

Dorchester Hotel has 'grooming list' for female staff

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The Dorchester Hotel gives its female staff a 'grooming list' to ensure that they meet certain standards of appearance whilst at work.

According to the list, female staff cannot come to work with oily skin, bitten nails, bad breath or body odour. It requires women to shave their legs, even if wearing tights, and recommends regular manicures and a full face of makeup.

Sam Smethers, CEO of the Fawcett Society, called the policy 'unacceptable', stating that: "Employers should concentrate on what enables people to do a good job and what drives productivity. This is 2016, not 1970; we need to see an end to this kind of objectification of women".

Besides this, there are arguments that any such policy may be discriminatory. If a grooming policy is applied only to women (which the Dorchester denies), it could arguably be directly discriminatory on grounds of sex. Even if a policy is applied across the board, it could be indirectly discriminatory if it puts women at a particular disadvantage. One imagines that any such policy would theoretically seek to enforce different but similarly stringent levels of conformity, but that in practice this would mean that requirements to shave legs, wear makeup and get manicures will only apply to women and the equivalent rules for men are likely to be less intrusive.

In addition, some medical conditions can have physical effects such as excess hair growth, body odour or oily skin. If such a condition amounts to a disability, the Dorchester could be discriminating against an employee on those grounds if it punishes them for violation of the grooming policy.

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