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UK CLOTHING MANUFACTURING • LOW MOQ • PRIVATE LABEL

CLOTHING BRAND LAUNCH CHECKLIST

68 Action Items • 6 Sequential Phases • 20–26 Week Timeline

Free Download • 2026 Edition

How to Use This Checklist

Each item has one of three states: Not Started / In Progress / Complete. Work each item to Complete before treating the phase as done.

Phase dependencies are strict. Do not begin Phase 3 without Phase 2 substantially complete. Do not begin Phase 5 without Phase 4 substantially complete.

Build your timeline backward from your target launch date. Add 20 to 26 weeks before that date as your project start.

KEY FACTS

- A clothing brand launch has 6 sequential phases — each must be substantially complete before the next begins
- The most common launch failure: starting Phase 3 (manufacturing) before Phase 2 (product development) is finished
- Allow 20 to 26 weeks minimum from a standing start to first delivery for a UK private label launch
- This checklist covers 68 action items across 6 phases — each item has a clear completion state
- Reserve 25 to 30% of your total budget as a reorder fund before placing the first production order

PHASE 1 LEGAL AND BUSINESS SETUP

Estimated time: 1–3 weeks

Complete before any product spend begins. This phase creates the legal and financial infrastructure your brand runs on.

Business Structure

- Decision made: sole trader vs limited company
Limited company recommended for brand protection and investor readiness
- Limited company registered at Companies House — £12 to £50 online, 24-hour turnaround
- Business bank account opened in company name
- Bookkeeping software set up (Xero, QuickBooks, or FreeAgent)
- VAT registration assessed — mandatory above £90,000 turnover threshold

Intellectual Property

- Brand name researched — check UKIPO register before committing to a name
- UK trademark application filed — Class 25 (clothing), £170 UKIPO fee, 4–6 months to registration
- Domain name secured — .co.uk and .com minimum
- Social media handles secured across all target platforms before brand name is public

Legal Documents

- Privacy Policy drafted and reviewed — UK GDPR compliant under UK GDPR / Data Protection Act 2018
- Terms and Conditions drafted for e-commerce store
- Returns Policy drafted — compliant with Consumer Rights Act 2015 (14-day return right for online purchases)
- Cookie policy in place if website collects data
- Accountant or bookkeeper engaged

PHASE 2 PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Estimated time: 4–8 weeks

Complete before approaching any manufacturer. The tech pack must be 100% complete before any factory is briefed.

Product Definition

- Hero style confirmed — one style, one fabric family, one target customer occasion
- Target retail price (RRP) confirmed
- Unit cost target calculated — landed cost must leave minimum 55% gross margin at launch MOQ
- Size range confirmed for launch — start narrow (e.g. XS–XL) and expand on reorder
- Launch colourway confirmed — one colourway only for first run

Tech Pack

The tech pack is the single most important document in your launch. Every checkbox in this section must be Complete before approaching a manufacturer.

- Tech pack brief written — garment type, construction approach, key measurements
- Tech pack designer engaged — freelance (£150–£500 per style) or in-house if qualified
- Technical flat drawings completed — front, back, detail views
- Measurements and size specifications documented
- Fabric specification confirmed — weight, composition, certification requirements
- Construction details specified — seam type, stitch density, hem finish
- Label and trim placement confirmed
- Artwork files prepared — print, embroidery, or woven label artwork in correct file format
- Tech pack reviewed and approved — every field complete before sending to factory

Fabric and Trims

- Fabric sourced or confirmed from factory stock
Do not proceed to manufacturer briefing without fabric direction confirmed
- Fabric sample ordered and assessed — weight, hand feel, drape, colour
- Trim specifications confirmed — zips, buttons, elastic, hardware if applicable
- Woven label design approved — fibre content, care instructions, country of origin, brand name
- Swing tag designed
- Packaging spec confirmed — polybag, tissue, mailer box or equivalent

Compliance

- Fibre content label confirmed compliant with Textile Products (Labelling and Fibre Composition) Regulations 2012
- Care instruction symbols confirmed — ISO 3758 standard
- Country of manufacture label confirmed — required on all UK garments
- Any sustainability claims verified and documented — GOTS, OEKO-TEX, WRAP if applicable

PHASE 3 MANUFACTURING

Estimated time: 12–18 weeks including sampling

Begin only when tech pack is complete and approved. This is the longest phase. Do not compress it by skipping sampling rounds.

