



Equality and Diversity Policy

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1. Diversity and inclusion statement

Zircon and BeTalent (collectively referred to as 'ZBeT', 'we', 'us', 'our') is committed to encouraging a dynamic and inclusive working environment, where we benefit from a variety of perspectives to make smarter decisions and better support people in crisis. Individuals with diverse cultures, perspectives and experiences are at the heart of the way ZBeT works. We want to attract and recruit, develop, and retain the most talented people, at all levels, regardless of race, gender, age, physical ability, religion, or sexual orientation, and make best use of their talents. We do not set specific, numerical targets for recruitment or promotion of particular groups, but we place great emphasis on ensuring that the pool of applicants for our jobs is diverse.

At ZBeT we are guided by our values in everything we do and recognise that being a diverse and inclusive employer helps us fulfil our responsibility to make a difference for our clients. We seek to develop a work environment where we treat all employees as individuals, fairly and in a consistent way where pay, retention, promotions, and redundancies are determined without discrimination.

We work within the spirit and the practice of the Equality Act 2010 by promoting a culture of respect and dignity and actively challenging discrimination, should it ever arise.

We will remove unnecessary barriers for our employees seeking opportunities through training and development, promotion, and career planning. We will continue to support our leaders, managers, and employees to demonstrate the principles of diversity and inclusion in their everyday activities, roles, and functions.

We have a humanitarian, ethical and legal responsibility to celebrate and champion equality and diversity. We will actively work to ensure that our organisation is inclusive and accessible to all.

2. Policy objectives

2.1. Purpose

This policy sets out ZBeT's approach to equality and diversity. ZBeT is committed to promoting equality and diversity and promoting a culture that actively values difference and recognises that people from diverse backgrounds and experiences can bring valuable insights to the workplace and enhance the way we work and help us make smarter decisions. ZBeT aims to be an inclusive organisation, committed to providing equal opportunities throughout employment including in the recruitment, training and development of employees, and to pro-actively tackling and eliminating discrimination.

We have a humanitarian, ethical and legal responsibility to champion equality, diversity, and inclusion. It is only through embracing equality and diversity that we can truly embody our organisational values and create a more compassionate and courageous business environment.

We expect all our people to be accountable for equality, diversity, and inclusion at ZBeT. It is only by working together in unity that we can ensure that everyone can perform at their best.

This policy reflects that we see equality, diversity and inclusion are an integral part of ZBeT. It sets out how we will treat all employees, contractors, partners, and other stakeholders with dignity, fairness, and respect. This is regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. We have also established an Anti-Slavery and Anti-Trafficking Policy, in compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015 to set out the measures we have in place to mitigate against the exploitation and discrimination of workers within our supply chain.

2.2. Equality and diversity at ZBeT

At ZBeT, we consider that equality means breaking down barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunities and access for all groups both in employment, and to goods and services.

We consider diversity to mean celebrating difference and valuing everyone. Each person is an individual with visible and non-visible differences and by respecting this everyone can feel valued for their contributions which is beneficial not only for the individual but for ZBeT too. We acknowledge that equality and diversity are not inter-changeable but inter-dependent. There can be no equality of opportunity if difference is not valued and harnessed.

2.3. Scope

The rights and obligations set out in this policy apply equally to all employees, whether part time or full time on a substantive or fixed-term contract, and also to associated persons such as secondees, agency staff, contractors and others employed under a contract of service.

You have personal responsibility for the application of this policy. As part of your employee induction, you are expected to read and familiarise yourself with this policy, ensure that this policy is properly observed and fully complied.

This policy is also of particular relevance to directors, line managers and other employees concerned with recruitment, training and promotion procedures and employment decisions which affect others.

3. Definitions

Equality: Ensuring people are not treated less favourably; unjustifiably. Specifically on the basis of one or more protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act 2010 and other anti-discrimination legislations.

Diversity: Recognising and valuing the benefits of different perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences. Also, identifying and acknowledging under-representation, and taking active steps to address it through initiatives, policies, and systemic change.

Inclusion: Actively embracing people with diverse perspectives, backgrounds and experiences and creating an environment that enables us all to feel a sense of belonging, and where we can achieve the extraordinary together.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion are not identical, but they are reliant on one other to tackle discrimination. For example, we cannot achieve real inclusion unless we embrace equality and diversity. We often use diversity as umbrella term to describe any of our equality, diversity, and inclusion initiatives.

