



ukft[®]

Building a stronger future for UK fashion and textiles

UKFT Impact Report 2025

www.ukft.org

UKFT is dedicated to supporting the growth of member businesses and enabling the UK fashion and textile industry to meet future challenges and global opportunities

Contents

4	<u>Executive summary</u>
5	<u>Championing our industry: Voice of UK fashion and textiles</u>
9	<u>UKFT Membership: The largest network for fashion and textiles in the UK</u>
14	<u>International business: Championing UK fashion and textiles on the global stage</u>
18	<u>Regulation & Compliance</u>
22	<u>Skills and training: Supporting industry through action</u>
26	<u>Innovation & Sustainability: Driving positive change</u>
31	<u>Annual accounts</u>

UKFT activity highlights:

The year in numbers

Visited 7 manufacturers with
the **UKFT President, HRH
The Princess Royal**



80+
member spotlights



115+
member visits

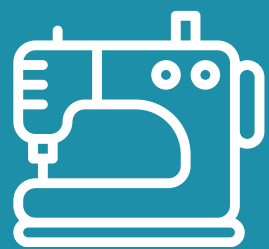


3600+
people attended
UKFT events



139

Production Sewing
Machinist learners



250+

Sustainability Conference
delegates

76%

rate UKFT as their main
sustainability information source



110+

new members join the UKFT network



£250k

annual bursary
programme

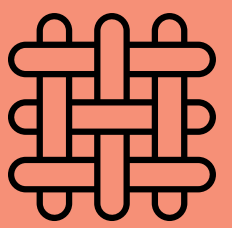
600+

UK brands and
companies supported
internationally



100+

Weaving Dinner
attendees



50

prisons engaged

Executive summary

2025 was a challenging year for the UK fashion and textile industry. Businesses continued to navigate economic uncertainty, geopolitical instability, changing international trade arrangements, growing regulatory requirements and persistent skills shortages. Against this backdrop, UKFT focused on providing practical support to members as they navigated a volatile and rapidly evolving regulatory landscape, while representing the industry’s interests to policymakers and regulators in the UK and internationally.

Government engagement remained high throughout the year. UKFT contributed to a wide range of consultations, parliamentary inquiries and policy discussions covering trade, manufacturing, sustainability, skills, procurement and industrial strategy. We worked closely with ministers, officials and international partners to ensure the needs of the fashion and textile sector are reflected in developing policy, while continuing to press for greater recognition of the industry's contribution to the UK economy.

Supporting members through a rapidly changing regulatory landscape has become an increasingly important part of our work. Businesses rely on UKFT for practical guidance on international trade, product compliance, sustainability legislation, packaging legislation, product safety, labelling, tariffs and market access. Alongside tailored one-to-one support, we expanded our programme of technical guidance, webinars and member resources to help businesses

understand and respond to new requirements across UK and international markets.

International trade remained a key priority. UKFT supported hundreds of UK brands, manufacturers and textile companies through overseas trade events, market development activity and export advice, while working with government and overseas partners to improve market access and strengthen export opportunities. At the same time, we provided members with practical support on the impact of changing tariff regimes, new customs requirements and evolving international regulations.

Developing the industry's future workforce also remained central to our activity. As the Government-appointed Sector Skills Body, UKFT has continued to influence skills policy, develop new qualifications, expand vocational training and strengthen links between education and industry. Our bursary programmes, Production Sewing Machinist training, careers initiatives and partnerships with universities, colleges and employers are helping create new routes into employment while supporting businesses to develop the skilled workforce they need.

Sustainability and innovation continue to shape the future of the industry. During the year, UKFT completed major collaborative projects including the Circular Fashion Innovation Network (CFIN) and ACT UK, published the National Textile

Recycling Infrastructure Plan and expanded practical sustainability support for members through guidance, webinars, research and one-to-one advice. This work is helping businesses respond to changing legislation while supporting investment in circularity, responsible manufacturing and new technologies.

Membership continued to grow across every part of the supply chain, with businesses joining from, fashion, retail, textiles, manufacturing, education, recycling, innovation and professional services. Throughout the year we strengthened opportunities for members to connect through events, webinars, networking, industry visits and specialist forums, while continuing to promote members' achievements and share opportunities across the wider sector.

Across all areas of our work, the focus has remained consistent: providing practical support that helps businesses respond to immediate challenges while contributing to longer-term improvements across the UK fashion and textile industry. Whether influencing government policy, supporting exporters, developing skills, helping businesses navigate regulation or leading collaborative innovation projects, UKFT continues to provide the expertise, representation and industry connections that members rely on.

Chapter 1

Championing our industry: Voice of UK fashion and textiles



Royal visit to Pincroft, September 2025

Government engagement remained high throughout 2025, with UKFT representing members across trade, manufacturing, sustainability and skills policy. We responded to consultations, met ministers and officials, contributed evidence to parliamentary inquiries and worked with partners in the UK and internationally to ensure the industry's priorities are reflected in policy.



UKFT Royal visit to Fermoie

GOVERNMENT POLICY AND INDUSTRY REPRESENTATION

UKFT maintained regular dialogue with ministers, officials and policymakers across government, ensuring the views of the fashion and textile industry are represented as new policies are developed.

