Quality and Compliance Manual

How we work, the standards we meet and how we check them

Document control	
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1. About this manual

This manual sets out the standards Assessment Hive Limited works to and how we show that we meet them. It applies to everyone who works for or on behalf of the company, and to every service we provide:

- **Energy certificates:** Energy Performance Certificates and MEES compliance
- **Property assessments and reports:** SAP and SBEM calculations, energy statements, air tightness testing, water calculations and overheating assessments
- **Floor planning:** detailed floor plans, Land Registry plans, fire plans, licensing plans and HMO plans
- **Property searches:** local authority, environmental, water, chancel, highways, development and utilities searches

It replaces our earlier Quality Policy Statement, Ethics Policy, Anti-Bribery Policy, Hospitality and Gifts Policy, Whistleblowing Policy, Modern Slavery Policy, Code of Conduct for Sub-Contractors, Suppliers and Partners, and Sub-Contractor Questionnaire.

This manual works alongside our other company documents:

Document	What it covers
Terms of Business	The terms on which we supply all services
Complaints Procedures	How we handle complaints about searches, and about certificates, assessments and plans
Data Protection and Information Security	How we collect, use, store and protect personal information
Health, Safety and Environment	How we keep people safe on site and in the office, and reduce our environmental impact
Operations Procedure	Step-by-step workflows for each service, and how we recruit and train staff

2. Our quality policy

Our aim is simple: every certificate, report, plan and search we issue should be accurate, on time and able to stand up to scrutiny by our accreditation schemes, the Property Codes Compliance Board, our customers and anyone who relies on our work.

To achieve this, we will:

- Understand what each customer needs before we start, and confirm the scope, price and timescale in writing
- Only let people carry out work they are trained, accredited and signed off to do
- Follow the methodology, conventions and evidence standards set by our schemes and the Search Code
- Check a sample of completed work every month and act on what we find
- Treat complaints, queries and audit findings as a chance to improve
- Review this manual, our procedures and our performance at least once a year

3. Roles and responsibilities

Assessment Hive is a family business. Responsibilities are set out by role below.

Role	Responsibilities
Chief Compliance Officer (CCO): Andrew Andreou	Overall responsibility for this manual; Search Code Compliance Officer; annual audit and statement to the PCCB; approves marketing; holds the registers in this manual; first contact for complaints, concerns and whistleblowing. Also leads on data protection and on health and safety.
Energy assessors	Carry out certificates, assessments, air tests and plans in line with their accreditation and this manual; collect and file site evidence; keep accreditation and CPD current; review colleagues' work in the monthly quality checks
Administration	Take enquiries and orders; confirm scope, price and timescales; book appointments in Workever; order, track and check searches; issue reports; log queries and complaints and pass them to the CCO
Everyone	Follow this manual; keep training current; declare conflicts of interest; record gifts and hospitality; raise concerns

Where this manual asks for a second person to check or approve something and the CCO is the person involved, another team member carries out that step.

4. Competence, accreditation and training

Accreditation

- Every energy assessor holds current accreditation with Elmhurst Energy and Quidos before carrying out work under that scheme. Scheme membership has no expiry date, but each assessor must keep up with the scheme's CPD and quality assurance requirements.
- Each assessor works only within the categories of work their accreditation covers.
- Assessors carry photo ID cards on every site visit.
- Every team member holds a DBS check, renewed every two years. The next renewal is due on 25 April 2027.

Training

- Each person keeps a training log showing courses, CPD, scheme bulletins and events attended, with dates.
- Search work: training covers the Search Code, PCCB Compliance Notes and our search procedures, including events run by CoPSO and IPSA and Search Code newsletters.
- Energy work: training covers scheme updates and methodology changes, including the move to SAP 10.3 for the Future Homes Standard from 24 March 2027.
- New staff complete the induction and sign-off set out in the Operations Procedure before working alone.

Six-monthly review

Every six months, the CCO reviews each person's training log, monthly quality review results and any complaints or queries. The review is recorded, with any training needs and a date for completing them.

5. Code of conduct

Everyone who works for Assessment Hive will:

- Act with integrity and carry out work with due skill, care and diligence
- Report what they find, never what a customer would prefer the result to be

- Display our accreditation, Search Code and Property Ombudsman logos on relevant reports
- Tell customers our charges, and any extra charges, before work starts
- Keep customers informed if a report or search will be delayed
- Answer queries within 5 working days and handle complaints under our Complaints Procedures
- Keep customer information confidential and use it only for the job it was given for
- Treat customers, occupiers, colleagues and suppliers with courtesy and respect, without discrimination

On site

- Arrive within the agreed time slot, or contact the customer if running late
- Show photo ID on arrival and explain what the visit involves
- Treat the property and its contents with care, and leave it as found
- Take extra care where an occupier may be vulnerable (for example elderly, unwell or a child is present). If anything gives cause for concern, stop the visit if needed and tell the CCO the same day.
- Never attend site under the influence of alcohol or drugs

6. Independence and conflicts of interest

Our reports are only valuable if they are independent. A conflict of interest arises when a personal or business link could affect, or appear to affect, our judgement.

