

Improving the durability of stretch denim jeans

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Through regular analysis of its products' returns data, New Look identified above average levels of returns on various womenswear stretch jeans due to button attachment failure.

WRAP worked with New Look to review the testing process of womenswear stretch jeans to help improve their performance, and therefore extend the life of these products.

- Regular analysis of its returns data enabled New Look to identify a button attachment issue on its womenswear stretch jeans.
- By reviewing faulty products along with the testing data received from its suppliers, New Look had an opportunity to standardise the shank button attachment's testing process and help reduce risks of failures.

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Case study

New Look identified issues with the attachment of metal shank buttons on different styles of womenswear jeans. Fabrics were failing to support the attachment on stretch jeans.

Failures and subsequent returns were occurring across different styles and from a number of different suppliers. A full analysis of fabrics, buttons, and product testing data received from suppliers was the agreed approach.

Button attachment failures

The study indicated that:

- A common failure was seen on the main waist button and fly area.
- Fabric was failing to support the button attachment under stress during wear.
- There was no evidence of the button itself failing.



Button failure example on stretch denim jeans

- Some of the faulty samples also featured a plastic washer attached to the underpart of the shank button. WRAP recommended New Look to test the use of the plastic washer and to compare it to the standard button attachment, in order to understand if this was bringing any performance improvements.

Assessing the performance of button attachment

The analysis of test reports for styles with high levels of button failures concluded that:

- standard tests did not help to predict a risk of button attachment failure; and
- there was an inconsistency of applied test methods across suppliers.

WRAP recommended that New Look reviewed part of its testing protocols, mainly:

- ensure that shank button pull testing gets evaluated against a recommended minimum standard of 25kg (replacing the lower standard more appropriate to sewn button attachment); and
- standardise risk assessment techniques with suppliers, focusing on pre-production prevention, in order to prevent transferring the costs of failures to customers.



Failures were occurring across stretch fabric and style ranges



Implementation of a quality management process

To transfer the experience of the denim assessment and implement lessons learnt across other fabrics and garment ranges, New Look is now looking at implementing a simple fabric specification document.

This would involve asking suppliers a standardised series of questions on finishing routes and laundry processes, providing New Look with opportunities to reduce the risks of failures. In instances where failures do still occur, analysis of a fabric specification document can help identify causes of failures and help resolve any potential problems.

How New Look has implemented the learnings from this project

As a consequence of carrying out this project and following WRAP's recommendations, New Look continues to improve the quality of its products by ensuring better standards in the interest of sustainability. Suppliers have been briefed and understand the need for consistency in testing in order to eliminate any potential pre-production issues.

“Reviewing the data provided to us from suppliers and making small, but essential improvements, has made positive changes to the performance of the clothes we produce.”

Iga Musiał, Assistant Technologist on Maternity, Denim

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WRAP's vision is a world where resources are used sustainably. It works in partnership with governments, businesses, trade bodies, local authorities, communities and individuals looking for practical advice to improve resource efficiency that delivers both economic and environmental benefits.

This case study was developed as part of the [Sustainable Clothing Action Plan \(SCAP\)](#). This is part of a series of [industry trials](#) focussed on extending clothing life, based on improvement actions identified in the [Sustainable Clothing Guide](#). The guide highlights how interventions can be made in design and throughout the supply chain, to make clothing last longer.

Our mission is to accelerate the move to a sustainable resource-efficient economy through:

- **re-inventing** how we design, produce and sell products;
- **re-thinking** how we use and consume products; and
- **re-defining** what is possible through recycling and re-use.