alsico®

GUIDE TO UNIFORM STANDARDISATION

How to optimise cost, performance and consistency at scale



WHY UNIFORM STANDARDISATION MATTERS NOW

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Uniform procurement was once seen as a straightforward task - low on the priority list, focused on getting the right garments delivered at the right price.

Today, they sit at the intersection of compliance, workforce wellbeing, operational efficiency, and brand consistency - and bringing with them a whole new level of complexity.

Because of this, for large, multi-site organisations, uniform programmes are often fragmented. Different suppliers, inconsistent specifications and evolving workforce needs create systems that are difficult to manage, harder to control and becoming increasingly risky.



But standardisation changes that. Not by restricting choice, but by creating structure - bringing consistency, visibility and confidence to uniform programmes at scale. And with the right uniform partner, a new low-risk, low-stress experience of workwear procurement.

This guide outlines how to move from fragmented systems to a model that is controlled, scalable and built to perform. We’re proud to share our expertise on the matter, backed by decades of experience and some of the biggest uniform partnerships in the UK.

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Greg Houlston
Business Development Director at alsico UK

WHAT IS UNIFORM STANDARDISATION (AND WHAT IT ISN'T)

Uniform standardisation is the process of creating a structured, organisation-wide approach to garments, specifications and supply - ensuring consistency whilst allowing for role-specific requirements.

It is not about forcing identical garments across every role or location. Instead, it is about establishing a clear framework that defines what is standard, where flexibility exists, and how decisions are made.

At its core, standardisation is about controlled flexibility - a model where consistency is maintained, but operational needs are still met. It bridges the gap between policy and practice, ensuring that what is defined at organisational level is delivered consistently on the ground.



THE COST YOU CAN'T SEE - BUT ARE ALREADY PAYING

Many organisations underestimate the true cost of non-standardised uniforms. The impact is rarely isolated - it spreads across budgets, operations and the wearer experience, and it is far more disruptive than you may realise.

Financial impact

Duplicated purchasing across departments, inconsistent pricing and a lack of visibility make it difficult to control or forecast spend. Small inefficiencies compound at scale, meaning the larger the organisation, the greater the financial impact.

Procurement governance

Without clear purchasing routes, staff may be unsure where to order uniforms and source garments independently. This reduces visibility, creates inconsistencies and can result in unexpected invoices and unplanned spend.

Operational impact

Multiple suppliers, varied garment specification and inconsistent processes create administrative burden. Managing stock, distribution and reordering become time-consuming and reactive.

Risk & compliance

In regulated environments, inconsistency increases risk. Variations in garments or specifications can lead to non-compliance with safety, hygiene or protective standards - putting both your business and your team at huge risk.

Brand & perception

Inconsistent uniforms weaken visual identity and can impact how organisations are perceived by visitors, customers, potential stakeholders, or the public.

Wearer experience

Poor fit, limited options or inconsistent quality can lead to dissatisfaction, disengagement, wearer refusal, and increased returns or replacements.

QUICK SELF-ASSESSMENT

If you answer “yes” to any of the below, standardisation is likely a solution:

- ☐ Are uniforms sourced from multiple suppliers?
- ☐ Is it difficult to track or forecast uniform spend?
- ☐ Do wearers experience inconsistent fit or quality?
- ☐ Are you experiencing delays in sourcing and provision of uniform?
- ☐ Is compliance managed differently across sites?

A CASE FOR STANDARDISATION

When uniform programmes are standardised effectively, organisations move from reactive management to proactive control - allowing them to spend time and money on other sides of the business.

- Spend becomes more predictable and easier to forecast, with reduced duplication and greater visibility across the organisation.
- Procurement processes are simplified, and stock management becomes more structured and efficient.
- Consistency strengthens brand identity across all locations, whilst compliance is easier to manage through clearly defined specifications and controlled supply.
- Operationally, the benefits are felt immediately — fewer administrative challenges, smoother rollout, and more efficient ongoing management.
- For wearers, improved fit, comfort, and consistency contribute to higher satisfaction and better engagement.

Standardisation does not reduce flexibility - it enables it, within a framework that ensures control.

EMBRACING STANDARDISATION: TURNING CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES

Introducing standardisation is an important step forward for any organisation, and like any meaningful improvement, it requires thoughtful implementation. While there can be initial complexities, these are often valuable opportunities to align teams, strengthen processes, and create long-term benefits for the business.



Building internal alignment

Teams often have established relationships and ways of working that have served them well. By engaging early, sharing uniform samples, and clearly communicating the benefits, organisations can bring people on the journey helping teams feel involved, informed, and confident in the change.