- Before accepting a job, declare any link to the property, its owner, the buyer, the seller or the agent to the CCO, for example a family relationship or a financial interest.
- Where required on an EPC, record any related-party disclosure accurately.
- The CCO decides whether the job can go ahead, needs reassigning or must be declined, and records the decision in the Conflicts Register.
- We never accept an instruction that depends on achieving a particular rating, result or outcome.

7. Quality checks

Monthly review

Each month, the CCO arranges a review of one job from each service category: one EPC or MEES report, one energy assessment, one plan and one search. The work reviewed is rotated so each person's work is checked at least once a quarter, and nobody reviews their own job. Reviews use the checklists in the compliance plan and are recorded in the monthly review log.

Where a review finds a problem, the reviewer records the action needed, the person responsible and a date. If the issue affects a report already issued, the CCO decides whether the customer must be told and the report corrected or reissued. A failed check is followed up with a further review the next month.

Scheme audits

Elmhurst and Quidos audit our energy work. Audit results are filed, and any corrective action is completed within the time the scheme sets and recorded.

8. Property searches and the Search Code

Assessment Hive is registered with the Property Codes Compliance Board (PCCB) as a subscriber to the Search Code. We only use search compilers that are registered with the PCCB. Our registration renews on 12 January each year.

Ordering and delivery

- Confirm the property, the searches ordered, the price and any further charges with the customer before ordering
- Give the customer a description of what each search product contains and our Terms of Business
- Before using a compiler, and every year after, check that it is registered with the PCCB, and keep a record of the check. A compiler that is not registered is not used.
- Diarise the expected return date and chase the compiler if it is late; tell the customer immediately of any delay
- Check each search before sending: right property, all searches included, compiler named, logos, planning cut-off dates where they apply, specialist search insurance where used, and the Important Consumer Protection Information
- Send each search to the customer within 24 hours of receiving it from the compiler

Queries and complaints

- Respond to queries within 5 working days. Where a query concerns the compiler's work, pass it on the same day and make sure a response is given within the same time.
- Log any query that cannot be answered straight away.
- Handle complaints under the Complaints Procedure for property searches and record them in the complaints log, including nil returns.

Monitoring the Code

- The CCO audits our compliance with the Search Code at least once a year, using the PCCB template audit checklist in Compliance Note CN07, at the full inspection on the first Monday of January.
- The signed audit and statement of compliance are sent to the PCCB before our renewal date of 12 January.
- We co-operate fully with PCCB inspections and put agreed recommendations in place promptly.
- We report to the PCCB any breach of the Search Code by a search provider that we become aware of.
- Changes to the Search Code, Compliance Notes or registration rules are reviewed by the CCO and built into our procedures and terms.

9. Energy certificates, assessments and plans

- Follow the current methodology, conventions and evidence requirements of the scheme the work is lodged under.
- Use the correct software and methodology version for each job (for example SAP 10.2 or SAP 10.3), and record it on the job file.
- Collect and file site evidence (photos, notes and measurements) that supports every input.
- Lodge certificates on time and send them to the customer.
- Clearly label energy assessments as design stage or as built, with a version number.
- For air tightness testing, use calibrated equipment with an in-date certificate and record test conditions.
- For plans, check measurements, include scale and north point, follow HM Land Registry or council requirements, and show the Ordnance Survey copyright notice where OS mapping is used.

10. Records

Record	Kept for	Where
Search reports and order correspondence	At least 6 years	Microsoft OneDrive for Business, backed up daily by IT Zero
Energy certificates, assessments, site evidence and plans	At least as long as the relevant scheme requires	Workever and OneDrive
Complaints and outcomes	At least 7 years	Complaints log
Query log	At least 6 years	OneDrive
Monthly review log and scheme audit results	At least 6 years	OneDrive
Training logs and six-monthly reviews	Employment plus 6 years	OneDrive
Conflicts, and Gifts and Hospitality Registers	At least 6 years	Held by the CCO

11. Marketing and our website

- The CCO approves all marketing material, website content and social media posts about our services before they are published.
- Claims must be accurate and supported, including prices, turnaround times and accreditations.
- Accreditation, Search Code and Property Ombudsman logos are used only as each body allows.
- Our website shows our complaints procedures, Property Ombudsman details, Important Consumer Protection Information and Terms of Business.

