

# Sustainable Buying Standard:

## Textiles

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### Introduction

Durham County Council recognises that the environmental and social impacts of textiles are substantial, from the extraction or cultivation of raw materials, through to the manufacture, import, use and disposal of these goods. This standard is designed to ensure that all textile products purchased by the Council come from socially and environmentally responsible sources. Suppliers of textile products are required to provide assurance that their manufacturers, distributors and any other supply chain partners comply with this Standard.

Product categories covered by this Standard include (but are not restricted to):

- Uniforms and corporate wear
- Protective clothing and workwear
- Soft interior furnishings
- Floor coverings

By applying this standard in the procurement of all textiles, the Council aims to:

- Respect international labour standards
- Reject illegal and child labour
- Promote healthy and safe working conditions
- Protect the environment from harmful chemicals
- Uphold recognised animal welfare standards
- Minimise avoidable waste and maximise resource efficiency

Compliance with this standard is mandatory for all Service Groupings.

### Buying Standard

#### 1. Fundamental compliance with ethical labour laws and conventions

Durham County Council will require suppliers and manufacturers of all textile products to demonstrate compliance to the **Fundamental** ILO (International Labour Organization) Conventions, which can be found at <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12000:0::NO>.

Compliance may be demonstrated through proof of affiliation to an ethical standards body or labelling initiative. These include:

- World Fair Trade Organisation
- Ethical Trading Initiative
- Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production
- Ethical Fashion Forum.

If no independent certification is available, the Council will accept a comprehensive **declaration of honour** that minimum standards relating to working conditions, wages and working hours are respected will be accepted. A template declaration will be included in the tender documents for each contract involving the purchase of textile products. *See Appendix 1 for an example of this declaration.*

The Council is committed to maintaining a supply chain that is free from exploitation, corruption, abuse and discrimination. It is therefore a requirement that all suppliers of textile products maintain awareness of all production and manufacturing processes and sites **throughout the supply chain** and are able to provide confirmation of their compliance to the Ethical Trading Initiative Base Code as a *minimum* standard, if they are not independently certified.

## 2. Sustainable specifications

In addition to the above, the Council will:

- Require suppliers of textiles to provide (via an Essential Criterion at tender / quotation stage) a declaration of non-use of the prohibited chemicals which are set out within the mandatory criteria of the Government Buying Standards for textiles;  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/341550/GBS\\_spec-textiles.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/341550/GBS_spec-textiles.pdf)
- Consider the environmental impact over the whole life of products when selecting fibres and materials;
- Where relevant, give preference to textiles which meet the “fitness for use” criteria of the EU Ecolabel, relating to:
  - Shrinkage (criterion 34)
  - Resistance to fading from washing (criterion 35)
  - Colourfastness to perspiration (criterion 36)
  - Colourfastness to wet rubbing (criterion 37)
  - Colourfastness to dry rubbing (criterion 38)
  - Resistance to fading from light (criterion 39)
- Specify that all leather and leather-containing products are sourced from tanneries who are able to provide evidence of the following:
  - traceability of hides back to country of origin / slaughterhouse
  - a formal management system for restricted substances
  - a formal waste management procedure that is compliant with all local regulatory standards*or who hold a current valid audit rating with the Leather Working Group.*
- Require suppliers of wool products to declare compliance with the ethical standards of the International Wool Textile Association (IWTO) which can be found at:  
<http://www.iwto.org/files/publications/26.pdf>

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**APPENDIX 1**

**Declaration of honour**

*For completion / signature by any economic operator which does not hold certification or affiliation via an ethical standards body or labelling initiative, relevant to the supply of textiles.*

On behalf of <name of organisation>, I confirm that the textiles (fabrics *and* final products) we will supply as part of this contract are manufactured in sites which operate wholly in accordance with the standards set out in the Ethical Trading Initiative Base Code, reproduced below.

We will continue to monitor our supply chain and ensure that these standards are upheld throughout the duration of the Contract.

Signed:	
Print Name:	
Date:	

Ethical Trading Initiative Base Code

**1. Employment is freely chosen**

- 1.1 There is no forced, bonded or involuntary prison labour.
- 1.2 Workers are not required to lodge "deposits" or their identity papers with their employer and are free to leave their employer after reasonable notice.

