



# Developing an Ethical Procurement Policy





## Section 1

### Why develop an ethical procurement policy? And how?

UNISON has worked with Labour Behind the Label to develop a set of resources to help activists planning Pride events make better purchasing decisions. We have developed these guidelines to help you approach your local Pride groups and support them in their journey to better procurement.

It can be hard to uncover the conditions in which clothes or merchandise are made. These industries are notorious for complex supply chains and a lack of transparency. Attempts to 'greenwash' mean that some brands, retailers and other suppliers benefit from an ethical or sustainable reputation, whilst in reality, the workers who make their clothes are subjected to unacceptable conditions.

We know that navigating these systems can be difficult, which is why we have developed a range of resources to support Pride groups through this process:

- The **Pride in Procurement guide** shares information of ethical procurement, as well as a checklist to support local Pride groups. It is available at [www.unison.org.uk/planningpride](http://www.unison.org.uk/planningpride)
- The **Ethical Procurement Policy** in Section 2 of this guide can be used and adapted by Pride groups to guide their procurement.
- We have also developed an accompanying **template letter** for Pride groups to send to their current or prospective suppliers (Section 3), outlining the expectations in the policy, plus a **template letter** to send to current or prospective suppliers of services (Section 4).

#### What do we mean by procurement?

In these resources, we are referring to garments, merchandise or services that Pride groups buy to support their work. This can include merchandise such as rainbow flags, t-shirts for Pride volunteers or stewards, items of clothes that are sold to

raise money or to promote awareness about LGBT+ equality and inclusion. It can also include the contracting of services such as security, cleaning and catering.

#### Why should Pride groups have a procurement policy?

Our impact goes beyond our immediate work. How we purchase has a bearing on the human rights of workers across the world, including LGBT+ workers. There is more information about this in the **Pride in Procurement leaflet**. A procurement policy helps Pride groups take the first steps to ensure that the money they spend does not support human rights violations such as modern-slavery, exploitation or child labour.

By taking active steps to improve our procurement practices, we can push for positive change within global supply chains, for all workers including those who are LGBT+. This includes living wages, safe working environments and the right for workers to organise and join a trade union. We can also amplify workers' demands for non-discrimination policies which will benefit LGBT+ workers, as well as other marginalised groups.

#### Extending our values through supply chains leads to change!

As charities, non-profits and community groups, we have power to amplify our impact if we ensure that our values of equality, inclusion and justice extend throughout our supply chains. As more community groups demand better conditions for workers, it will be harder for suppliers to ignore.

We can't change these industries overnight; low wages and lack of transparency are deeply engrained in them. It is likely that a Pride group's suppliers will not meet all the criteria set out in the policy, however this framework enables us to identify suppliers with a commitment, and actionable plans to improve conditions within their supply chains. The policy will enable Pride groups to



work with brands/suppliers who are making progress on workers' rights.

By engaging in these conversations with prospective suppliers, it sends a clear message: to get business with Pride groups, suppliers and retailers must work towards better conditions within their supply chain!

### Five steps for Pride groups to make the procurement policy their own

Our template Ethical Procurement Policy in Section 2 is a foundation for Pride groups to build a policy that works for them.

1. **Identify** what the policy needs to cover, and what items the group buys, or may buy in the future. These factors may be based on the particular needs of your group or organisation, or it could be based on funder requirements.
2. **Adapt** your policy to the local context. It is important that the policy is tailored to your specific organisation and needs.
3. **Consult** with staff or volunteers. It is important that everyone who uses the policy understands it. Ask for input as to whether there are any particular aspects they would like clearly outlined in the policy.
4. **Agree** the policy and sign it off with trustees or the management committee. You should also agree a process of implementing the policy and decide if any procedures need to be developed in order to adhere to the policy.
5. **Share** your policy with other LGBT+ groups, charities and non-profits. There is strength in numbers and inviting other groups to make better purchasing decisions will drive change throughout supply chains.