Manufacturer Selection

- Manufacturer type confirmed — CMT or full-service based on your fabric sourcing capability
- Shortlist of three UK manufacturers identified — UKFT member directory is primary reference
- Initial enquiry sent with tech pack, target MOQ, and timeline
No manufacturer approached without a complete tech pack
- Quotes received and compared — unit cost, MOQ, sampling cost, lead time
- Reference check completed — request production examples at your volume tier
- Manufacturer selected and confirmed

Sampling

Budget for 2 to 3 sampling rounds. First samples are almost never approved without changes. Never approve a sample you would not sell at full price.

- NDA signed with selected manufacturer before tech pack is shared
- Sampling deposit paid — confirm amount in writing before any work begins
- Proto sample submitted and reviewed against tech pack — every deviation documented in writing
- Proto feedback sent to factory in writing — annotated images, numbered change list
- Fit sample produced and assessed on correct body — fit model booked if needed
- Fit sample feedback documented and sent — no verbal-only feedback
- Pre-production (PP) sample produced in confirmed production fabric and trims
- PP sample reviewed and approved — confirm every detail matches tech pack
- PP sample sealed — brand signs, factory countersigns, reference number allocated
- PP sample reference number included in purchase order

Production

- Purchase order drafted — unit price, total value, MOQ, payment schedule, lead time, delivery date, QC standard, PP sample reference, IP ownership clause
- Purchase order signed by both parties
- Production deposit paid — typically 50%, confirm trigger for balance payment
- Production start date confirmed in writing
- Mid-production QC check scheduled — approximately 30% through production run
- Mid-production QC completed — results documented

- Final QC completed on finished units before despatch — inspected against sealed PP sample
- Balance payment made on QC approval — not on despatch
- Delivery confirmed — address, courier, tracking

Labels and Packaging

- Woven labels ordered — minimum order quantities confirmed; ordered before production begins
- Swing tags printed and delivered
- Tissue paper, polybags, mailer boxes ordered and delivered
- All packaging received before delivery of production run

PHASE 4 BRAND AND DIGITAL

Estimated time: 4–8 weeks

Can run in parallel with Phase 3 from Week 4 onward. Complete brand identity before photography.

Brand Identity

- Brand name finalised — trademark application filed or pending
- Logo design complete — primary, secondary, and favicon versions
- Brand colour palette confirmed — HEX, RGB, CMYK values documented
- Typography selected — primary and secondary typefaces
- Brand guidelines documented — minimum one-page style guide

E-Commerce Store

- Platform selected — Shopify recommended for DTC clothing brands
- Domain connected to store
- Theme selected and customised — mobile-first review essential
- Product pages set up — title, description, size guide, care instructions
- Shipping rates configured — UK standard, express, and international if applicable
- Payment gateway connected and tested — test transaction completed
- Returns policy page live and linked from footer
- Privacy policy and cookie policy live
- Terms and conditions live
- Email capture form live — pop-up or footer
- Email marketing platform connected — Klaviyo or Mailchimp recommended
- Welcome email sequence set up — minimum three emails: welcome, brand story, product education
- Store tested on mobile — product page, checkout, confirmation email

Product Photography

- Photographer booked — half day minimum for a single-style launch
- Styling brief prepared — model, location, props, lighting direction
- Shot list confirmed — front, back, detail, lifestyle, flat lay minimum
- Photography completed and edited
- Images uploaded to store — minimum four images per product variant
- Images sized and compressed for web — under 500KB without quality loss

PHASE 5 PRE-LAUNCH MARKETING

Estimated time: 6–8 weeks

Begin 6 to 8 weeks before launch date. Runs in parallel with Phases 3 and 4.

