Microcement Substrate Preparation – On-Site Checklist

Step/Area	What to Check	Check (YES/NO)
1. Area Preparation	All furniture removed or fully covered with dust sheets/polythene	
	No other trades working in or near the work area during installation and curing	
2. Substrate Suitability	Substrate is solid and load bearing (no movement/flex)	
	Substrate is level and flat (no bumps or hollows)	
	Substrate is fully cured (e.g. screed/concrete cured >28 days)	
	Substrate is completely dry (≤4% humidity, check with digital hygrometer)	
	Substrate is clean (dust, oil, grease, paint, glue, chemicals removed)	
	Substrate is crack-free (repair cracks, reinforce with fibre mesh if needed)	
	Joints are secure and overlapped (ply/cement boards glued, screwed, joints taped & filled)	
	No holes or protruding screws—fill or fix as needed	
	No surface movement (test for bounce/spring; timber/laminate/vinyl NOT suitable)	
	Substrate is approved type (concrete, screed, ply, cement board, tile, certain MDF/ply; NOT laminate/vinyl/wood floors)	
	Existing expansion joints agreed to be mirrored in microcement layer	
3. Moisture/Damp Checks	No water ingress/leaks in area (verify especially for basements, outdoors)	
	For damp/moisture: inform SOBO. SOBO to use HYDRO EPOXY PRIMER as base - additional cost applies	
	Cracked/irregular/jointed surface: inform SOBO. SOBO Use HYDRO EPOXY PRIMER + fibre mesh as prep – where possible , additional cost applies	
	Wet/external areas: Confirm area has slope/fall to prevent standing water	

	Shower Trey – only used microcement suitable shower try such as MST shower treys.	
4. Underfloor Heating & Temp	Underfloor heating OFF min. 72 hrs before installation	
	After install, underfloor heating stays OFF for minimum 28 days	
	After 28 days, increase UFH source temp gradually (1–2°C per day from 12–13°C upwards)	
	Area temperature ≥15°C (day and night) during works and curing	
	Good ventilation/air circulation for normal drying/curing	
5. Utilities	Adequate lighting throughout work area	
	Power supply for tools, mixing, lights	
	Water supply available for mixing and cleaning	
6. Outdoor/External Work	Room temperature above 15°C day and night, outdoor installation - forecast temperature above 15°C day and night , no rain/snow, or waterproof heated shelter is in place	
	Substrate protected from dirt, mud, contaminants, cold	
7. Final Preparations	All pipework, heating, and electrical systems tested and complete before microcement begins	
	Area swept, vacuumed, dust-free, ready for primer/coating	
12. Curing & Aftercare	No access or use during curing—no other trades, foot traffic, or furniture for minimum 3–7 days depending on drying time	
	After the curing process has ended protect finished area with breathable cover (e.g., cardboard)—never use plastic sheeting	
	In wet/joint areas: Apply silicone to all joints after curing	

If you answered NO to any of the above, please inform SOBO immediately, as installation on an inappropriate substrate will affect the result. SOBO can only assess what is visible, so the responsibility for ensuring the correct wall, floor and /or furniture build-up lies with the appointed person completing those works.

FAQs for On-Site Prep

Q: Can I install microcement over wood, laminate or vinyl? A: No. Only on suitable, stable, non-moveable, and moisture-free substrates.

Q: What if my area is damp or outdoors? A: Inform SOBO , so they can use HYDRO EPOXY PRIMER as the first step.

Q: How do I protect my new microcement before final handover? A: Follow the curing period guideline, use breathable cardboard protection (never plastic), and avoid dragging heavy items.

FAQ: Can microcement be applied directly onto underfloor heating (UFH) pipes or cable systems or mats?

A: No, microcement cannot be applied directly onto underfloor heating pipes, cables, or mats. Microcement must only be applied onto a solid, load-bearing, fully cured, and stable substrate.

This means the UFH system—whether wet (pipes) or electric (cables or mats)—must first be covered with an appropriate material such as a screed, self-levelling compound, or cement board. This solid substrate must meet all requirements (fully cured, dry, crack-free, level, and with no movement) before microcement installation. The substrate acts as the structural base and distributes heat evenly, preventing failures, cracks, or other problems with the microcement finish.

Key Points:

- UFH pipes, cables, or mats must always be covered with a load-bearing, solid substrate first.
- Microcement is then applied to this prepared surface, not directly to the UFH system.

- Ensure the substrate is fully dry, cured, and stable before proceeding.
- Always turn off UFH at least 72 hours before application, and keep it off for at least 28 days after microcement installation to allow proper curing.

Q: What does “load-bearing substrate” mean, and what should I use under microcement?
Can I just use any board or do I need a specific thickness? What about self-levelling compounds?

A: A load-bearing substrate is a solid, stable, and rigid base that can support day-to-day loads and does not flex or move under weight. This is crucial for microcement installation, because microcement is a relatively thin, hard finish—it will crack or fail if there’s movement beneath it.

Microcement can only be applied to load-bearing substrates, NOT directly onto underfloor heating pipes or onto flexible or weak surfaces.

Examples of Load-Bearing Substrates for Microcement

Substrate Type	Minimum Thickness	Notes / Application
Concrete Slab or Screed	50–65mm+	Must be fully cured, dry (<4% moisture), crack-free, and level.
Sand/Cement Screed	50–65mm+	Same as above; check for strength (C20/25 or better for floors).
Self-Levelling Compound (SLC)	5mm + (as per product)	Must be “traffic grade”/load-bearing, not only for vinyl/carpet. Examples: Ardex K15 or K40, Mapei Ultraplan Industrial
Cement Board (e.g. HardieBacker, Aquapanel)	12mm+ (floor/wall)	Rigid, external/fibre cement, boards securely screwed and joints taped.
Plywood (WBP/Exterior/Marine)	18–22mm (floor/furniture)	High-quality exterior or marine ply, glued & screwed to base, joints overlapped or doubled for strength.
Marine Plywood (Build-ups, furniture, basins)	18–22mm	Moisture-resistant, glued and screwed from the bottom, joints overlapped.
Existing Non-Moving Tiles	N/A	Must be securely fixed, no movement, fill grout lines as base.

Mixed Substrate (tiles/concrete, etc.)	Varies (see above)	Requires levelling layer

Key:

All substrates must be solid, level, fully fixed, free of deflection or bounce, and with moisture content ≤ 4%.

Board thicknesses are minimum recommendations; thicker may be needed for increased spans or heavy use.

Microcement cannot be installed on:

- Floating timber, laminate, or vinyl floors
- Expansion foams
- Thin MDF or foam boards
- Unsecured boards or loose tiles
- Uncured screeds or substrates with more than 4% moisture
- Always ensure underfloor heating is covered by a suitable screed, board, or SLC to create a stable, load-bearing surface before microcement is applied.