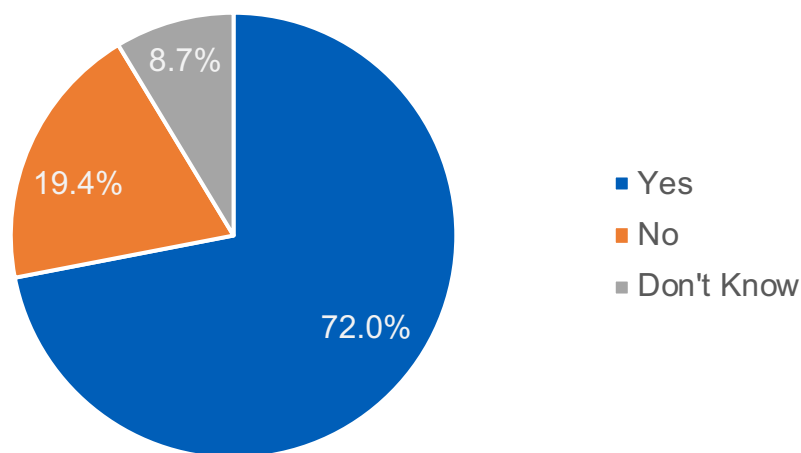
The preference for tunics declines more markedly amongst respondents of Asian ethnicity, dropping below the average of approximately 30%.

During the consultation process we had a considerable number of emails asking why there was no choice for 'no uniform'. These concerns were raised as the respondents did not want to have to wear a uniform, when they don't currently. NHS Supply Chain are aware that there are many clinical settings where it is not deemed appropriate to wear a uniform because of the effect this may have on a patient. It is not the intention of this proposal to change that.

Considering the clear indication of a preference across all demographics, a design will be developed based on adopting a smart scrub style.

"Should a choice of dress be offered?"

**Figure 23 – National Uniform Consultation – % in favour of a dress being offered**



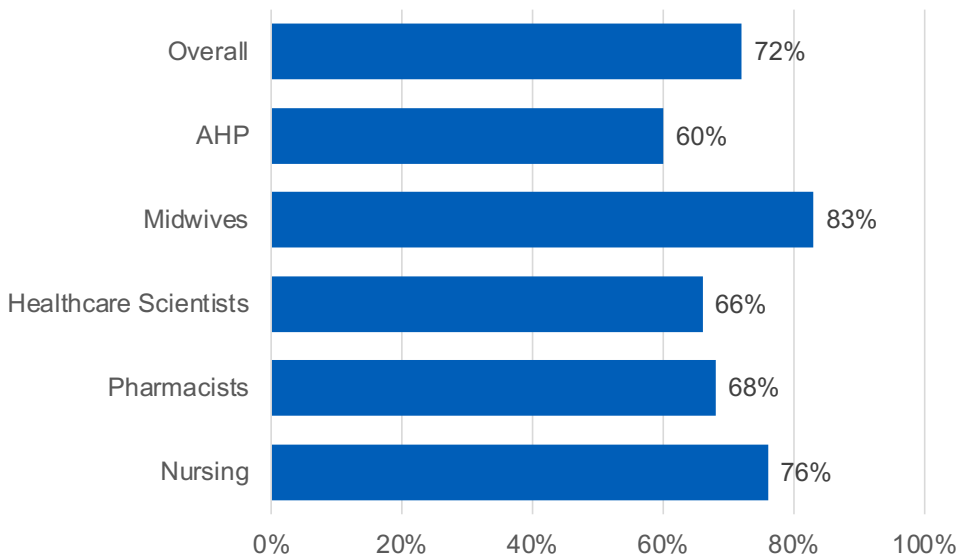
Dresses are currently available as an option in most trusts alongside the common uniform style two-piece (top and trousers).

The consultation asked whether this should still be offered as part of a national approach. As Figure 23 shows 72% of respondents agree that there is a need for the inclusion of a dress option.

This position of being in favour of a dress option is consistently strong across all professions and ethnic groups as shown in Figures 24 and 25.