Unlawful discrimination: When a person or group of people is treated less favourably than another person or group of people would be treated based on their protected characteristic or religious or political opinion.

Types of discrimination:

- **Direct discrimination** – Treating someone unfairly because of their protected characteristics. The protected characteristics covered by anti-discrimination laws are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. Political opinion is a protected characteristic in Northern Ireland only.
- **Indirect discrimination** – A practice, policy or rule applied to everyone that may at first appear fair or neutral but puts people of a particular protected characteristic at a disadvantage.
- **Discrimination by association** – A person is treated unfavourably because of another person's protected characteristic.
- **Discrimination by perception** – When someone is treated unfairly because others believe they have a protected characteristic.
- **Victimisation** – A person is treated less favourably because they have or is expected to complain about discrimination.
- **Harassment** – Unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.
- **Bullying** – Persistent, offensive, abusive, intimidating, or insulting behaviour, abuse of power or unfair sanctions which make the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable, which undermines their self-confidence, and which may cause them to suffer stress

Positive action: When an employer or organisation takes positive steps to help or encourage certain groups to participate in activity or overcome or minimise disadvantages. For example, offering leadership developing training to women when an organisation has identified that that women are under-represented in senior leadership roles.

This measure stops short of allowing preference to be given to less qualified applicants (e.g., employing or promoting an individual solely because they are from an under-represented group regardless of their suitability for the position); this is considered positive discrimination and is unlawful.

Occupational Requirement: There are times when it is fair and lawful to state a preference for a person of a particular sex or a particular ethnic origin. This is when you can prove that it is essential for the purposes of the job to be of a particular sex or to come from a particular ethnic background. This is referred to as an occupational requirement.

Equality targets: These are targets an organisation has decided to establish to ensure equality of opportunity. Equality targets are not the same as setting or establishing quotas. Quotas involve setting aside a number of jobs only to be filled by a particular group. This restricts the opportunity for other people to fill these positions and would therefore result in unfair or unlawful discrimination.

Reasonable Adjustments: Under anti-discrimination legislation (e.g., Equality Act 2010) employers are required to make reasonable adjustments for disabled staff. This means making changes to a disabled person's environment or the way their employment is structured to mitigate any disadvantages, and allows them to work safely and productively. This may include, removing physical barriers, providing extra support, and providing flexibility.

4. Our standards and commitment

- Every employee is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity, equality, and respect for all. ZBeT will not tolerate any acts of unlawful or unfair discrimination (including harassment) committed against an employee, contractor, job applicant or visitor because of a protected characteristic, including:
 - sex.
 - gender reassignment.
 - marriage and civil partnership.
 - pregnancy and maternity.
 - race (including ethnic origin, colour, nationality, and national origin).
 - disability.
 - sexual orientation.
 - religion and or belief.
 - age.
- Discrimination on the basis of work pattern (part-time working, fixed term contract, flexible working) which is unjustifiable will also not be tolerated.
- ZBeT will ensure that recruitment & selection, and promotion is transparent merit-based and fair. We will refer to this policy on all our job adverts and recruitment drives. We commit to providing recruitment and selection training, including training on equal opportunities and unconscious bias.

- Our services will take a person-centred approach, and diversity considerations will be incorporated into processes and delivery to ensure that all our services are accessible to all. We will endeavour to prevent discrimination and protect the dignity of our service users/clients.
- We expect that all our people will use appropriately inclusive language and behave in a way that will uphold the dignity of colleagues, clients, and stakeholders.
- All employees will be encouraged to develop their skills and fulfil their potential and to take advantage of training, development, and progression opportunities at ZBeT. Selection for employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability.
- No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.
- We commit to providing and supporting channels for our people to have their voices heard. This includes opportunities to network with one another, and feedback to organisational proposals.
- Any new and reviewed policies, programmes, decisions that will affect our people will undergo an Equality Impact Assessment. This is to ensure that any negative impact on those with protected characteristics is mitigated wherever possible at all levels of ZBeT and in all our activities.
- Our assessment tools undergo extensive internal review to ensure wide applicability and fairness to all groups. We are transparent with candidates offering clarity of instruction and detailed feedback. For candidates who have little or no experience of assessment we provide knowledge to enable them to compete effectively and fairly.
- We will integrate multiple perspectives into our research, idea generation, consultation, and decision-making processes, thus increasing the probability of greater fairness, creativity, and innovation in all our outcomes.