We submitted evidence to HM Treasury's Spending Review and later to the 2025 Budget, setting out how investment in manufacturing, exports, innovation and skills could support economic growth and strengthen UK supply chains. Our recommendations included increased export support, capital investment for manufacturers, procurement reform, improved research and development funding, and the introduction of a VATRES scheme.

We also responded to a wide range of government consultations covering public procurement, apprenticeship reform, defence strategy, further education, intellectual property, design protection, de minimis imports and textile regulation.

Following the cabinet reshuffle, UKFT wrote to new ministers across the Department for Business and Trade, DEFRA and the Department for Work and Pensions, setting out the sector's priorities, including improved export support, reform of the skills system and the introduction of a UK textiles Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme.

Although government published several new strategies during the year, there has been limited practical support for the sector. UKFT continues to press for greater recognition of fashion and textiles as a major contributor to the UK economy.

TRADE AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY

Trade policy has remained a major focus. UKFT worked closely with government on negotiations and consultations relating to the UK's trading relationships with the European Union, the United States, India, South Korea and Canada. We also engaged on developments affecting US tariffs, de minimis rules and wider international trade policy.

The UK-India Free Trade Agreement was a significant area of work. UKFT pressed for rules of origin that better support UK manufacturing and secured improvements in this area. However, the agreement is still expected to provide greater benefits for Indian exporters than UK manufacturers.

We also continued to make the case for UK membership of the Pan-Euro-Mediterranean (PEM) Convention, highlighting the advantages that harmonised rules of origin would bring to exporters. Government launched a consultation on PEM membership, and UKFT submitted a detailed response while encouraging members and European partners to do the same.

Alongside this work, we raised concerns about businesses having to comply with both UK and EU regulations, contributed to discussions on forced labour legislation and Digital Product Passports, and ensured industry concerns are reflected as new regulatory frameworks develop.



UKFT Royal visit to Edge o' Beyond

SUSTAINABILITY AND THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

UKFT continued to lead discussions on the development of a UK textiles Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme. Working with DEFRA and organisations including the British Retail Consortium, British Fashion Council and WRAP, we supported the introduction of an eco-modulated EPR system that encourages better product design and greater investment in textile collection and recycling.

We also contributed to discussions on industrial decarbonisation and the Government's Circular Economy Strategy. Although publication of the strategy was delayed, we remained engaged with DEFRA as the policy develops. During the year UKFT launched the National Textile Recycling Infrastructure Plan, setting out the investment needed to build a stronger UK recycling system.

Internationally, UKFT also responded to the United Nations Environment Programme's draft Global Guidelines on Used Textiles, highlighting concerns about their potential impact on the UK's reuse and recycling sector.

SKILLS

Skills remain a major priority for the industry. UKFT submitted evidence to parliamentary inquiries on further education, responded to consultations on apprenticeship reform and met ministers to discuss changes that would better reflect employers' needs.

The Industrial Strategy included welcome proposals to make apprenticeship funding more flexible, particularly through support for shorter technical courses. However, further reform is needed if the skills system is to meet the needs of businesses across the fashion and textile supply chain. Following responsibility for work-based learning moving to the Department for Work and Pensions, UKFT also submitted detailed proposals aimed at improving the current system.

MANUFACTURING AND PROCUREMENT

Supporting UK manufacturing remained central to our policy work. UKFT has argued consistently for procurement policies that make better use of UK manufacturers, particularly within defence, healthcare and technical textiles.

We submitted evidence to the Government Defence Strategy, worked with the Department for Business and Trade to bring together technical textile manufacturers supplying defence markets, and explored opportunities arising from the Defence Industrial Strategy.

At the same time, we raised concerns that recent government initiatives, including the British Industrial Competitiveness Scheme and elements of the Post-16 Skills White Paper, exclude much of the fashion and textile sector because support is limited to the government's priority industries. We are continuing to make the case for broader eligibility. As more funding is devolved to combined authorities, UKFT is also increasing engagement with regional and local government to help members access new funding opportunities.

WORKING WITH INDUSTRY PARTNERS

UKFT remains an active member of Euratex, contributing to the development of European policy on trade, sustainability and regulation. We also work closely with the American Apparel and Footwear Association (AAFA), sharing intelligence on legislative developments affecting global supply chains.

These relationships help ensure that UK businesses are represented as international regulation evolves.

SUPPORTING MEMBERS

During the year, Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal, President of UKFT, visited member companies across the UK to recognise the contribution they make to British manufacturing.

Visits included Toray Textiles Europe in Mansfield, LLUK in Berkshire, Fermoie in Wiltshire, Edge o' Beyond in South Wales, Pincroft in Lancashire, British Wool in Devon and Edward Green in Northampton. Together they showcase the breadth of UK manufacturing, from technical textiles and defence to luxury fashion, footwear and natural fibres.

These visits provide an opportunity to recognise investment, innovation, craftsmanship and the skilled workforce that underpins the UK's fashion and textile industry.

ONGOING PRIORITIES

Government continues to seek UKFT's input on a wide range of policy areas, particularly trade, sustainability, manufacturing and skills. While this provides opportunities to influence policy, there is still limited direct support available for much of the sector.

Our priorities include securing better support for manufacturers and exporters, influencing the development of a UK textiles EPR, promoting UK membership of the PEM Convention, improving skills policy and ensuring fashion and textiles are recognised within future industrial and economic policy.

