

Gender Equality Policy

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31 Skyline Villages,
Limeharbour, London
E14 9TS

29th Floor, One Canada Square
London, E14 5DY

Tel: 0845 686 1212 Fax: 0845 686 1213

www.questit.ltd.uk
info@questit.ltd.uk

Introduction

This guidance has been developed jointly to equip Quest to meet its obligations under The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 as amended by the Equality Act 2006, The Equal Pay Act 1970, The European Equal Treatment Directive (75/207) and other relevant legislation.

The Equality Act 2006 inserted the general Gender Equality Duty into section 76A of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, which applies to all public authorities in England and Wales. Quest recognises that the Gender Equality Duty (as introduced by the Equality Act 2006) requires a proactive approach to mainstreaming gender equality into all decisions and activities.

Our Commitment

Quest celebrates and values the diversity brought to its workforce by individuals, and believes that the company benefits from employing both women and men at all levels of responsibility, and across all areas of work. We will treat all employees and consultants with respect and dignity, and seek to provide a positive working environment free from sex discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

Quest will seek not only to eliminate sex discrimination, but also to create a working environment based on good relations between women and men. To this end, the company undertakes to provide diverse, non-stereotypical images of women and men in any material which it produces for employees and consultants. The aim is to create a positive inclusive ethos where issues of gender discrimination and stereotyping can be discussed openly, with a shared commitment to challenging and preventing sexism and sex discrimination, to respecting diversity and difference, and to encouraging good relations between women and men.

Quest will also seek to eliminate unlawful harassment and promote equality of opportunity for employees who intend to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment. We will work towards the elimination of sexism whether overt or covert.

Our Legal Duties

Quest undertakes to fulfil all the legal duties put upon it by The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 as amended by the Equality Act 2006 and The Equal Treatment Directive (75/117), (i.e. there will be no discrimination against staff, either directly or indirectly on grounds of sex or marital or family status in access to employment, training, working conditions, treatment at work, promotion or dismissal).

The company also undertakes to adhere to the Gender Equality Duty Code of Practice and the Code of Practice on Equal Pay produced by the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Quest is committed to the two aspects of the “general duty” or “gender equality duty” (GED), and in carrying out its functions will have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment

- Promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

Quest recognises that under the GED our company must have due regard to the need to eliminate all forms of discrimination that are unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, specifically:

- Direct and indirect discrimination on grounds of sex
- Discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity leave
- Discrimination on the grounds of gender reassignment
- Direct and indirect discrimination against married persons and civil partners
- Victimisation
- Harassment and sexual harassment.

When this document refers to discrimination on the grounds of sex it refers to all the interpretations of sex discrimination as outlined above.

Harassment

Harassment on grounds of sex, harassment on grounds of gender reassignment and sexual harassment, are viewed by Quest as very serious offences, which if proven may in certain circumstances lead to the dismissal of the employee or consultant. For details of handling harassment claims, see Quest handbook.

Ensuring Equality between Women and Men

Quest is committed to working to eliminate gender inequality and harassment, and to promote equality of opportunity. Quest is also committed to encouraging changes in individual behaviour and attitudes, and ensuring equality of opportunity and treatment for women and men.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that:

- ✓ Quest Senior Management Team are responsible for taking the lead in creating a positive, inclusive ethos that challenges sexist attitudes and behaviour on the part of managers, employees or consultants
- ✓ They are aware of the company's statutory duties in relation to sex legislation
- ✓ All aspects of the company's policies and activities are sensitive to gender issues
- ✓ Sex monitoring information is collected and analysed
- ✓ The procedures for the recruitment and promotion of staff enshrine best practice in equal opportunities
- ✓ The company's publicity materials present appropriate positive and non-stereotypical messages about gender
- ✓ Initial induction programme reflect the company's commitment to promote equality of opportunity
- ✓ Appropriate training and development is provided to support the appreciation and understanding of diversity.

Employees and consultants are responsible for ensuring that:

- ✓ They are aware of the company's statutory duties in relation to sex legislation;
- ✓ Their schemes of work, demonstrate sensitivity to issues of equality;
- ✓ Quest and each of its individual staff or consultants confront sexism, whether witting or unwitting, whenever it occurs.

Complaints

Quest will seek to provide a supportive environment for employees or consultants, who make claims of discrimination or harassment. Acts of sex discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, victimisation or abuse will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence. Members of our team, who feel they are being discriminated against on the grounds of sex by other members of staff, should raise the matter under the Grievance Procedure, which will, if the accusation is upheld, be treated as a serious disciplinary offence.

Review and Consultation

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis in accordance with legislative developments and the need for good practice. Policy is accessible to all employees and consultants on the company web site and it is included in Quest corporate handbook. This policy should not be read in isolation, but cross-referenced with all relevant Quest employment policies.

Managing Director
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