### Tools and resources

- An International Framework Agreement (IFA) or Global Framework Agreement (GFA) establishes an ongoing relationship between a multinational enterprise (MNC) and a Global Union Federation (GUF) to ensure that the company adheres to the same standards in every country in which it operates. For Pride sourcing purposes, the most relevant GUFs are IndustriALL,

**UNI Global Union** and the **IUF**. The documents are publicly available on the GUF and/or MNC's websites.

- The **Open Apparel Registry** is an open-source map of garment facilities around the world. By encouraging suppliers to declare which factories they are associated with, it increases transparency in the industry and allows human rights campaigners to respond to exploitative conditions in supply chains. In May 2019 **Reuters Events** published information about the Open Apparel Registry.
- **The Transparency Pledge** sets the minimum standard for supply chain disclosure in the garment and footwear industry. Many, but not all, UK major brands have committed to the pledge. The Transparency Pledge requires all companies to publish on their website on a regular basis (such as twice a year) a list naming all sites that manufacture its products. The list should be published in a spreadsheet or other searchable format and provide the following information in English:
  - The full name of all authorized production units and processing facilities
  - The site addresses.
  - The parent company of the business at the site.
  - Type of products made.
  - Worker numbers at each site.
- **The Fashion Checker** tool shines a light on transparency and living wages in the fashion industry and allows you to see whether brands are paying their workers a living wage, and how transparent their supply chains are.

### Current campaigns

- The Council of Global Unions have adopted a **solidarity charter** for LGBTI workers, have a dedicated website **lgbtiworkers.org** and continue with efforts to improve working conditions.
- UNISON is partnering with the Corporate Justice Coalition's '**Failure to Prevent**' campaign which calls for legal reform in the

UK to hold multinationals and public services to account for human rights violations and environmental damage.

- The **#PayYourWorkers** Campaign is a global campaign to negotiate an enforceable agreement to support stronger social protections for workers, through the establishment of a Severance Guarantee fund.

### Media reports: Current issues in the garment industry

- **Garment Workers going hungry, as fallout from cancelled orders takes toll- report** (Guardian) Workers are being forced into debt and facing food shortages as suppliers to western fashion brands cut wages and close factories.
- **Government ‘must stop garment worker exploitation’** (BBC) 50 MPs and peers call on the home secretary urging her to do more to protect UK garment factory workers from exploitation.
- **Fashion’s dirty secret: how sexual assault took hold in jeans factories** (Guardian) Covid-19 is threatening to unravel hard-won gains against gender-based violence in the garment industry.

### Media Reports: LGBT+ garment workers

- **Primark’s Pride collection is made in countries where it’s illegal to be gay** (Pink News) Primark came under fire for producing their Pride collection in countries where it is illegal to be gay, and so did Stonewall, their charity partner.
- **Love In The Factories: Cambodia’s Underground LGBT Community** (Journeyman Pictures) Pressured into conforming to heterosexual expectations, many LGBT+ women seek refuge by going to work in garment factories.
- **Breaking taboos: Bangladesh’s Denim Expert Ltd. welcomes its first transgender employees** (Ethical Trading Initiative) A factory in Bangladesh is taking the first steps towards transgender inclusion.



## Section 2

### Template Ethical Procurement Policy

[Group name] exists to promote human rights and equality, and we therefore seek to source products and services in a way that promotes social justice and human rights.

Working conditions in the global manufacturing and service industries including garments, cleaning, security and catering are notorious for low wages, exploitation, and a lack of transparency. This policy provides a framework for [Group name] to work with brands/suppliers who are making progress on workers' rights in their supply chains.

#### Human Rights in Supply Chains

1. At a minimum, we require all suppliers that we work with to ensure that the following standards for workers' rights are being upheld along the supply chain of the products they sell:
  - Employment is freely chosen.
  - Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are respected.
  - Working conditions are safe and hygienic.
  - Child labour shall not be used.
  - Living wages are paid.
  - Working hours are not excessive.
  - No discrimination is practiced.
  - Regular employment is provided.
  - No harsh or inhumane treatment is allowed.

Where [group name] sources garments, merchandise or services, suppliers and brands should have a code of conduct that, at a minimum, includes workers' rights as outlined above. The code of conduct should apply to suppliers and subcontractors and engage the responsibility of the company, and not only that of its suppliers. Effective resolution, remediation, and grievance mechanisms should be in place for workers in case of violations to the code of conduct.