We will continue to represent members' interests across government and work with industry partners in the UK and internationally to ensure the sector's voice is heard.

Chapter 2

UKFT Membership: The largest network for fashion and textiles in the UK





UKFT member: Tera Mira



UKFT member: Seasalt

UKFT membership continued to grow throughout the year, with businesses from every part of the fashion and textile supply chain joining our network. New members ranged from global brands and manufacturers to independent designers, colleges, recycling businesses and specialist service providers, reflecting the breadth of the industry we represent. We launched dedicated membership categories for reuse and recycling and innovation businesses.

Alongside welcoming new members, our focus remained on providing practical support, creating opportunities to connect with peers and keeping businesses informed about the latest developments affecting the sector.

GROWING OUR MEMBERSHIP

We were pleased to welcome a wide range of new members during the year, including Passenger Clothing, J Barbour & Sons, Frahm Jacket, Nobody's Child, Ann Summers, Liberty London, Montane, Elizabeth Scarlett, Fanatics, lululemon, Beyond Retro, DeMellier, New Era, Royal College of Art, The University of Manchester, The Manchester College and many others. New members also joined from the growing textile reuse and recycling sector, alongside manufacturers and suppliers.

The continued growth of our membership reflects the value businesses place on practical advice, technical expertise, networking opportunities and representation across the industry.

SUPPORTING MEMBERS

Throughout the year we worked closely with members on a wide range of business challenges, providing advice on compliance, sustainability, international trade, manufacturing, skills and business growth.

Member feedback consistently highlighted the value of having direct access to specialist expertise and practical guidance. Businesses particularly valued support on product compliance, labelling, tariffs, sustainability, international regulations and day-to-day technical enquiries, alongside introductions to other members and industry contacts.

Many members also highlighted the importance of being part of a wider community, particularly smaller businesses and independent brands, who welcomed opportunities to connect with peers, share experiences and build new commercial relationships.

VISITING MEMBERS ACROSS THE UK

Face-to-face engagement remained an important part of our membership activity. During the year, the UKFT team visited well over 100 member businesses in their factories, studios, offices and retail locations across the UK. These visits provide valuable opportunities to understand members' priorities, discuss current challenges and identify where additional support is needed.

We also attended a wide range of industry events throughout the year, meeting members and representing the sector at exhibitions, conferences and trade events across the UK.

SHARING MEMBER NEWS

One of the most popular areas of member communications continues to be our member spotlights. Across the year we published more than 80 features celebrating members' achievements, including product launches, investment, sustainability initiatives, awards, business milestones, leadership appointments and manufacturing developments.

We also shared news of King's Award winners, Royal visits, business expansions, new collections, innovative products, training initiatives and investment in UK manufacturing, helping members raise their profile across the wider industry.

EVENTS AND NETWORKING

Bringing members together remained a major focus. During the year we hosted a wide range of networking events, conferences and roundtables covering sustainability, manufacturing, marketing, policy and regulation.

Highlights included the Sustainability Conference: Innovation in Action, attended by more than 250 delegates, the Weaving networking dinner in Bradford with more than 100 attendees, regular textile industry roundtables, our first Policy & Regulation roundtable for larger businesses and retail partners, and dedicated discussions for the textile reuse and recycling sector.

These events provided opportunities for members to exchange ideas, hear from industry experts and discuss the issues affecting their businesses.

WEBINARS AND RESOURCES

Our webinar programme continued to expand throughout the year. We delivered webinars covering topics including climate reporting, energy management, colour and trend forecasting, international trade, Première Vision, currency risk, product compliance, the EU General Product Safety Regulation (GPSR), the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR), Digital Product Passports, Better Cotton, GOTS certification and exporting to new international markets. Alongside webinars, members received practical guidance, templates and technical resources covering funding opportunities, trade agreements, compliance, testing, exporting, sustainability and business best practice.

MARKETING SUPPORT

In response to member feedback, we launched the Small Marketing Team Network for businesses with limited marketing resources.

The programme combines in-person events with monthly online Marketing Mornings, providing practical advice, peer discussion and updates on marketing trends. Sessions during the year covered artificial intelligence, workload management, public relations and content planning, giving members practical ideas they could apply within their own businesses.

UKFT member: Roberts Recycling



UKFT Member: Peter Reed

BUSINESS UPDATES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Keeping members informed remains one of our core services. Throughout the year we published regular updates covering changes in UK and international legislation, trade agreements, tax, employment regulation, consumer protection, product safety, environmental policy and international compliance.

Members also received information on grants, innovation funding, accelerator programmes, trade missions, exhibitions, awards, networking events and export opportunities, helping businesses identify new sources of funding, partnerships and commercial growth.

Trend forecasting also remained a valued benefit, with members continuing to access colour and textile forecasts from Peclers Paris through both physical trend books and the Peclers+ online platform.

REUSE AND RECYCLING MEMBERSHIP

During the year we launched a dedicated membership category for businesses working in textile reuse, recycling and circular innovation. Developed in response to growing demand from this part of the industry, the new category brings together collectors, sorters, graders, recyclers, upcyclers and technology providers. Members benefit from support on regulation, funding, infrastructure, compliance and policy, while brands gain access to a growing network of organisations helping to develop more circular supply chains.

The launch builds on UKFT's wider work through initiatives including ACT UK, the Circular Fashion Innovation Network and our partnership with the Textiles Recycling Expo.

