



# EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY



## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy

### 1. Policy Statement and Scope

Promoting and delivering equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace is an essential aspect of good people management. It's about creating a working environment and culture where every individual can feel safe, experience a sense of belonging, and is empowered to achieve their full potential.

We, at Quiss, are committed to treating everyone fairly and equally, while recognising and valuing our diverse workforce. The unique perspective, each of our employees bring, creates an environment of collaboration, creativity and innovative ideas which is intrinsic to the success of the business. We want our employees to grow and develop, by providing a safe, healthy, respectful and inclusive working environment, where barriers that prevent staff from reaching their full potential are eliminated, through the implementation of fair and inclusive employment practices.

This policy exists:

- a) to ensure our employees are treated equitably irrespective of their status under the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010
- b) to outline our commitment to promoting dignity and respect for all, creating a fair and equitable work environment free from any form of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination in line with the Equality Act 2010, the Workers Protection Act 2023 (amendment to the Equality Act 2010 Act) which came into effect October 2024
- c) to outline the expectations of the Company and those working for it, in observing and upholding its zero-tolerance on unlawful discrimination.
- d) act as a source of information and guidance for all individuals.
- e) act as a clear statement to all our clients and business partners

This policy applies to all employees of Quiss, regardless of seniority and contract status (i.e. permanent, fixed term or temporary). It also extends to individuals working on our behalf, for example, agency staff or contractors or other individuals representing Quiss (associated individuals).

Any breaches will be dealt with under the Disciplinary policy, which could include dismissal from the Company, if deemed gross misconduct. It may also become a criminal matter

Should any employee believe that they have suffered discrimination, they should raise their concerns through the Company's Grievance Procedure.

### 2. Quiss Commitment and Responsibilities

The Company values the diversity of its workforce: where we have individuals from a different range of backgrounds, cultures, lifestyles and circumstances. While specific responsibility for eliminating discrimination and providing equality of opportunity lies with the Board, HR, managers and supervisors, **individuals at all levels** have a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect (as outlined in the Dignity at Work and Code of Conduct policies).



Quiss has a zero-tolerance approach to any form of unfair and unlawful discrimination: no person at Quiss will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of their protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act 2010:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy or maternity
- race, religion or belief
- sex or sexual orientation

Neither shall any person be victimised or subjected to any form of bullying, coercion, harassment or sexual harassment.

This fundamental commitment covers the following areas:

- pay and benefits
- terms and conditions of employment
- dealing with grievances and discipline
- dismissal
- redundancy
- selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities
- requests for flexible working
- leave for parents

To support our commitment, advance EDI within the workplace, and embed fair and inclusive working practices, the Directors and the Leadership team shall:

- receive training and guidance so that they understand the appropriate employment legislation to prevent unfair and unlawful discrimination, bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and victimisation. This will also ensure they are fully aware of their responsibilities so that they may lead by example in advancing equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace.
- ensure their departments are fully aware, understand and are committed to, treating their colleagues, clients and all our business partners, with dignity and respect. No form of intimidation, coercion, bullying, harassment or sexual harassment will be tolerated. This ethos must be incorporated in how they operate day to day.
- recognise each person is unique with different skills, knowledge and abilities that can contribute to the success of the department and the business overall.
- continue to support an inclusive, safe and respectful working environment where contributions of all our employees are valued.
- ensure all employees are able to access training and developmental opportunities, as appropriate to their role or agreed progression.
- treat colleagues fairly and without bias in recruitment, secondment, promotion and progression. Such exercises will be conducted on the basis of merit. apart from in



any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).

- make reasonable adjustments for colleagues or applicants who are disabled (or become disabled) to enable them to carry out their role. Employees must inform their manager or HR about any medical or health condition so that reasonable adjustments can be considered, or additional support is given where appropriate.
- ensure employees are fully aware of the signs of modern slavery and understand how to raise concerns.
- shall challenge any form of discrimination, monitor and deal with any breaches of this policy, with support from HR.

HR shall specifically:

- ensure all employees including new starters (and associated individuals), receive training on this policy and also other Company policies so they fully understand the expectations of the Company.
- ensure all employees have access to training and development and be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
- ensure all employees are aware of how they can make a complaint of discrimination through the Grievance Policy and Procedure or other appropriate policies.
- where allegations of discrimination are substantiated, and corrective action is taken, that changes are made to prevent such an incident happening again.
- review our HR policies and procedures to ensure they are up to date with current legislation and HR best practice.
- monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability to support the business meeting its commitments set out in this policy and to understanding how it can advance EDI in the workplace.