## By Profession

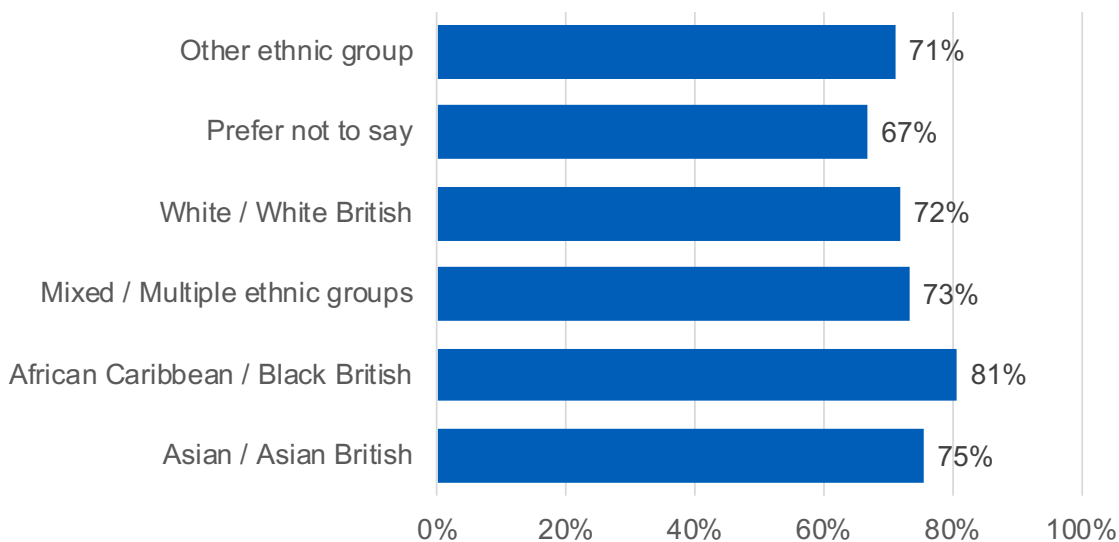
Figure 24 – National Uniform Consultation – % in favour of a dress being offered



When segmenting by profession, Midwives most strongly desired the inclusion of a dress with 83% of respondents in favour. Nursing professionals also showed results with a strong preference at 76%. In contrast Allied Health Professionals had a considerably lower percentage of 60% in favour, however still illustrating a majority in favour of inclusion.

## By Ethnicity

Figure 25 – National Uniform Consultation – % in favour of a dress being offered by ethnic group



The highest preference for a dress to be included is amongst respondents of Black or Asian ethnicity with 81% and 75% in favour respectively, but all groups support the inclusion of a dress option.

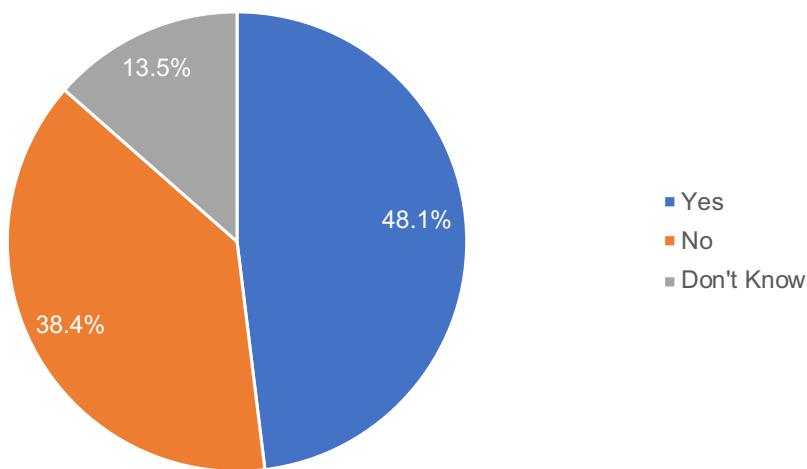


Based on the responses to this question it is clear that a dress option should be included within the design brief alongside smart scrub tunic and trousers.

**“Do you think it would be beneficial for the Health Service to have a formal uniform available? This would be a uniform which could be worn for ceremonial purposes away from the clinical environment.”**