NEW WAYS TO CONNECT

This year also saw the launch of the Grow Your UK Fashion & Textile Business podcast and video series, providing members with practical advice and insight from UKFT specialists and industry experts.

Alongside our newsletters, webinars, events and online resources, the series offers another way for members to access information and stay connected with the work of the association.

MEMBER FEEDBACK

The feedback we receive continues to show that members value practical advice, responsive support and opportunities to connect with others across the industry.

Businesses consistently tell us they appreciate having direct access to specialists, timely guidance on complex regulations and introductions that lead to new partnerships and commercial opportunities. Others highlight the reassurance of having an organisation they can contact for trusted advice as regulations evolve and business conditions change.

As our membership continues to grow, we remain focused on providing practical support, creating valuable connections and ensuring members have access to the expertise, information and representation they need to succeed.

Chapter 3

International business



UKFT team at VIATT Vietnam

International trade remained one of the busiest areas of UKFT's work during the year, as businesses navigated changing trade policy, new regulations and increasingly uncertain global markets.

Alongside promoting UK fashion and textiles overseas, we worked closely with members to address practical export challenges, provided guidance on evolving regulations and represented the industry's interests in discussions with government.

TRADE POLICY AND EXPORT SUPPORT

UKFT has continued to work closely with government on a wide range of trade issues, including negotiations with the European Union, India, Canada, the Gulf Cooperation Council and South Korea.

Although engagement with ministers and officials has been positive, progress has been slower than many businesses had hoped. Funding remains one of the biggest challenges. While government recognises the value of export support, grants for international trade activity remain limited, reducing opportunities for businesses to access overseas markets.

UKFT has continued to make the case for greater investment in export support through discussions with government and Export Partners UK. During the year we met newly elected MPs, provided parliamentary briefings and contributed to reviews of UK trade policy, ensuring the needs of fashion and textile businesses are reflected in policy discussions.

There has also been progress in a number of areas. Following discussions with UKFT, the British Embassy in Tokyo now has dedicated fashion expertise, supporting greater engagement with Japanese buyers and retailers.



Intertextile Shanghai Apparel Fabrics, September 2025

SUPPORTING UK BUSINESSES OVERSEAS

Despite a difficult trading environment, UKFT maintained an extensive programme of international promotion through our Discover British Brands and Discover British Textiles campaigns.

During the year we supported UK companies at major trade events across Europe, North America and Asia, including Pitti Uomo, Paris Fashion Week, Milano Unica, Première Vision Paris, Chicago Collective, Intertextile Shanghai, VIATT Vietnam, JITAC Tokyo and A Fabric Affair in New York.

Across these events, hundreds of UK brands, manufacturers and textile companies exhibited their products to international buyers. Embassy visits, ministerial engagement and targeted promotional activity helped raise the profile of British fashion and textiles in key export markets.

Funding uncertainty meant our programme had to be adapted during the year. While Department for Business and Trade support was available for a limited number of fashion events, we secured additional funding from the Worshipful Company of Clothworkers to support UK textile companies to continue to have a presence in important international markets.

At Intertextile Shanghai and Première Vision Paris, UKFT coordinated Discover British Textiles stands showcasing the capabilities of UK manufacturers, while our Discover British Brands in Paris initiative helped more than 100 British fashion brands increase their visibility during Paris Fashion Week.

De minimis risk: The US De Minimis rule — which allows goods valued under \$800/day to enter duty-free - is under review. UKFT has warned for some time that the exemption may be reduced or withdrawn, which would significantly affect UK brands using this route for B2B shipping.

MARKET CONDITIONS

Trading conditions remained challenging throughout the year.

US tariffs, changes to the US De Minimis rules and wider geopolitical uncertainty created significant disruption for exporters. Businesses sought advice on landed pricing, customs procedures, rules of origin and changes to shipping arrangements, particularly for exports to the United States.

UKFT provided regular updates to members while also feeding industry concerns back to government. One-to-one support increased significantly as companies assessed the impact of new tariffs and reviewed their export strategies. Interest in the European market also increased as businesses looked to diversify away from the US. However, many exporters continue to face the practical challenges created by the current UK-EU trading arrangements.

Market conditions varied across regions. Demand remained strong in parts of Europe and North America, with encouraging signs from Japan, while China continued to present significant challenges. Interest also grew in the Middle East, where UKFT began developing new relationships and opportunities for members.

HELPING MEMBERS NAVIGATE REGULATION

International regulation continued to evolve rapidly.

The EU General Product Safety Regulation (GPSR) remained one of the most significant issues affecting exporters to Europe. UKFT worked extensively with members to explain the new requirements, correcting government guidance where necessary and developing practical compliance solutions with industry partners.

We also provided guidance on Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) proposals, explaining likely implementation timescales and ongoing discussions at European level.

During the year UKFT published a series of practical resources for members, including guidance on the UK-India Trade Agreement, the end of the US De Minimis rule, US e-filing requirements and updates to UK-EU-US trade guidance.

BUILDING NEW INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Alongside supporting established export markets, UKFT expanded its work to identify new commercial opportunities for members.

We worked with government and overseas partners on plans for trade missions to Japan and explored opportunities in Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Morocco, Egypt, Ethiopia and Jordan.

