

Who are we?

The William Lamb Group have been shoemakers since 1887. We are a family-owned company which produces footwear, bags and accessories for some of the world's largest retailers and brands.

In 1981 we moved our supply base to Asia. We work closely with factories in China, India, Vietnam and Laos where we have our own technical, product development, testing and ethical auditing teams. Many of our manufacturing partners have been working with us for more than 20 years.

In 2015 we acquired Trade Mark Collections, the UK's leading supplier of licensed bags and umbrellas. Their design innovation and speed to market delivery has ensured a winning business formula.

Our Ethical Policy

Millions of people around the world, including in the UK, endure shocking conditions at work. From our origins as a Yorkshire based family-run company, we have always endeavoured to do business fairly and ethically.

As a business we are committed to ensuring safe working conditions and fair treatment of employees. We take our ethical responsibilities very seriously and we are proud to be recognised in the industry for our leading Ethical Trading standards.

We have a dedicated Ethical Team consisting of 16 people. They work with our factories to improve working conditions, raise standards and meet Corrective Action Plan timescales. We employ four external auditors to validate the work carried out by our in-house Ethical Team.

Why it matters

- Many factory workers live in poor countries where laws protecting their rights are inadequate or not enforced - it is our responsibility to ensure that they are protected.
- Our business is founded on core values of equality, honesty and integrity. We are committed to improving the working conditions of the people who make the products we sell - we do not simply pay lip-service to our policies.
- Recent tragedies in Bangladesh have drawn greater public attention to these issues, for example, the factory collapse near Dhaka in April 2013 killed over 350 people, and the fire in a garment factory in Dhaka killed over 100 people and injured 200 factory workers.

Membership of the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI)

As a member of the Ethical Trade Initiative we help to improve working conditions for workers across the globe by setting out a code of minimum standards to be implemented into the supply chain. The code address issues like wages, hours of work, health and safety, child labour, discrimination, and the right to join free trade unions.

We are regular attendees at ETI strategy meetings to help develop further trading standards together with suppliers, retailers, trade unions and NGOs. Across our supply base we advocate a Zero Tolerance policy on non-compliance.

Why it matters

- *"Once I was penalised because I came back 15 minutes late from lunch, so they deducted nearly 15% of my monthly wages and gave me a written warning."* - Vietnamese footwear factory worker
- *"Now there is clean drinking water and the toilets are clean... Before, I would have to work day & night for 150 rupees (£1.80). Today I can earn 6,000 rupees (£72) a day."* - Indian factory worker
- *"From the age of six, I was imprisoned in an illegal garment factory in Delhi. I would work each day for 16 hours for just 50 rupees (67p) per week. Then at 1am I would sweep the floor and sleep on the spot at my work station."* - Former child worker in a garment factory

Our Technical Heritage

Technical Excellence since 1887

Our company has a manufacturing heritage of more than 125 years in shoemaking. With our recent business acquisition we have expanded our technical department which now consists of:

- An industry Chemical Expert who advises on all aspects of EU legislation
- 33 highly trained inspectors worldwide working across China, India, Vietnam and Laos with at least one inspector in each factory.
- 15 technicians, with 8 based in the UK who carry out Risk Assessments and full testing programmes.
- Four SATRA accredited shoe fitters who fit all our products to industry standards.

We have our own SATRA accredited laboratory for product and material testing in China which is reviewed and calibrations checked by SATRA every twelve months.

Our technical team are in constant contact with customers, overseas offices and our laboratories (both in-house and external laboratories where we outsource any highly specialist testing).

We test our products for fit and comfort, performance, durability, slip testing and safety. Additionally, to comply with the EU REACH policy we test for a comprehensive range of restricted chemical substances.

Why it matters

- Legislation is constantly changing, expanding the list of restricted substances in the EU on a regular basis.
- Nearly all product recalls in the EU in recent years were a result of banned or restricted substances being present, most of the substances being carcinogenic, toxic to the environment and harmful to the reproductive system.
- Some children's bags can have 'Child Appealing' characteristics, for example where a 3 dimensional character is attached – in those cases we will test to EN71 standards for Toxicity, mechanical and physical properties.
- In recent years, other reasons for recalls of shoes and boots include danger to children's health due to poor design, for example, the toe-part may be too narrow or the sole is too rigid and hard which could hinder the healthy development of the foot.
- Certain tests are even more critical for children's footwear— we therefore test EN71 parts 1, 2, 3 which ensure that (i) any small parts cannot become detached and therefore swallowed by a child, (ii) the shoe has very slow flammability, and (iii) the shoes are free from heavy metals.