Bringing stakeholders together

Different functions (such as procurement, operations, estates, and frontline teams) naturally bring diverse priorities. A structured approach to engagement creates an opportunity to align these perspectives, ensuring decisions reflect a balanced, organisation-wide view and lead to a stronger, more cohesive outcome.

Evolving from legacy arrangements

Existing supplier agreements can be an important foundation to build from. A phased approach allows organisations to transition smoothly, maintaining continuity while introducing improvements in a controlled and manageable way.

Enabling flexibility within consistency

Standardisation is sometimes seen as limiting, but in reality it provides a clear and consistent framework that still allows for necessary variation. By communicating this effectively at every level, organisations can demonstrate how structure actually supports smarter, more flexible decision-making.

Strengthening ownership and accountability

Clear governance is a powerful enabler of success. Establishing defined ownership ensures the programme remains focused, delivers value over time, and benefits from strong supplier relationships and consistent oversight



THE ALSICO STANDARDISATION FRAMEWORK

A successful uniform programme requires more than good intent - it needs a clear, structured approach. The alsico standardisation framework outlines five key stages for building and maintaining control at scale

STEP 1: Audit your current state

Map your existing uniform landscape - suppliers, garment types, spend, and usage. This stage identifies duplication, inconsistency and gaps that may not be visible at surface level.

STEP 2: Define requirements

Establish what your organisation needs from its uniform programme. This includes role-specific requirements, compliance standards and wearer expectations, but also the less thought about things like gender-fit, fabric choice and environmental considerations.

Here's where you bring in alsico as your uniform partner.

STEP 3: Design your standard

Create a structured uniform framework. Define core ranges, role-specific variations, branding guidelines, and fabric performance requirements. Complete demonstrations, organise wearer trials and gather honest feedback.

STEP 4: Implement and communicate

Plan and execute rollout across sites. Engage stakeholders, support wearers through the transition, and ensure clear communication at every stage.

STEP 5: Manage and optimise

Maintain control through ongoing governance, stock visibility, and supply chain management. Use feedback to continuously refine and improve the programme.

This structured approach transforms uniform management from reactive to controlled - ensuring consistency, scalability, and long-term performance.

SECTOR-SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS

Uniform standardisation is not one-size-fits-all. Different sectors require tailored approaches based on their environments, risks, and workforce needs.

Private hospitals and residential care

Infection control, hygiene and comfort are critical. Uniforms must support long shifts, varied roles, and high standards of cleanliness and compliance.

Utilities and arc flash

Protection and certification are essential. Garments must meet strict safety standards whilst remaining practical and comfortably wearable in demanding conditions.

But across all sectors, consistency across locations is key. Programmes must balance central control with local operational needs, supported by robust logistics and distribution. Understanding these nuances ensures that standardisation works in practice, not just in theory.







CHOOSING THE RIGHT UNIFORM PARTNER

Standardisation is not achieved through products alone – it requires expertise, structure and ongoing management.

Choosing the right uniform partner is therefore about far more than supply. The right partner should provide the expertise, capability and support needed to successfully implement and manage a standardised uniform programme.

Look for a partner that understands operational, compliance and wearer requirements, creating garments that perform in practice, not just on paper.

Implementation experience

Experience delivering large-scale uniform programmes helps simplify wearer trials, rollout planning and implementation across multiple sites.

Supply chain resilience

A resilient, transparent supply chain helps maintain continuity, manage demand and support long-term uniform programmes with confidence.

Long-term partnership

Standardisation doesn't end at rollout. Ongoing governance, account management and continuous improvement help programmes evolve over time.

The right uniform partner should simplify complexity, reduce risk and create confidence throughout every stage of a standardisation programme. The following case study demonstrates how these principles can be applied in practice.



CASE STUDY:

CIRCLE HEALTHCARE

Transforming uniform standardisation at scale

When organisations grow - across sites, teams, and functions - uniform becomes fragmented. For Circle Health Group, this created inconsistencies in appearance, complexity in procurement, and a lack of alignment across roles and locations.

Working in partnership with alsico, the goal was clear: create a standardised uniform solution that delivers consistency, supports staff, and simplifies operations - without compromising on quality or wearer experience.

The challenge

As Circle Health Group continued to grow, its existing approach to uniform needed to evolve into a more structured, scalable programme that could support consistency across every site and role.