Our sourcing visits were developed in response to changing global supply chains, helping brands identify alternative manufacturing partners while strengthening relationships with suppliers in emerging production markets.

UKFT also strengthened relationships with British embassies and trade teams in key markets including Tokyo, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Ho Chi Minh City, Milan, Paris, Madrid, Warsaw and Prague, creating new opportunities for members and improving access to local market intelligence.

DELIVERING RESULTS FOR MEMBERS

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UKFT also strengthened relationships with British embassies and trade teams in key markets including Tokyo, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Ho Chi Minh City, Milan, Paris, Madrid, Warsaw and Prague, creating new opportunities for members and improving access to local market intelligence.

CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR EXPORTERS

Demand for export advice has continued to grow as businesses adapt to changing market conditions.

Members increasingly seek support on customs procedures, tariffs, compliance, sourcing, market entry and international regulations. Our role has expanded beyond organising trade activity to providing practical advice that helps businesses make informed commercial decisions in an increasingly complex trading environment.

Alongside our overseas programme, we will continue working with government, embassies and international partners to improve market access, strengthen export support and ensure UK fashion and textile businesses are well represented in key international markets.

Chapter 4

Regulation & Compliance



Keeping up with changing regulation remains one of the biggest challenges facing fashion and textile businesses. During the year, UKFT expanded its compliance support, helping members understand new legislation, meet regulatory requirements and prepare for future changes across the UK and international markets.

Alongside providing day-to-day technical advice, we worked with policymakers, regulators and industry organisations to ensure members' views were represented as new legislation was developed.

SUPPORTING MEMBERS

Demand for compliance support continued to grow throughout the year, with members seeking advice on an increasingly wide range of regulatory issues.

Our team provided guidance on product labelling, packaging and textile Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes, product testing, chemical and safety requirements, import and export regulations, certificates of conformity and international standards.

We also continued to advise businesses on global labelling requirements, including care labelling, fibre composition, environmental labelling, safety warnings and country-specific requirements, as well as supporting members with GINETEX licensing and translations.

In addition, members received practical advice on product testing, helping businesses meet regulatory requirements while reducing unnecessary testing costs, customer complaints and product returns.

GUIDANCE AND RESOURCES

Throughout the year we published a wide range of member guides and technical resources covering major regulatory developments.

These included guidance on the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), the EU General Product Safety Regulation (GPSR), Certificates of Conformity, flammability testing, UK pricing compliance, sustainability certifications, non-preferential certificates of origin, the end of the US and EU De Minimis rules, the Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition Directive and the new EU Waste Framework Directive introducing mandatory textile EPR schemes.

Regular business updates also covered wider regulatory developments, including US tariffs, Spain's Packaging EPR scheme, Product Environmental Footprint (PEF), due diligence requirements and other international compliance issues affecting exporters.



COMPLIANCE 101

To help members navigate increasingly complex legislation, we launched the Compliance 101 programme.

The series combines webinars with practical guidance covering key regulatory topics including GPSR, the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), Extended Producer Responsibility, GINETEX and care labelling, the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR), Digital Product Passports (DPP), global regulatory developments and understanding green claims.

More than 100 companies attended our GINETEX and global care labelling webinar, with further sessions attracting strong engagement from businesses seeking practical guidance on new and emerging regulations.

Alongside the webinars, members received a growing library of supporting resources, helping them interpret legislation and apply it within their own businesses.

INFLUENCING REGULATION

As regulation becomes increasingly international, UKFT continues to work closely with policymakers in both the UK and Europe.

Our active participation in Euratex enables us to contribute directly to discussions with the European Commission, ensuring members' concerns are represented as new legislation develops.

During the year our Compliance Manager was invited to present to the European Commission on proposed PFAS restrictions affecting personal protective equipment, while the team continued discussions on Product Environmental Footprint methodology and the future of the Green Claims Directive.

We also maintained regular engagement with the American Apparel & Footwear Association to monitor regulatory developments in the United States and shared updates with members as new requirements emerged.

UKFT contributed to industry events throughout the year, including speaking at the American Apparel & Footwear Association's Traceability & Sustainability Conference in Atlanta, the Society of Dyers and Colourists Conference, and delivering guest lectures on sustainability legislation at the University of Leeds.

PRACTICAL SUPPORT

Alongside publishing guidance and delivering webinars, the compliance team continued to provide tailored advice to businesses facing complex regulatory decisions.

During the year we helped one retail partner avoid investing more than £80,000 in a Digital Product Passport solution before regulatory requirements had been finalised.

We also supported members in reassessing compliance priorities under new European legislation, helping businesses focus on current legal obligations rather than investing time and resources in areas that had been delayed or were outside the scope of regulation.

Other support included advice on labelling requirements, preferential tariffs within trade agreements, product regulations and evolving sustainability legislation, helping members reduce unnecessary costs while remaining compliant.

RESPONDING TO CHANGING LEGISLATION

The pace of regulatory change shows no sign of slowing.

One of the most significant issues during the year was the Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition Directive, particularly its impact on sustainability certifications and environmental claims. UKFT worked closely with legal advisers, certification bodies and Euratex to develop practical guidance, enabling members to make informed decisions before the new rules take effect.

This approach reflects the wider role of the compliance team. Alongside answering members' day-to-day questions, we monitor emerging legislation, engage directly with policymakers and provide practical guidance that helps businesses understand what new regulations mean in practice.