Audience Building

- Instagram account live — bio, link, and highlight covers set up
- TikTok account live if target audience is under 35
- Content calendar created — minimum 4 weeks of planned posts before launch
- Behind-the-scenes content filmed and edited — manufacturing, packaging, founder story
- Pre-launch countdown content planned
- Email waitlist promoted — target minimum 200 subscribers before launch day
- Pre-launch giveaway or offer defined — incentivises sign-up without devaluing the product

Influencer and PR

- Micro-influencer shortlist built — 5 to 10 accounts in your niche, 5k to 50k followers, genuine engagement
- Gifting brief prepared — product, brand story, content guidelines, posting window
- Gifting packages sent — timed to arrive 2 weeks before launch for content creation
- Press contacts identified — relevant fashion editors, bloggers, online publications
- Press release drafted — 300 words, product focus, founder story, launch date, image attached
- Press release sent — 3 to 4 weeks before launch date

Paid Advertising

- Meta Business Manager set up — Facebook and Instagram ads
- Pixel / Meta Conversion API installed on store — tracks purchases, add-to-cart, page views
- Awareness campaign prepared — creative assets, audience, budget, and dates confirmed
- Retargeting campaign prepared — for website visitors who do not convert on first visit
- Budget confirmed — minimum £300 for a 30-day launch window; £600–£1,000 for meaningful data

PHASE 6 LAUNCH WEEK

Estimated time: 7 days before and after launch

Set your public launch date only after your factory delivery is confirmed in writing.

Pre-Launch (Days -7 to -1)

- Stock confirmed received and quality checked against PP sample
- All units packed and ready for despatch — polybags, swing tags, tissue, mailer
- Store set to password-protected with coming-soon page
- Email to waitlist scheduled — to send at launch time
- Social posts scheduled for launch day — minimum three posts across channels
- Influencer content confirmed — posts scheduled to go live on launch day
- Ad campaigns set to launch on launch day
- Shipping labels system tested — print one test label
- Customer service email set up and monitored — response time target confirmed
- Google Analytics or Shopify Analytics confirmed tracking

Launch Day

- Store password removed — site goes live
- Email to waitlist sent at launch time
- Social posts published
- Ads activated
- First orders monitored — check checkout process, confirmation emails, payment processing
- First despatch completed — same day or next working day

Post-Launch (Days +1 to +7)

- Daily sell-through tracked — units sold vs units available
- Customer feedback monitored — returns reason, sizing comments, product queries
- Ad performance reviewed daily — cost per click, cost per purchase, ROAS
- Email open and click rates reviewed
- Reorder trigger assessed — is sell-through on track for 60%+ in 90 days?
- Factory reorder conversation initiated if sell-through is on track

Timeline Overview

PHASE	DURATION	DEPENDENCY
Phase 1 — Legal and Business Setup	1–3 weeks	None — start here
Phase 2 — Product Development	4–8 weeks	Phase 1 complete
Phase 3 — Manufacturing	12–18 weeks	Phase 2 complete
Phase 4 — Brand and Digital	4–8 weeks	Can begin from Phase 3 Week 4
Phase 5 — Pre-Launch Marketing	6–8 weeks	Phase 4 substantially complete
Phase 6 — Launch Week	1–2 weeks	Phase 3 delivery confirmed
TOTAL MINIMUM	20–26 weeks	Plan backward from launch date

Top 5 Launch Mistakes to Avoid

1	Starting manufacturing before the tech pack is complete A manufacturer who receives an incomplete brief produces a sample to their assumptions. Correction rounds add 4 to 6 weeks.
2	Ordering packaging after production is delivered Production arrives. Mailer boxes take 3 weeks to print. Brand cannot despatch. Order all packaging at the point of production confirmation.
3	Building the store after photography Shooting without a confirmed brand identity produces images that need to be reshot. Finalise brand identity before booking the photographer.
4	Launching without an email list A brand launching to zero subscribers is entirely dependent on expensive cold paid advertising. Build the email waitlist 6 to 8 weeks before launch.
5	No reorder reserve in the launch budget A brand that spends its entire budget on the first run has no capital to reorder when the style sells through. Reserve 25 to 30% as a reorder fund.

Sources and References

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