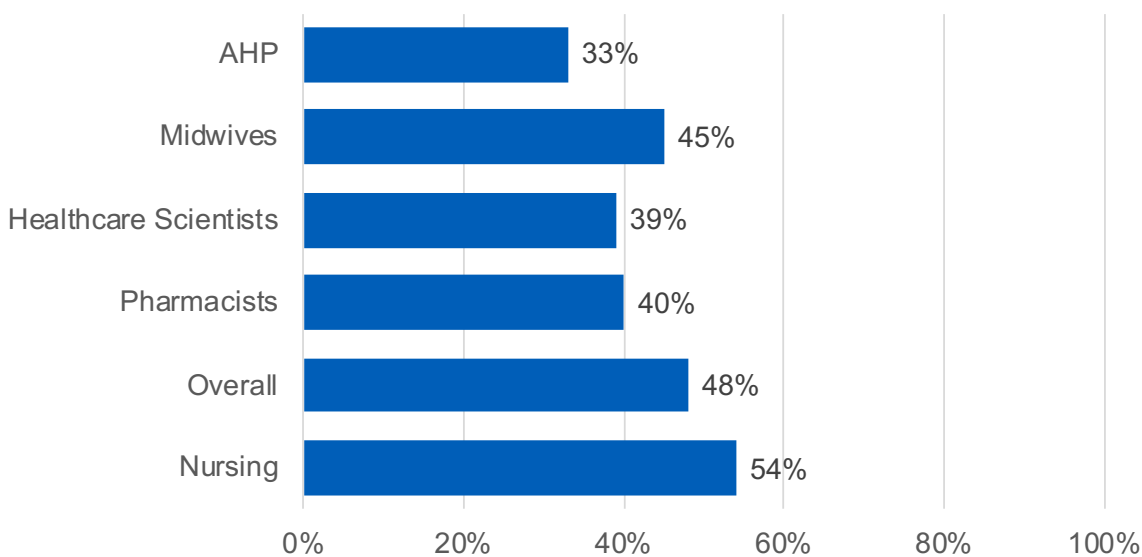
Other arms of the emergency services such as Police and the Ambulance Service have a ‘formal’ uniform which can be worn at ceremonial events. This question was asked to establish whether the NHS should also have such a uniform.

**Figure 26 – National Uniform Consultation – % in favour of a formal uniform, being available**



The results received were inconclusive and do not show an overwhelming preference either way with only 48% of respondents in favour as opposed to 38.4% being against a formal uniform. Segmenting by profession provides a little more insight.

**Figure 27 – National Uniform Consultation – % in favour of a formal uniform, being available by profession**



Only Nursing professionals were in favour of a ceremonial dress with 54%. This is the only profession to have exceeded 50% in favour with some other professions being very much against such a uniform.

Due to these results it is proposed that the requirement for a ceremonial uniform within the national approach is not necessary at this stage. NHS Supply Chain will engage further across the NHS and look to consider this requirement again in the future.

## Design Attributes

Respondents were asked to rank the features of garments based on how important they considered them to be. The list provided was not an extensive list and should not be viewed as exhaustive. However, it was collated from the most commonly mentioned concerns raised in the previous engagement sessions carried out before the launch of the consultation, providing a basis to commence any detailed design.

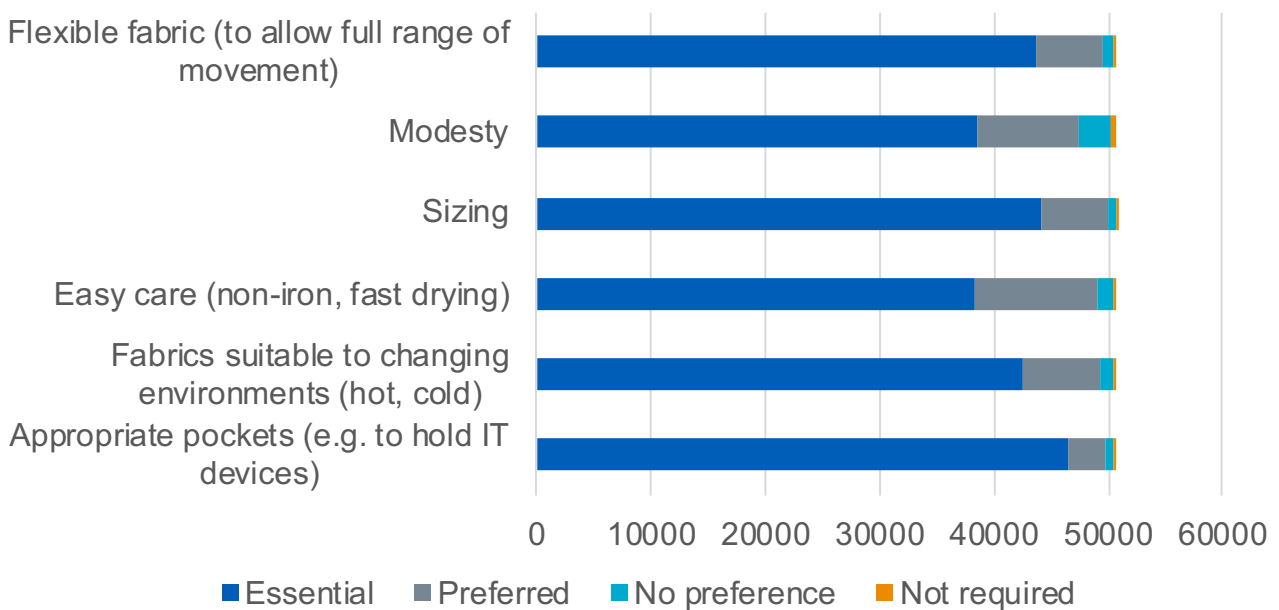
The aim of this question was to test that the feedback received previously was agreed nationally and across all demographics.