This led to:

- Inconsistent brand and professional appearance
- Complex, inefficient procurement processes
- Limited visibility and control over spend
- Varying levels of comfort and suitability for different roles

Standardisation wasn't just about clothing - it was about creating a system that works at scale.

Our approach

Alsico worked closely with Circle Health Group to design and implement a fully standardised uniform solution - built around the needs of both the organisation and its people.

This included:

- Developing a consistent, role-based uniform framework across all sites
- Creating a single, structured uniform programme across clinical and non-clinical teams
- Designing garments that balance durability, comfort and professional appearance
- Implementing a structured rollout plan to ensure smooth adoption

Every stage was shaped by collaboration - ensuring the solution worked in practice, not just on paper.

The result

The move to a standardised uniform approach delivered clear, measurable benefits across the organisation.

Circle Health Group achieved:

- A consistent, recognisable brand and professional image across all locations
- Simplified procurement and improved operational efficiency
- Greater control over ordering and improved operational visibility
- Improved wearer satisfaction through better fit, comfort, and functionality

> ***Throughout the project, alsico have felt like an extension of our own team, working closely with us at every stage. The project has not only improved uniform standardisation but reinforced our commitment to quality and excellence in everything we do.***

Natalie Jackson
Category Manager, Circle Health Group

GETTING STARTED

Moving towards uniform standardisation does not need to be overwhelming. A structured approach can create momentum and deliver early value.



WHAT THE PROJECT COULD ACHIEVE

IMPROVEMENT	OUTCOME	BENEFIT	£ BENEFIT
A reduction in uniform styles and colours	Clarity for patients: easier understanding of staff roles	Improvement in patient experience, confidence, trust and staff identification	Value
	Clarity for staff; easier for staff to identify each other by role and grade		
	Simplified supply management.	Cost reduction in managing multiple product lines – contract governance, ordering, chasing deliveries, invoice reconciliation,data analysis	£ - quantifiable savings in resource
Uniform policy set and governed	Agreed objectives and guidelines with buy-in by directorate or department	Improved compliance and better staff communication	Value
	Improved staff appearance	Reflection of professionalism - staff and Trust	Value
	Move to stock garments – fewer special styles and colours	Cost and leadtime reduction	£ - quantifiable savings in price
	Effective management of future uniform requests	Prevention of future uniform proliferation	£ - quantifiable savings in price
Improved data analysis and planning	Rolling forecast of usage and demand - uniform requirement by role	Scheduled orders and agreed delivery dates with supplier	£ - quantifiable savings in resource
		Timely deliveries - improved relationship with internal customers	Value
		Tighter control of expenditure	£ - quantifiable savings in resource
		Reduction in order chasing	£ - quantifiable savings in resource
Agreed number of uniform suppliers	Manageable number of uniform suppliers and service level agreements in place	Sustainable procurement - Improved relationship with and management of suppliers	£ - quantifiable savings in resource
Value for money	Quality, agreed competitive pricing and lower associated processing costs	Overall cost benefit to the Trust	£ - quantifiable savings

STANDARDISATION IS ONLY SIMPLE WITH THE RIGHT PARTNER

With experience supporting some of the UK's largest healthcare organisations - including the rollout of the NHS Healthcare Uniform across NHS trusts in England - alsico understands what successful implementation looks like at scale.

From implementation planning and wearer trials to stock continuity and long-term support, the focus should always remain the same:

- Simplifying uniform selection
- Creating consistency across teams
- Making products easier to compare
- Reducing complexity during rollout
- Building long-term wearer confidence
- Delivering reliable continuity of supply

"We worked closely with alsico, NHS Supply Chain and other partners to support colleagues across all five sites through the transition. Although a change of this scale naturally brings challenges, our collaborative approach meant we were able to successfully move into their new uniforms. We are grateful to everyone involved for their support throughout the project, and we are pleased to have received positive feedback from colleagues, who tell us their uniforms are both comfortable and durable during long clinical shifts."

Karen Hill
Lead Nurse Professional Standards at University Hospitals of Derby and Burton (UHDB) NHS Foundation Trust

BUT WHAT NOW?

Uniform standardisation is not just about simplifying garments - it is about simplifying complexity.

By creating structure, consistency and control over something as simple as garments with a trusted uniform partner, organisations can reduce risk, improve efficiency, and build uniform programmes that perform at scale and are built to last.

With the right approach - and the right partner - standardisation becomes a foundation for long-term success.

READY TO START THE CONVERSATION?

Scan the QR code to learn how we've supported some of the UK's largest healthcare organisations.

Or speak to our team directly:

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