



9 January 2019

Chief Executives Health Boards & Trusts

Dear colleagues

**Bare Below the Elbow (BBE)**

Welsh Government takes patient safety in all health care settings very seriously. Many patients are concerned about picking up an infection when they receive health care services from NHS Wales and especially when admitted to hospital settings. All care providers must ensure that they have delivered the highest standard of care to prevent patient harm and this includes taking all precautions to prevent the development of healthcare associated infections.

The All Wales Dress Code was developed in 2009 to encompass the principles of inspiring confidence, preventing infection and for the safety of the workforce. A principle within the dress code states that all clinical staff must wear short sleeves or elbow-length sleeves in the clinical workplace to enable effective hand washing techniques.

It is disappointing that almost a decade later some clinical health care staff are failing to comply with this Code and long sleeves, watches and other jewellery are a common sight in clinical settings. It is the responsibility of each health care provider to take steps to ensure compliance of this Code by all of its front line clinical staff – irrespective of grade or profession.

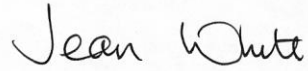
We are now in the most demanding time of year for healthcare services and ensuring the burden on services is not exacerbated by preventable healthcare acquired infections is a reasonable and essential action for all service providers to take. We are therefore writing to you requesting that you communicate with all frontline staff during the month of January to make it absolutely clear that bare below the elbow is the only acceptable dress code practice for front line clinical staff in Welsh health care settings. All must understand that in addition to short/elbow length sleeves, arms and hands should be free of jewellery with the exception of a plain wedding band. Please emphasise adherence with good basic hand hygiene practices.

We thank you for your support in ensuring this basic principle of infection prevention is adhered to.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Frank Atherton', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr Frank Atherton  
Chief Medical Officer  
Medical Director NHS Wales

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jean White', written in a cursive style.

Professor Jean White CBE  
Chief Nursing Officer  
Nurse Director NHS Wales