

Facilities Management from A to Z



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U niforms

The provision of corporate workwear for staff involved in the provision of service activities goes back many years. From the starched collars of the butler to the maids apron or the chefs hat, the wearing of clothing that is appropriate to the role is a time honoured and practical tradition. The provision of personal protective clothing where required for health and safety reasons is a legal duty for UK employers but many organisations also take the opportunity offered by uniform dress to promote their brand identity and encourage a closer team spirit.

Facilities managers who have outsourced their frontline services must decide what to do about uniforms. Where services have been contracted to a number of individual companies they may all arrive at site wearing different uniforms bearing the logos of their respective employers. This may be quite acceptable in many circumstances; however some uniforms may not present the desired image and a number of different colours and styles among the facilities team may be considered unacceptable.

Some customers may prefer a neutral look with no company identification. This is particularly common when security personnel are to be located in an office reception area and a police style uniform with epaulettes and a peaked cap would be completely unsuitable. Depending on the image required an acceptable alternative might be a dark suit or a blazer and slacks. These decisions should be specified at the time of contract as incremental cost may be involved.

Some organisations wish to develop a new brand identity for their FM team independent of employer and a common corporate dress code is a powerful tool to emphasise service characteristics and build team loyalty. This can be extended up through management levels including senior staff unaccustomed to wearing a uniform.

It must be borne in mind that the introduction of a uniform or corporate dress code may require a variation to and employees conditions of employment and the necessary notice and consultation period must be given to avoid industrial dispute. A corporate workwear or dress code policy will also need to address practical issues around the number of clothing items to be provided, who is responsible for cleaning and repairs, replacement arrangements etc.

There may also be tax issues where the clothing provided is not part of Personal Protective Equipment. Contrary to common belief the addition of a company logo is not enough to warrant a tax allowance for clothing which meets the employees need for cover and comfort. The test is where the clothing is: "of a special character dictated by the occupation as a matter of physical necessity

For detailed advice on taxation issues regarding corporate clothing contact your local Inland Revenue office and check their website at www.hmrc.gov.uk/manuals/eimanual/EIM32455.htm