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NEW ROMNEY COUNSELLING SERVICES

Dress Code and Professional Appearance Policy

Policy Owner: Board of Trustees

Approved By: Board of Trustees

Date Approved: 21st October 2026

Review Date: 1st October 2027

Version: 1.0

1. Purpose

New Romney Counselling Services (NRCS) is committed to providing a professional, welcoming, safe and inclusive environment for clients, employees, counsellors, students and volunteers.

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear and reasonable expectations regarding dress and personal appearance, while recognising the importance of individual expression, comfort, cultural identity and personal circumstances.

NRCS recognises that the counselling environment should feel approachable and reassuring rather than overly formal. A smart-casual standard of dress is therefore considered appropriate for most roles.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals undertaking duties on behalf of NRCS, including:

- Employees and administrative staff
- Qualified counsellors
- Student and trainee counsellors
- Volunteers
- Trustees when representing NRCS in an official capacity
- Other individuals working within NRCS premises or representing the organisation

The policy applies while working on NRCS premises, attending meetings, representing the charity externally or delivering services remotely where clients or other professionals can see the individual.

3. General Dress Standards

All individuals representing NRCS are expected to maintain a clean, tidy and professional appearance appropriate to their duties.

Clothing should:

- Be clean, presentable and in a reasonable state of repair.
- Be suitable for the individual's role and working environment.
- Support a professional, respectful and welcoming atmosphere.
- Allow individuals to carry out their duties comfortably and safely.
- Be appropriate for working with clients who may be experiencing emotional distress or vulnerability.

NRCS does not require formal business attire, such as suits, unless appropriate for a particular occasion.

4. Acceptable Clothing

Smart-casual clothing is generally appropriate and may include:

- Smart trousers, chinos or suitable jeans.
- Shirts, blouses, polo shirts or smart tops.
- Jumpers, cardigans and other suitable knitwear.
- Dresses and skirts.
- Clean, presentable trainers, shoes or boots.

Jeans and trainers are permitted, provided they are clean, tidy and appropriate for a professional counselling environment.

Clothing should provide suitable coverage for the work being undertaken, without imposing different standards based on gender.

5. Clothing and Appearance That May Be Unsuitable

The following should generally be avoided when undertaking NRCS duties:

- Clothing displaying offensive, discriminatory, sexually explicit or otherwise inappropriate wording or images.
- Clothing that is excessively damaged, dirty or unsuitable for the working environment.
- Beachwear or clothing intended primarily for leisure activities, where inappropriate for the role.
- Clothing or accessories that create an identifiable health, safety or safeguarding risk.
- Strong fragrances that may cause discomfort to clients or colleagues, particularly those with allergies or sensitivities.

Clothing choices will be considered in context, and any concerns will be addressed reasonably and sensitively.

6. Counselling and Client-Facing Roles

Counsellors, student counsellors and other client-facing personnel should consider the impact of their appearance on the therapeutic environment.

The emphasis should be on presenting a professional, approachable and non-distracting appearance that helps clients feel comfortable and respected.

Counsellors should exercise professional judgement when selecting clothing, taking into account:

- The nature of the counselling relationship.
- The comfort and dignity of clients.
- The importance of maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.
- The practical requirements of the counselling environment.

NRCS recognises that professional appearance does not require a formal or corporate style of dress.

7. Personal Hygiene and Presentation

Individuals are expected to maintain appropriate standards of personal hygiene while undertaking their duties.

Hair, facial hair, jewellery, tattoos and piercings are generally matters of personal choice, provided they do not present a genuine health, safety or safeguarding concern.

NRCS will not impose unnecessary restrictions on personal appearance or expression.

Where a specific concern arises, it will be considered individually and addressed respectfully.

8. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

NRCS is committed to treating everyone fairly and with dignity and respect, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

This policy will be applied consistently and without discrimination.

NRCS respects clothing and appearance associated with:

- Religion or belief.
- Disability or medical requirements.
- Race, ethnicity or cultural identity.
- Sex, gender identity or gender expression.
- Pregnancy or maternity.
- Other protected characteristics or relevant individual circumstances.

Reasonable adjustments will be considered for individuals with disabilities, sensory sensitivities or medical conditions.

Any restriction on clothing or appearance must have a legitimate and proportionate justification, such as health and safety or safeguarding.

9. Health and Safety

Clothing and footwear must be suitable for the activities being undertaken.

Individuals should avoid clothing, footwear or accessories that could create an unnecessary risk to themselves, clients or others.

Where specific duties require additional protective clothing or footwear, NRCS will communicate the relevant requirements.

Any health and safety concerns will be assessed according to the circumstances of the role.

10. Remote Counselling and Online Meetings

Individuals providing counselling or representing NRCS through video calls should maintain the same general standards of professional appearance expected during face-to-face work.

Consideration should also be given to the visible background, lighting, privacy and confidentiality of the online environment.

The aim is to maintain a professional and reassuring experience for clients.

11. Responsibilities

All individuals covered by this policy are responsible for ensuring their clothing and appearance are appropriate for their role and working environment.

Managers, supervisors and designated NRCS representatives are responsible for communicating the policy, responding to questions and addressing concerns fairly and sensitively.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for approving the policy and ensuring that it remains appropriate, inclusive and consistent with the organisation's values and legal responsibilities.

12. Addressing Concerns

Where an individual's clothing or appearance is considered inconsistent with this policy, the matter will normally be addressed through an informal and confidential discussion.

The individual will be given an opportunity to explain any relevant personal, cultural, religious, medical or other circumstances.

Where appropriate, reasonable adjustments or alternative arrangements will be considered.

If concerns continue, they may be addressed under the relevant employment, volunteer, placement or professional conduct procedures.

Any action taken will be fair, reasonable and proportionate.

13. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where necessary due to changes in legislation, organisational requirements or working practices.

Approved by:



Position: Director

Date: 21st October 2026

Next Review Date: 1st October 2027