**If a National Healthcare Uniform was adopted in NHS England, the garment design and attributes (e.g. pockets and fabric) would be essential in ensuring the uniform is fit for purpose, well designed, and of a high quality.**



Figure 28 – National Uniform Consultation – design attribute requirements



The results show that this is the case and the comments provided also match those outlined in previous workshops. All responses indicated that these attributes are mostly essential or preferred.

This is a consistent requirement across all professions and ethnic groups with no significant differences observed.

Alongside the comments and responses from the online survey we also received collective responses from the CSP and from NHS Muslim Women. These responses placed emphasis on practicality and modesty of a uniform which will form part of the design brief.

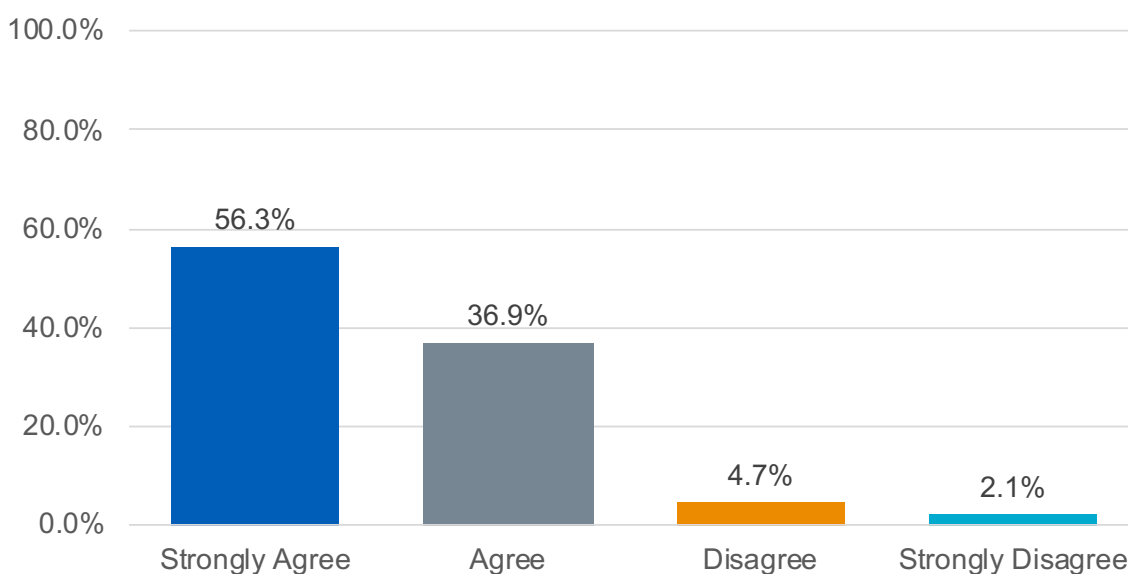
The importance of these design attributes is clear; NHS Supply Chain are confident that they accurately reflect the needs of the entire NHS workforce. We will commence the build of a uniform design brief, of which these features will play a substantial part.

## Colourways

The consultation made a proposal that colourways should be used to distinguish different professions and asked whether respondents agreed with this statement or not.

**“It has been suggested that the best way to distinguish between roles would be to have different colour uniforms for each role grouping, please tell us if you agree or disagree?”**

**Figure 30 – National Uniform Consultation – distinguishing between roles using different coloured uniforms**



The results clearly indicate agreement with this approach with an overall 93% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the suggestion that colour should be the basis of identifying professions.

This position is consistent across all professions, but it is also clear that professional identity and pride is important to everyone in the NHS and as such the uniform must support and demonstrate this. Midwives, Pharmacists, Healthcare Scientists and Allied Health Professionals emphasised this point and it was a significant point raised in the written responses from both the RCM and CSP which we acknowledge.

