Workplace Dress Codes and Uniform Policies

A clear dress code can support safety, hygiene, customer service and a consistent brand. It should also be reasonable, inclusive and applied without unlawful discrimination or unnecessary restrictions.

1. Set a legitimate, proportionate purpose

Explain why particular clothing or appearance standards are needed. Distinguish safety and hygiene requirements from brand preferences, and avoid rules that are more restrictive than the job requires.

Standards for different groups need not be identical in wording, but should be equivalent in effect. Requirements that disproportionately disadvantage employees because of protected characteristics can create discrimination risks.

2. Consider religion, disability and individual needs

Consider religious dress, disability-related adaptations, pregnancy, gender reassignment and other protected characteristics when assessing a policy. Listen to individual requests and consider reasonable adjustments where required.

Avoid prescriptive sex-specific rules, such as requiring only women to wear high heels, make-up or revealing clothing. A neutral, job-related standard is generally easier to explain and enforce.

> **Example | Uniform adjustment for a site employee**
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> A site employee requests an alternative form of head covering consistent with their religious practice. The employer considers the actual safety and hygiene requirements, discusses suitable options and records an agreed adjustment rather than imposing a blanket refusal.

3. Separate uniforms from PPE and safety obligations

Where personal protective equipment is necessary, assess the risk and provide suitable protective equipment under the applicable rules. Explain cleaning, replacement, safe use and reporting damage. Uniform appearance rules should not override health and safety.

Confirm whether employees are expected to buy or maintain a uniform. Any deductions or required expenditure must be checked against wage and National Minimum Wage rules.

4. Communicate changes and apply rules consistently

Consult staff where appropriate, publish the current policy, give a practical explanation and keep a record of updates. Address genuine breaches consistently and fairly, allowing employees to raise concerns without embarrassment.

Common errors employers should avoid

- Using gender-specific appearance rules without a legitimate justification.
- Applying the dress code inconsistently or refusing to consider required adjustments.

How Assyst helps employers communicate uniform policies

Assyst makes company and site policies available through the staff app, so employees can read the current uniform and appearance requirements while at work. Employers can issue documents in appropriate languages, circulate updates and retain electronic acknowledgements confirming that staff have read them. Site-level documentation makes it easier to present different legitimate requirements where workplaces have different operational or safety needs.

Discuss your workforce requirements with Assyst

Assyst Workforce Management is a workforce management platform for multi-site employers, bringing together HR and paperless onboarding, time and attendance, workforce scheduling, payroll calculations, task management and a mobile staff app. To discuss how Assyst could support your business, visit www.assyst.uk and contact us through the website.

Useful official sources

GOV.UK — Dress codes and sex discrimination guidance
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dress-codes-and-sex-discrimination-what-you-need-to-know

Acas — How discrimination can happen at work
https://www.acas.org.uk/discrimination-and-the-law/how-and-when-discrimination-can-happen

GOV.UK — Workplace safety and PPE
https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/ppe.htm

General guidance for employers in Great Britain, reviewed November 2026. Contract terms and individual circumstances may require professional advice.