As legislation continues to evolve across the UK, Europe and international markets, UKFT will continue to provide members with clear, practical advice, helping businesses stay compliant while avoiding unnecessary cost and complexity.



Ava gave a presentation on PFAS in Brussels

Chapter 5

Skills and training

UKFT Education Partners Conference, May 2025



As the Government-appointed Sector Skills Body for fashion and textiles, UKFT works with employers, education providers and government to address skills shortages across the industry. Our work spans vocational qualifications, apprenticeships, higher education, workforce development and careers, ensuring training reflects the needs of employers while helping more people enter the sector.



The Textile Centre of Excellence apprenticeships

INFLUENCING SKILLS POLICY

Skills policy remained a major focus throughout the year. UKFT continued to represent the industry's interests during significant reforms to vocational education and apprenticeships across England, Scotland and Wales. We responded to consultations, worked with qualification bodies and raised concerns with government about proposed apprenticeship reforms, including changes to functional skills requirements and flexible apprenticeships.

In Scotland, our work contributed to the approval of three new Modern Apprenticeship frameworks covering fashion and textiles manufacturing, aftercare and heritage skills, while new vocational qualifications were also introduced to support learners entering the industry.

We also secured the continued delivery of the SEG Awards fashion and textiles qualification portfolio, safeguarding vocational provision across England and maintaining apprenticeship frameworks in Wales and Northern Ireland. Alongside this work, UKFT responded to consultations on the future of apprenticeship certification in Scotland and engaged with Skills England and the Department for Education as wider reforms to post-16 education continued to develop.

BUILDING INDUSTRY-LED TRAINING

Developing practical training that meets employers' needs remains central to UKFT's work. Our Production Sewing Machinist (PSM) programme continues to expand, providing flexible training covering industrial sewing techniques, machinery, quality, efficiency, materials, health and safety and workplace skills.

During the year the programme was substantially updated and expanded to include eight courses, 57 lessons and more than 400 practical knowledge and skills assessments. Since launch, it has attracted 139 enrolments, with learners completing more than 70 full programme certifications alongside over 100 individual course certifications. Participant feedback remains consistently high, with a 95% satisfaction rating.

Businesses are increasingly using the programme to train new employees, while independent learners are using it to develop the practical skills needed to enter the industry. UKFT also continued to deliver specialist sewing machinist training for BAE Systems, helping standardise training across its manufacturing operations.

WORKING WITH HM PRISON AND PROBATION SERVICE

Our partnership with His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service continues to grow.

Working together, we are developing standardised Production Sewing Machinist training for prison textile workshops, helping instructors deliver training that reflects current industry practice while improving employment opportunities for prisoners on release.

There are now 73 textile workshops operating across 50 prisons, with additional establishments joining the programme during the year. UKFT delivered instructor training, presented at the HMP annual textiles conference and organised employer engagement events linking businesses with prison workshops and potential recruits.



Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP and UKFT's John West, Pincroft

SUPPORTING EDUCATION

Strengthening links between education and industry remains a priority. During the year we held our first Education Partner Conference, bringing together universities, colleges, training providers and industry representatives to discuss the future of fashion and textile education. Discussions focused on workforce needs, National Occupational Standards, careers, research and closer collaboration between education and employers.

UKFT also extended its UKFT Approved quality assurance scheme to include continuing professional development courses, supporting a wider range of industry training. Our work with higher education included supporting the launch of new qualifications, contributing to the development of the MA Fashion Manufacturing course at the University of Westminster and continuing our involvement with the BSc in Textile Sustainability and Innovation at the University of Leeds.

We also completed a major review of graduate outcomes in fashion and textiles. Working with universities, UKFT identified significant shortcomings in the Higher Education Statistics Agency's methodology, which currently classifies many recognised graduate roles as negative employment outcomes. The resulting report and recommendations have been submitted to HESA and the Office for National Statistics, with discussions now underway on potential changes.

PROMOTING CAREERS

Through UKFT Futures we continued to promote careers across the fashion and textile industry. During the year we attended careers fairs and job events across England and Scotland, engaging with hundreds of students, teachers, careers advisers and jobseekers. Working alongside education partners and employers, these events showcased the wide range of technical, creative and manufacturing careers available across the sector.

The UKFT Futures website has also been expanded with a live jobs board and new careers content developed in collaboration with member companies, helping to raise awareness of the breadth of career opportunities available within the industry.



Edinburgh Careers Fair, September 2025

INVESTING IN NEW TALENT

UKFT's bursary programme has now grown to £250,000 each year, helping remove financial barriers for people entering the industry.

Through the MADE IT programme, students receive industry masterclasses before undertaking paid placements with leading UK businesses. During the year, students from universities across the UK secured placements with companies including Barbour, Barrie Knitwear, KC Manufacturing, Knitster London, E.L.V Denim, The London Embroidery Studio, Standing Ground and Carl Stuart Tailors.

The Young Textile Technician Fund continued to support employers investing in technical training, funding specialist development for young technicians working across knitwear and textile manufacturing businesses. The programme enables companies to access advanced technical training while helping retain valuable skills within the UK industry.

Additional bursaries supported students studying the BSc in Textile Sustainability and Innovation at the University of Leeds, paid internships through the Weavers × UKFT programme and the launch of the new Haberdashers × UKFT Internship Bursary.