12. Ethics and human rights

We conduct our business fairly, honestly and lawfully, and expect the same of everyone we work with.

- We treat everyone with dignity and respect, and do not tolerate harassment, bullying or discrimination.
- We oppose slavery, forced labour and human trafficking in all forms. We check who works for us, give every employee a written contract, and pay in line with the law.
- We use information given to us only for the purpose it was given, never for personal gain.
- We do not mislead our customers, suppliers, creditors or anyone else who relies on us.
- We comply with environmental law and work to keep our environmental impact low.

13. Anti-bribery, gifts and hospitality

We do not tolerate bribery in any form. Under the Bribery Act 2010, offering, paying, requesting or accepting a bribe is a criminal offence, and so is a company failing to prevent bribery by people acting for it.

Rules

- Never offer, pay, request or accept money or any other advantage intended to influence a report, a search, a referral or any business decision.
- Never make facilitation payments (small payments to speed up routine actions).
- Never give or accept cash as a gift.

- We do not pay or accept referral fees from anyone, including through networking groups. Referrals are welcome, but no money or other reward changes hands for them.
- We make no political donations. Charitable donations are made only to registered charities, never in cash, and are recorded.

Gifts

Token gifts such as pens, calendars or a small box of chocolates may be accepted. Any other gift should be politely declined. If refusing would cause real offence, it may be accepted and donated to charity.

Hospitality

Normal working refreshments, and hospitality offered to everyone at an event or free seminar, may be accepted. Any other hospitality needs approval from the CCO before it is accepted, or from another team member if the CCO is the person offered it. Hospitality worth over £50 should normally be declined.

Gifts and Hospitality Register

Every gift or hospitality offered, other than tokens, is recorded in the register held by the CCO within 5 working days: what was offered, by whom, its estimated value, whether it was accepted or declined and why, and who approved it.

Any breach of these rules may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal, and may be reported to the police.

14. Raising concerns (whistleblowing)

Anyone who works for us can raise a concern about wrongdoing without fear of being treated unfairly. This includes concerns that:

- a criminal offence, including bribery, has been or may be committed
- someone is failing to meet a legal obligation, including under the Search Code or scheme rules
- someone's health or safety is at risk
- the environment is being damaged
- information about any of the above is being hidden

How to raise a concern

1. Raise it with the CCO, in person or in writing.
2. If the concern involves the CCO, raise it with another team member, or with the relevant outside body: the PCCB for Search Code matters, Elmhurst or Quidos for scheme matters, or another prescribed body such as the Health and Safety Executive.
3. For free, confidential advice, contact the whistleblowing charity Protect.

Concerns are treated in confidence, looked into promptly, and the person raising them is told the outcome where possible. Nobody will suffer any detriment for raising a genuine concern, even if it turns out to be mistaken. Deliberately false allegations are treated as misconduct.

15. Suppliers and subcontractors

Suppliers

Our main suppliers are our search compilers, all registered with the PCCB, IT Zero (website, email, Microsoft 365 and hardware) and Workever (case management). We expect every supplier to:

- Act lawfully, honestly and ethically, and not offer bribes or inducements

- Protect any personal data we share with them, under a written agreement where they process it for us
- Hold the registrations, accreditations and insurance their work requires
- Treat their own workers fairly and keep modern slavery out of their business

The CCO reviews our suppliers each year at the January inspection.

Subcontractors

Before any subcontractor carries out work on our behalf, the CCO will approve them using our subcontractor approval checklist, and they will:

- Hold current accreditation for the work, with Elmhurst Energy, Quidos or another approved scheme, and work only within it
- Hold their own professional indemnity and public liability insurance at levels we agree, and employers' liability where they employ staff
- Hold a current DBS check and carry photo ID on site visits
- Have suitable health and safety arrangements and risk assessments for the work
- Sign a written agreement setting out the scope of work, timescales, fees, confidentiality, data protection and record keeping
- Read this manual, and follow our code of conduct, conflicts of interest, anti-bribery, gifts and hospitality rules, and our Health, Safety and Environment document
- Never pass the work on to anyone else without our written agreement

We remain responsible to our customers for work carried out by a subcontractor. Subcontracted work is included in the monthly quality checks, and any complaint about it is handled under our Complaints Procedures. Where the law, the Search Code or a scheme requires it, the customer is told that a subcontractor will carry out the work. Each subcontractor is reviewed every year at the January inspection, and approval is withdrawn if they no longer meet these requirements.

16. Review

This manual is reviewed by the CCO every year at the full inspection on the first Monday of January, and sooner if the law, the Search Code, scheme rules or our services change. Every team member reads it when joining and after each review, and confirms in writing that they have done so.

Internal records referred to in this document, such as registers, logs, risk assessments and checklists, are available on request.