2. Knowing where products are made, and who made them, is an essential step to ensuring human rights in supply chains.
  - a. [Group name] requires all suppliers/brands to commit to transparency and to publish their full supply chain and make it available on the Open Apparel Registry.
  - b. [Group name] requires all suppliers/brands to align with the Transparency Pledge by publishing on their website a list naming all sites that manufacture its products on a regular basis (such as twice a year).
3. [Group name] will encourage multinational companies to enter into Global Framework Agreements with global trade union federations.
4. [Group name] will encourage all suppliers that we work with to implement LGBT+ inclusion policies to protect workers both in the UK and abroad.
5. [Group name] expects all suppliers/brands to be working towards paying all workers in their supply chain a living wage. This requires brands/suppliers to negotiate fair prices with their own suppliers and sub-contractors based on robust living wage benchmarks.
6. [Group name] will write to all suppliers/prospective suppliers outlining the expectations stated in this policy and requesting information about what action they take to ensure that workers' rights are respected along their supply chains.

7. Where violations are found in a supply chain, brands and suppliers should commit to working to improve the situation, rather than terminating contracts, or not sourcing from countries that criminalise LGBT+ rights, which may be detrimental to workers.
8. If existing suppliers fail to develop an action plan to remedy human rights violations, *[group name]* will take steps to implement a responsible exit strategy, and instead source from suppliers/brands who are taking steps towards ethical sourcing.
9. If prospective suppliers do not meet the above expectations, or have a commitment to work towards them, *[group name]* will not source from them, citing their failure to protect workers in their supply chain.
10. *[Group name]* will join forces with other community groups who use the same supplier/brand and use our collective power to strengthen calls for improvements.

## Human Rights in Services

A majority of service workers are undervalued low paid and part-time. Many are also marginalised as people of colour, migrant workers, women and/or LGBT+.

11. *[Group name]* commits to ensure chosen service providers promote LGBT+ inclusion by:
  - Implementing policies to protect staff from discrimination in line with the Equality Act 2010 and Gender Recognition Act 2004.
  - Ensuring that all staff, including leaders, managers, and supervisors, receive training on LGBT+ inclusion, including specific training on trans/ non-binary identities.
  - Implementing trans/ non-binary-affirmative training and policies such as gender-inclusive language, respecting pronouns and ensuring access to toilets and other facilities in line with gender identity.
  - Encouraging and supporting LGBT+ representation within staffing teams.
  - Encouraging and supporting LGBT+ staff networks and engaging with them on the needs of LGBT+ workers.
  - Creating processes to support staff to report workplace discrimination or hate crimes.
  - Running specific training on Trans/Non-Binary identities.
  - Developing guidelines around non-gendered language and use of pronouns.
  - Creating processes to support staff reporting of LGBT+ workers hate crimes.
12. *[Group name]* expects all service suppliers to be working towards paying all workers a living wage.
13. *[Group name]* will not contract security suppliers who have contracts associated with violence towards marginalised groups, for example security contracts with immigration detention centres.
14. UNISON research has highlighted how people who are marginalised in society are also marginalised in the workplace. For example, cleaners tend to remain with their employer for a long time but are rarely given development opportunities to progress into other roles. *[Group name]* will encourage their suppliers to offer staff development opportunities.
15. Pride marches take place on public highways cleaned by the relevant local authority. This service may be in-house, or it could be outsourced to a private contractor. *[Group name]* will engage with the local authority to understand who provides this service and what policies are in place to protect and support LGBT+ staff and the LGBT+ public.

## Climate Crisis and Human Rights

16. The current rates of consumption have an adverse effect on global human rights and the climate crisis. Therefore, we commit to only purchasing products or merchandise when deemed necessary to fulfil campaign aims.
17. All quotes for products will be compared based on their environmental and social impact, as well as price. Environmental and social impact will be given highest priority in sourcing.
18. Organic, fair trade and recycled products shall be sourced where available and not prohibitively expensive.

**Policy Reviewed by** *[Staff name]*

*[Date]*

**Agreed by the trustees/management committee**

*[Date]*.



## Section 3

### Template letter to current or prospective suppliers

Dear *[Supplier name]*,

*[Group name]* is an organisation campaigning for LGBT+ rights in the UK. As a social justice campaign group, we recognise our responsibility to ensure that human rights are upheld across all the work that we do, both in the UK and abroad. We believe that consumer actions have an impact on the improvement of workers' rights.

We therefore have a policy of contacting our own suppliers to ask about the policies they have in place to ensure workers' rights are respected within their internal operations and own supply chains.