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES

Alongside established programmes, UKFT continued to develop new routes into employment.

The Licence to Sew programme in Lancashire trained new sewing machinists through a combination of classroom learning, online study and practical experience, while our collaboration with Albion Knitting School supported the approval of new specialist knitwear courses.

We also contributed to the development of new qualifications in Scotland and supported the rollout of the Craft and Design T Level, helping ensure new training reflects the practical skills employers need.

SUPPORTING THE INDUSTRY'S FUTURE WORKFORCE

Skills shortages remain one of the biggest challenges facing the fashion and textile industry.

By working with government, employers, education providers and training organisations, UKFT is helping develop practical training, improve qualifications and create clearer routes into employment. Alongside influencing national policy, our focus remains on ensuring businesses can access the skilled workforce they need while giving more people the opportunity to build successful careers across the UK fashion and textile industry.

Henna Ibrahim, from Winchester School of Art, interning at Sirplus, as part of the MADE IT programme



Chapter 6

Innovation & Sustainability



Innovation and sustainability continue to be a fastest-moving area for the fashion and textile industry, with businesses facing growing expectations from customers, investors and regulators. Throughout the year, UKFT supported members with practical guidance, delivered collaborative research projects and worked with industry, academia and government to develop solutions that strengthen UK manufacturing and accelerate the transition to a more circular economy.

SUPPORTING MEMBERS

Providing practical support for members remained a priority throughout the year. The UKFT Sustainability 101 programme continued to expand, offering straightforward guidance on the key sustainability issues affecting fashion and textile businesses. The series now covers standards and certifications, green claims, human rights and environmental due diligence, chemical compliance, with additional resources on European legislation and energy and carbon in development.

Alongside the guides, we delivered webinars covering energy management, greenhouse gas accounting, decarbonisation, Better Cotton, GOTS certification, green claims and sustainability legislation. These sessions focused on helping businesses understand what regulations mean in practice and how they can respond.

To provide more tailored support, UKFT also introduced sustainability clinics, giving members one-to-one advice on issues including certifications, responsible sourcing, waste reduction, next-generation materials, supply chain due diligence and environmental reporting.

We also launched a continuing professional development course on sustainable practices with the University of Huddersfield, providing businesses with another route to develop in-house sustainability expertise.

CIRCULAR FASHION INNOVATION NETWORK

The Circular Fashion Innovation Network (CFIN), led by UKFT and the British Fashion Council in partnership with UK Research and Innovation, concluded during the year after bringing together brands, manufacturers, recyclers, researchers and technology providers to explore practical ways of strengthening UK manufacturing and supporting circularity.

Projects delivered through CFIN included an artificial intelligence pilot to improve manufacturing efficiency and reduce fabric waste, research into robotics and automation, a reshoring study identifying opportunities for increased UK production, and the development of the National Textile Recycling Infrastructure Plan.

The programme also produced practical research on responsible supply chains, circular manufacturing and UK textile recycling infrastructure, providing businesses with evidence and recommendations to support future investment and policy development.

BUILDING A CIRCULAR TEXTILES SYSTEM

The completion of the ACT UK project marked another important milestone. Led by UKFT and funded by Innovate UK, ACT UK brought together partners from across the recycling, retail, manufacturing and academic sectors to develop a blueprint for advanced textile sorting and pre-processing in the UK.

The project delivered a national model for automated textile sorting, consumer trials exploring household textile collection, research into the economics of textile recycling and investment in new fibre-sorting technology. Together these outputs provide a foundation for expanding fibre-to-fibre recycling capacity and strengthening domestic textile recycling infrastructure.

Building on this work, UKFT published the National Textile Recycling Infrastructure Plan, setting out the investment and collaboration needed to develop a more effective UK circular textiles system.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Alongside major collaborative programmes, UKFT continued to contribute to a broad portfolio of research projects with universities and industry partners.

This included research with the University of Leeds on non-clothing textile material flows and post-consumer textile recycling, work with Manchester Metropolitan University on the Compliance Navigator tool to help businesses manage regulatory requirements, and collaboration with the Royal College of Art and Northumbria University on measuring environmental impacts across fashion and textile businesses.

UKFT also contributed to Horizon funding bids with UK and European partners, helping develop future research projects focused on product environmental footprint methodologies, local manufacturing and circular innovation.