5. When does this policy apply?

This policy applies to all conduct in the workplace and also to conduct outside of the workplace that is related to your work (e.g., at meetings, social events and social interactions with colleagues) or which may impact on ZBeT's reputation (e.g., the expression of views on social media, contrary to the commitments expressed in this policy, which could be linked to ZBeT). We set out below some specific areas of application:

5.1. Recruitment

Selection for employment at ZBeT will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. Further detail is set out in ZBeT's Recruitment and Selection Policy. Where possible, ZBeT will capture applicants' diversity demographics as part of its recruitment processes to promote the elimination of unlawful discrimination.

5.2. Training

You may also be required to participate in training and development activities from time to time, to encourage the promotion of the principles of this policy.

5.3. Promotion

All promotion decisions will be made on the basis of merit, and will not be influenced by any of the protected characteristics listed above. Promotion opportunities will be monitored to ensure equality of opportunity at all levels. Where appropriate, steps will be taken to identify and remove unnecessary or unjustifiable barriers to promotion.

5.4. During employment

The benefits, terms and conditions of employment and facilities available to ZBeT employees will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that access is not restricted by unlawful means and to provide appropriate conditions to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or under-represented groups.

6. Laws and regulations

This policy ensures our compliance with the requirements of relevant UK legislation including the Equality Act 2010, The Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, and the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis by ZBeT to assess its effectiveness and may be amended from time to time.

This policy is for guidance only and does not form part of your contract of employment.

7. Monitoring and compliance

- All diversity-related staff and complaints data will be captured and actively monitored, to ensure our policy and strategies are working effectively in practice and inform their development.
- Diversity-related actions and targets within the corporate strategy will be monitored and reported on. Procedures will be put in place to assess and monitor potential and existing partners, to confirm that their practices and behaviours are consistent with our commitment to equal opportunities.
- Feedback and consultations will take place regularly, including collecting the views of our people in relation to diversity.
- Any breach of this policy will be promptly investigated, and any breaches by staff will be a matter for disciplinary action.
- Anonymised equality and diversity monitoring information may be provided to external organisations to meet our contractual obligations or to comply with legislation (e.g., Race Equality Standards, or gender pay gap reporting requirements).
- If you believe that you may have suffered discrimination you should consider the appropriateness and feasibility of attempted informal resolution by discussion in the first instance with your line manager or another colleague in a relevant position of seniority. You

may decide in the alternative to raise the matter through ZBeT's Harassment Policy or Grievance Policy.

- Any individual who experiences or witnesses discrimination / harassment is encouraged to report it.
- Allegations regarding potential breaches of this policy will be treated in confidence and investigated in accordance with the appropriate procedure. ZBeT will ensure that individuals who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably by ZBeT as a result. However, false allegations of a breach of this policy which are found to have been made in bad faith will be dealt with under ZBeT's Discipline Policy.
- Employees may also be personally liable for any acts of discrimination prohibited by this policy that they commit, meaning that they can be sued by the victim.
- The officers and Directors of ZBeT are responsible for championing equality, diversity and inclusion and ensuring that the policy is consistent with the fundamental principles and that resources, support and leadership is provided to ensure this policy can be meaningfully implemented, and that effective development, implementation and monitoring of equality and diversity objectives and related actions is achieved.
- The Chief Operating Officer, Sarah Linton is the policy owner and is responsible for ensuring that this policy is fit for purpose and up to date.
- All line managers and executive leadership are the policy leads as well as diversity team, and are responsible for the development, monitoring and updating of this policy. They are also responsible for supporting the communication and implementation of this policy.
- Our staff are ultimately responsible for championing equality, diversity, and inclusion, understanding how the policy relates to their role, and reporting cases of discrimination, harassment, and unfair treatment.

8. Document history

8.1. Revision history

This document is subject to Change Control and as such any amendments must be carried out through the Document Change Management process and all Approvers must agree to the amendments. This document will update as and when required, and in any case, on an annual basis

Date of this revision 01/08/2022 Date of next review 01/08/2023

Version Number	Revision Date	Change History	Changes Marked	Updated By
V1.8.22	01/08/2022	New policy created	yes	Sarah Linton, Talal Malik

8.2. Reviewers

This document requires to be reviewed by the following reviewers.

Name	Title	Review date
Sarah Linton, Stu Scott Davies	COO, IT Director	15/08/2022

8.3. Approvers

This document requires the following approvals.

Name	Title	Approved date
Sarah Linton, Stu Scott Davies	COO, IT Director	15/08/2022

8.4. Distribution list

Once complete, this document will be distributed to:

All interested parties.