As you are one of our *[prospective]* suppliers, we are contacting your company to ask what action you take to ensure that workers' rights are upheld in your supply chains. In particular, we would like to know:

- Do you, and any suppliers you work with, have a code of conduct that, at a minimum, includes the following international workers' standards:
  - Employment is freely chosen
  - Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are respected
  - Working conditions are safe and hygienic
  - Child labour shall not be used
  - Living wages are paid
  - Working hours are not excessive
  - No discrimination is practiced
  - Regular employment is provided
  - No harsh or inhumane treatment is allowed
- What action do you take to monitor workers' rights and compliance of codes of conduct in your supply chain?
- Where violations of the code of conduct are found, is there access to effective resolution, remediation, and grievance mechanisms for workers?
- Knowing where products are made, and who made them is an essential step to upholding human rights in supply chains.
  - Have you published your full supply chain and made it available on the **Open Apparel Registry**?
  - Have you aligned with **Transparency Pledge** standards by publishing on your website, an up-to-date list naming all sites that manufacture your products?
- What action are you taking to ensure that all workers in your own operations and your contracting supply chain are paid a living wage, based on recognised living wage benchmarks?
- Do you, and any suppliers you work with, have LGBT+ inclusion policies in place to protect workers?
- *[For multinational companies]* Have you entered into a Global Framework Agreement with a global trade union federation(s), ensuring that you adhere to the same standards in every country in which you operate?



- Are all your policies clearly communicated to all workers in your supply chain, including where relevant, in languages that reflect the nationalities of the migrant workers making or delivering your goods and services?
- What action do you take to ensure the workers you employ or contract to deliver services, including security, catering or cleaning are not discriminated against?

If you haven't begun to work on this issue, please see this letter as an encouragement to do so.

We urge you, at a minimum, to inform your suppliers that the implementation of international workers' standards is an important part of fulfilling their contract, ask your suppliers how they meet these standards and for them to ask the same questions of their suppliers.

Violations of the expectations outlined in this letter will unfortunately be found within most supply chains, and such violations are best resolved through positive action done in cooperation with your supplier.

Where violations are found you should work with your suppliers to develop a plan to improve the situation. We explicitly do not want you to stop sourcing where conditions are poor as this would be detrimental to the workers producing the goods.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



## Section 4

### Template letter to current or prospective suppliers of services

Dear *[Supplier name]*,

*[Group name]* is an organisation campaigning for LGBT+ rights in the UK. As a social justice campaign group, we recognise our responsibility to ensure that human rights are upheld across all the work that we do, both in the UK and abroad. We believe that consumer actions have an impact on the improvement of workers' rights.

We therefore have a policy of contacting our own suppliers to ask about the policies they have in place to ensure workers' rights are respected within their internal operations and those of their contractors.

As you are one of our *[prospective]* service suppliers, we are contacting your company to ask what action you take to ensure that workers' rights are upheld. In particular, we would like to know:

- Do you, and any suppliers you work with have a code of conduct that, at a minimum, includes the following international workers' standards:
  - Employment is freely chosen
  - Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are respected
  - Working conditions are safe and hygienic
  - Child labour shall not be used
  - Living wages are paid
  - Working hours are not excessive
  - No discrimination is practiced
  - Regular employment is provided
  - No harsh or inhumane treatment is allowed
- What action do you take to monitor workers' rights and compliance of codes of conduct in your own operations and contracting?
- Where violations of the code of conduct are found, is there access to effective resolution, remediation, and grievance mechanisms for workers?
- What action are you taking to ensure that all workers in your own operations and contracting are paid a living wage, based on recognised living wage benchmarks?
- Do you, and any suppliers you work with, have LGBT+ inclusion policies in place to protect workers?
- *[For multinational companies]* Have you entered into a Global Framework Agreement with a global trade union federation(s), ensuring that you adhere to the same standards in every country in which you operate?
- Are all your policies clearly communicated to all workers including in languages that reflect where relevant, the nationalities of the migrant workers making or delivering your goods and services?
- What action do you take to ensure the workers you employ or contract to deliver services, including security, catering or cleaning are not discriminated against?

If you haven't begun to work on this issue, please see this letter as an encouragement to do so.

We urge you, at a minimum, to implement LGBT+ inclusion policies to protect and support your LGBT+ staff; work towards paying the real Living Wage and provide development opportunities for employees including those from marginalised groups.

Where violations of workers' rights are found you should work internally and with relevant contracted suppliers to develop a plan to improve the situation.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