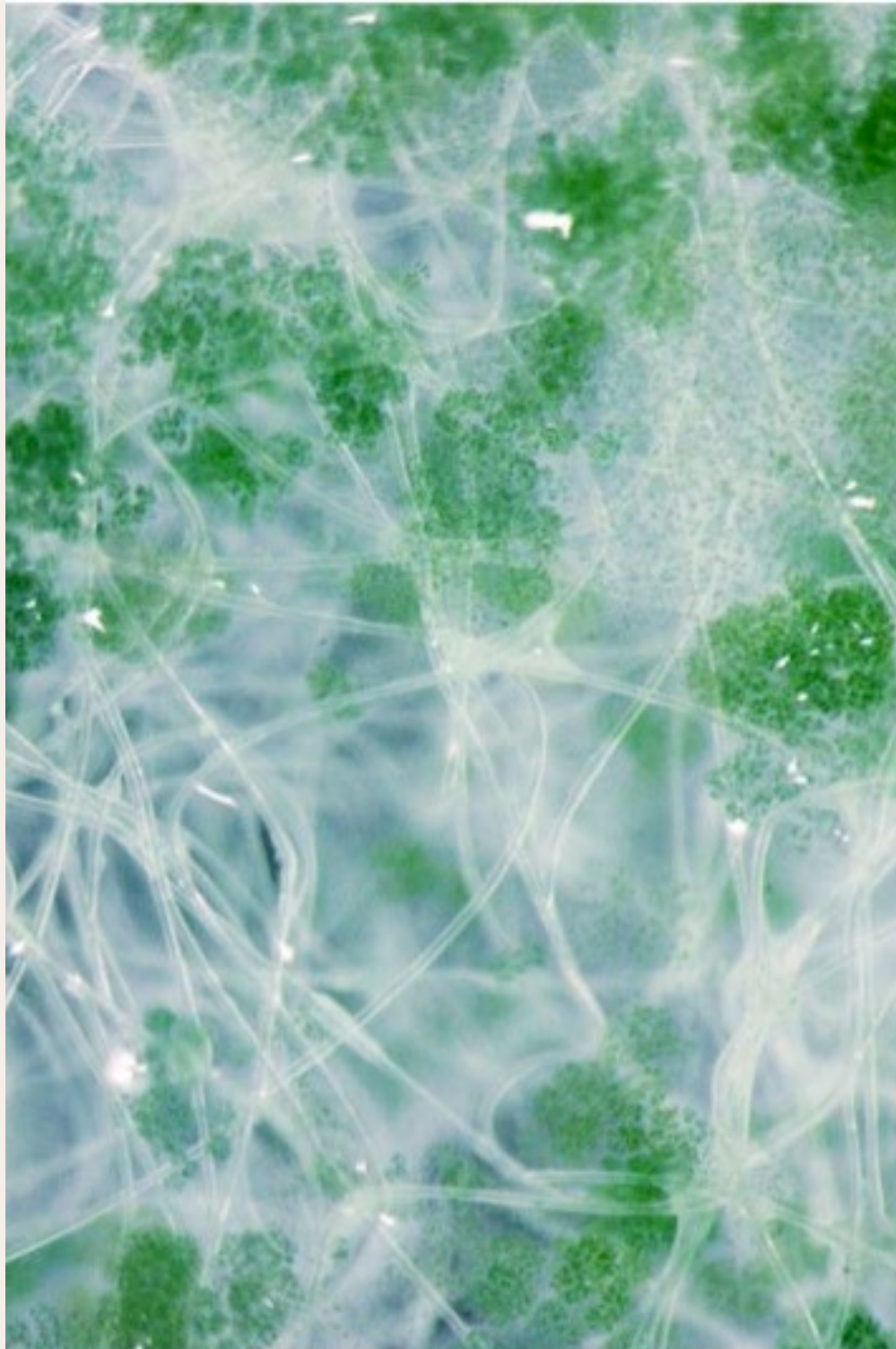
RESPONSIBLE SUPPLY CHAINS

Supporting more responsible supply chains remained a major area of activity. During the year we published a Code of Conduct template for members, collaborated with the British Standards Institution and King's Business School on responsible sourcing and modern slavery learning programmes, and continued work on guidance covering due diligence and ethical business practices.

Members also received practical support on environmental claims, sustainability certifications and emerging legislation affecting supply chains, helping businesses prepare for future regulatory requirements.



Lauren at the WTIN Innovate event in Shanghai, October 2025



UKFT member: Post Carbon Lab

SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Throughout the year UKFT worked with partners across industry and academia to share research and encourage collaboration. We hosted workshops connecting businesses with biotechnology innovators, delivered sustainability sessions for universities, contributed to international conferences and participated in industry events covering textile recycling, circular economy and sustainable manufacturing.

International engagement included participation in the British Council's sustainable fashion symposium in Pakistan, presentations in China on innovation across the fashion and textile supply chain, and collaboration with European research networks.

These activities help ensure UK businesses remain connected to emerging technologies, research and international best practice.

INNOVATION MEMBERSHIP

During the year we launched a dedicated Innovation Membership, bringing together businesses developing new materials, technologies and manufacturing solutions.

The network creates opportunities for innovators to connect with brands, manufacturers, researchers and investors while strengthening collaboration across the wider fashion and textile sector.

INFORMING FUTURE POLICY

Research carried out through UKFT projects continues to support wider policy development. Evidence generated through our work on recycling infrastructure, supply chains, manufacturing, environmental impacts and circularity is helping inform discussions with government while providing businesses with practical tools to prepare for future legislation.

Alongside our close engagement with government departments, industry organisations and academic partners, this work ensures members have access to reliable evidence and practical guidance as sustainability requirements continue to evolve.



UKFT team visit LaundRe

SUPPORTING INDUSTRY TRANSITION

Businesses continue to face increasing pressure to reduce environmental impacts while responding to rapidly changing legislation.

UKFT's role is to help members navigate these changes by combining practical business support with collaborative research, technical guidance and industry representation. By bringing together businesses, researchers, policymakers and technology providers, we are helping develop practical solutions that strengthen UK manufacturing and support the transition to a more sustainable and circular fashion and textile industry.



Non-clothing material flows report



UKFT team visit Johnstons of Elgin

ukft[®]

www.ukft.org
info@ukft.org