Engagement with NHS E&I professional leads and the associated bodies will take place in the coming months. The objective of this engagement is to finalise appropriate colours and whether any other element such as piping, embroidery or badges are required to supplement the colourway.

## General Comments

The final question of the consultation provided an opportunity for individual respondents to share any further comments, feedback or suggestions they may have.

A total of 18,734 verbatim comments were also received. These comments have been analysed and grouped together into a range of topics.

### **The main topics referred to are:**

- An acknowledgement that the current situation is confusing, and a simpler less complex approach should be adopted.
- The importance of maintaining professional identity is strong.
- The requirement and need to wear a uniform. It is clear that some respondents are concerned that they will be required to wear a uniform in the future when they do not at present. We can confirm that this is not the intention of this project.
- Adoption of a single approach and standard across the whole of the NHS is strongly supported.
- The choice of style and colours were frequently mentioned.
- Value for money was frequently referred to, with the approach seen as both a poor use of funds and an opportunity to save money in equal measure.
- The need for the uniform to be easy to care for, available in a range of sizes, be culturally sensitive, have suitable pockets and adaptable to temperature changes was a common area of comment.

# Conclusions

The consultation has received responses from across all NHS Professions and trust types. Respondents were from a diverse range of backgrounds with responses from all genders, age groups and ethnic backgrounds. Responses have been received from a number of employee representative bodies.

Professions such as Pharmacists and Healthcare Scientists who had not been considered within the scope of the project, responded in significant numbers and expressed a desire to be included in scope.

The opinions of the individuals who responded to the consultation has not been significantly altered by the impact of COVID-19.

The volume and breadth of response to the consultation allows us to draw the following conclusions:

- The adoption of a standardised national uniform will provide benefits to patients and visitors by improving the ease of which they can identify different health care professionals.
- It will have a positive impact upon the professional image of the NHS in England.
- There is an overwhelming desire across the NHS in England to adopt a standard national uniform and that this approach should be followed by all trusts.
- The national approach must recognise individual professions but not lead to confusion for patients and visitors but rather improve the ability for patients and visitors to recognise healthcare professionals.
- The preferred style of garment is a 'smart scrub', and it is essential that the design:
  - Contains enough pockets
  - Has easy aftercare (e.g. washing, drying and non-iron)
  - Allows for a full range of movement
  - Provides wearers with modesty
  - Is comfortable to wear across changing settings
  - Is offered in a broad range of sizes
  - Contains sustainable materials.
- The option of a dress should be offered as an addition to a smart scrub.
- There is no clear requirement for a 'formal ceremonial' uniform at this stage.
- The uniform design must allow for equality, diversity and inclusion and be appropriate for the whole of the NHS workforce.
- The use of different colours should be the primary method of distinguishing between professions. Other design elements such as embroidery and badges need to be evaluated.

# Recommendations

The consultation results are strongly in favour of the adoption of a national approach and it is recommended to progress the project to the sourcing stage on this basis, with the aim of launching the national uniform in Summer 2022.

## Next Steps

- A sourcing process objective will be developed for a fit for purpose healthcare uniform for use right across the NHS in England.
- The scope of the project will be expanded to include Pharmacists and Healthcare Scientists as well as Nurses, Midwives and AHPs.
- A design brief will be developed based on a smart scrub tunic and trousers.
- A dress will be developed alongside the smart scrub design.
- The design will not be finalised as the sourcing process commences but will evolve during the process. A comprehensive testing and wearer trial stage will be developed which will ensure that front line healthcare professionals will be able to trial potential designs and provide feedback before a final design is agreed. These wearer trials will take place across the country and include a range of NHS settings – Acute, Mental Health and Community. The trials will have representatives from all the professions in scope and will reflect the diverse nature of the NHS workforce. NHS Supply Chain will discuss and agree the best time for trusts to carry out these wearer trials.

This consultation does not mark the end of the engagement process and it is imperative that the views of individuals and representative bodies right across the NHS continue to be heard and considered as we move forward.

NHS Supply Chain will communicate progress with the project when appropriate; it will continue to take guidance and direction from NHSE&I and will engage with the professional representative bodies to ensure the voice of the NHS workforce continues to be heard.

We remain extremely conscious of changing priorities and the unprecedented challenges which the NHS continues to face and will constantly review the activity and progress of this project.