**2. Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are respected**

- 2.1 Workers, without distinction, have the right to join or form trade unions of their own choosing and to bargain collectively.
- 2.2 The employer adopts an open attitude towards the activities of trade unions and their organisational activities.
- 2.3 Workers representatives are not discriminated against and have access to carry out their representative functions in the workplace.
- 2.4 Where the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining is restricted under law, the employer facilitates, and does not hinder, the development of parallel means for independent and free association and bargaining.

**3. Working conditions are safe and hygienic**

- 3.1 A safe and hygienic working environment shall be provided, bearing in mind the prevailing knowledge of the industry and of any specific hazards. Adequate steps shall be taken to prevent accidents and injury to health arising out of, associated with, or occurring in the course of work, by minimising, so far as is reasonably practicable, the causes of hazards inherent in the working environment.
- 3.2 Workers shall receive regular and recorded health and safety training, and such training shall be repeated for new or reassigned workers.
- 3.3 Access to clean toilet facilities and to potable water, and, if appropriate, sanitary facilities for food storage shall be provided.

3.4 Accommodation, where provided, shall be clean, safe, and meet the basic needs of the workers.

3.5 The company observing the code shall assign responsibility for health and safety to a senior management representative.

#### **4. Child labour shall not be used**

4.1 There shall be no new recruitment of child labour.

4.2 Companies shall develop or participate in and contribute to policies and programmes which provide for the transition of any child found to be performing child labour to enable her or him to attend and remain in quality education until no longer a child; "child" and "child labour" being defined in the appendices.

4.3 Children and young persons under 18 shall not be employed at night or in hazardous conditions.

4.4 These policies and procedures shall conform to the provisions of the relevant ILO standards.

#### **5. Living wages are paid**

5.1 Wages and benefits paid for a standard working week meet, at a minimum, national legal standards or industry benchmark standards, whichever is higher. In any event wages should always be enough to meet basic needs and to provide some discretionary income.

5.2 All workers shall be provided with written and understandable Information about their employment conditions in respect to wages before they enter employment and about the particulars of their wages for the pay period concerned each time that they are paid.

5.3 Deductions from wages as a disciplinary measure shall not be permitted nor shall any deductions from wages not provided for by national law be permitted without the expressed permission of the worker concerned. All disciplinary measures should be recorded.

#### **6. Working hours are not excessive**

6.1 Working hours must comply with national laws, collective agreements, and the provisions of 6.2 to 6.6 below, whichever affords the greater protection for workers. Sub-clauses 6.2 to 6.6 are based on international labour standards.

6.2 Working hours, excluding overtime, shall be defined by contract, and shall not exceed 48 hours per week.\*

6.3 All overtime shall be voluntary. Overtime shall be used responsibly, taking into account all the following: the extent, frequency and hours worked by individual workers and the workforce as a whole. It shall not be used to replace regular employment. Overtime shall always be compensated at a premium rate, which is recommended to be not less than 125% of the regular rate of pay.

6.4 The total hours worked in any 7 day period shall not exceed 60 hours, except where covered by clause 6.5 below.

6.5 Working hours may exceed 60 hours in any 7 day period only in exceptional circumstances where all of the following are met:

- this is allowed by national law;
- this is allowed by a collective agreement freely negotiated with a workers' organisation representing a significant portion of the workforce;
- appropriate safeguards are taken to protect the workers' health and safety; and
- the employer can demonstrate that exceptional circumstances apply such as unexpected production peaks, accidents or emergencies.

6.6 Workers shall be provided with at least one day off in every 7 day period or, where allowed by national law, 2 days off in every 14 day period.

\* International standards recommend the progressive reduction of normal hours of work, when appropriate, to 40 hours per week, without any reduction in workers' wages as hours are reduced.

**7. No discrimination is practised**

7.1 There is no discrimination in hiring, compensation, access to training, promotion, termination or retirement based on race, caste, national origin, religion, age, disability, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, union membership or political affiliation.

**8. Regular employment is provided**

8.1 To every extent possible work performed must be on the basis of recognised employment relationship established through national law and practice.

8.2 Obligations to employees under labour or social security laws and regulations arising from the regular employment relationship shall not be avoided through the use of labour-only contracting, sub-contracting, or home-working arrangements, or through apprenticeship schemes where there is no real intent to impart skills or provide regular employment, nor shall any such obligations be avoided through the excessive use of fixed-term contracts of employment.

**9. No harsh or inhumane treatment is allowed**

9.1 Physical abuse or discipline, the threat of physical abuse, sexual or other harassment and verbal abuse or other forms of intimidation shall be prohibited.