### **3. Employee responsibilities**

All employees (and associated individuals) are responsible for ensuring they treat their colleagues, our clients and business partners with dignity and respect, upholding a culture of inclusivity at Quiss. It is integral to how we work as a business and therefore discriminatory behaviour will not be tolerated. Therefore:

- all new employees / associated individuals, will complete EDI training as part of their mandatory induction programme within the first week of joining Quiss.
- all existing employees will receive EDI training every two years
- all employees, as part of their training, should understand that they, as well as their employer, can personally be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment.
- all employees will read through and familiarise themselves with this policy and other Quiss policies and procedures to understand and support our ethos of nurturing an equitable and inclusive working environment.



- should anyone have any concerns, these should be discussed with their manager in the first instance or with the HR.
- should anyone wish to make a complaint of discrimination, then the Grievance Policy should be invoked (or any other appropriate policy).

#### **4. Support and Wellbeing**

Should our employees ever need someone to talk to (other than their manager or the HR team) our Quiss Wellbeing Champions are available. In addition, we have Health Assured, our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) who are an independent service, providing free confidential emotional support and practical guidance on **0800 028 0199** available 24/7, any day of the year. Further details can be found on 'Your Wellness' page on our intranet, Q-Hub.

Website: [www.healthassured.org](http://www.healthassured.org)

Portal: [HealthAssuredEap.co.uk](http://HealthAssuredEap.co.uk)

For an employee who has made the complaint, it may also be useful to discuss what additional support you may need, with the investigating manager and HR.

#### **5. Awareness and Training**

This policy is available to all employees through Q-Hub and will form part of the induction for new starters. All employees will be asked to confirm they have read and understood this document. Online training will also be given to ensure individuals are aware of and understand their responsibilities in adhering to this policy.

This policy will also be available on our website, to ensure potential and existing clients, suppliers, contractors, business partners and any third parties have a clear understanding of our zero-tolerance approach to unlawful discrimination.

#### **6. Breaches of this policy**

Failure to adhere to this policy will be taken very seriously and will be dealt with as misconduct under the Company's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice (termination of contract). In some instances, it may also become a criminal matter.

#### **7. Monitoring of EDI Data**

We will collect and monitor diversity-related data on an annual basis to better understand the experiences of our workforce. This will include personal and sensitive information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability, to help the Company identify and remove barriers, draw up an action plan where appropriate, and take action to address issues where identified, to uphold our commitment to ensuring a fair, safe, healthy and inclusive workplace environment.

This information will be held and accessed by HR only. For further information on how we protect personal and sensitive data, please refer to our Data Protection Policy and our Privacy Policy.



## **8. Monitoring and Reviewing**

The Director of Operations has the overall responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy and will assure it is reviewed on an annual basis, so that it remains compliant with current employment legislation and HR best practice.

This policy does not form part of an employee's contract of employment and may be reviewed and amended at any time.



## Appendix 1: Terminology

### Protected Characteristics

Under the Equality Act 2010 legislation it is unlawful to: discriminate directly against anyone and treat them less favourably than others on the grounds of their protected characteristics:

- Age (unless this can be justified as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim),
- Disability (including discrimination arising from a disability and failure to make reasonable adjustments)
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and Belief (including lack of belief)
- Sex and Sexual orientation

### Direct discrimination

Actions where people are treated less favourably than others on grounds related to their identity as one of the above protected groups.

### Indirect Discrimination

Where a condition or requirement has been put in place which applies to all, but, in practice, has a detrimental effect upon a group of individuals that cannot be fully justified

### Equality

At its core, equality means fairness: ensuring that individuals, or groups of individuals, are not treated less favourably because of their protected characteristics.

### Equality of opportunity

Where everyone has the same opportunities to fulfil their potential, free from discrimination.

### Diversity

Recognising, valuing, respecting and celebrating each other's differences. A diverse environment is one with a wide range of backgrounds and mindsets, which allows for an empowered culture of creativity and innovation.

### Inclusion

Creating an environment where everyone feels welcomed, comfortable to be themselves and feels the worth of their contribution.

### Harassment

There are three types of harassment which are unlawful under current legislation:

- Harassment related to a protected characteristic



- Sexual harassment - unwanted conduct (verbal, non-verbal or physical) of a sexual nature that has the intent and/or effect of violating a person's dignity.
- Less favourable treatment of a person because they either submit to or reject sexual harassment or harassment related to sex.

Harassment creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for people experiencing harassment and those that witness the harassment. It is critical to note that:

- It can happen online as well as in person.
- It can be a one-off incident or a pattern of behaviour.
- You can be impacted by something that is not directly aimed at you.
- It can still be harassment even if the behaviour was not intended to offend

### **Victimisation**

Treatment of someone less favourably because they have made or might make a complaint or allegation or have given or intend to give evidence in relation to a complaint about discrimination under one of the above protected group categories.

### **Additional Information.**

Please refer to our Dignity in the Workplace and Code of Conduct policies.

