

The BIT Collective – Whistleblowing Policy

Last Updated September 2022

1. Introduction

Individuals in the workplace have the right to protection from victimisation where they make a protected disclosure or malpractice within an organisation. You do not need to be an employee of the organisation in order to raise a genuine concern of malpractice or wrongdoing.

Within The BIT Collective, we are committed to providing a safe environment for our freelance contractors and volunteers to raise and discuss any concerns they may have about potential malpractice or wrongdoing. Everyone should have the confidence to speak up, and to know that those raising a genuine concern will not suffer any detriment.

This whistleblowing policy sets out The BIT Collectives procedure for receiving concerns of volunteers, employees or freelance contractors. It is important that The BIT Collective knows about potential malpractice or wrongdoing within the organisation as soon as possible, so that, where appropriate, we can act quickly and effectively to put matters right.

2. What should be reported under the Whistleblowing policy?

The BIT Collective's whistleblowing policy can be used to disclose any concerns about existing or potential malpractice or wrongdoing within the organisation, for example:

- That a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed, or is likely to be committed;
- That a person has failed, is failing, or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation to which he or she is subject;
- That the health and safety of any individual has been, is being, or is likely to be endangered;
- That information tending to show the matter falling within any one of the preceding paragraphs has been, or is likely to be, deliberately concealed.

Any concern of malpractice must be a genuine concern and cannot be made in bad faith. However, it does not matter if you do not have conclusive evidence of the concern occurring, or if you are in fact mistaken and the concern has in fact not occurred – as long as you reasonably believe what you tell us. Please report genuine concerns at the earliest stage rather than wait for proof. If you have any personal interest in the matter, we do ask that you tell us.

Please be mindful of the distinction between a whistleblowing concern and a grievance. Grievances are concerns about an individual's personal circumstances and can be addressed by contacting thebitcollective1@gmail.com. Whistleblowing matters are those that are about unlawful conduct, financial malpractice or dangers to personal health or safety or the environment.

Whistleblowers who make disclosures on a regular basis which have been subsequently found to be frivolous, baseless, and having malicious intention will be disqualified from reporting further disclosures under this Policy.

3. How to raise a concern

Any person who wishes to make a disclosure of malpractice or wrongdoing should discreetly get in touch with The BIT Collective core team by emailing thebitcollective@gmail.com.

While it is preferable to deal with concerns openly, we recognise that this will not always be possible. If you wish to contact a board member directly or anonymously, please fill out [this form](#). If you raise a concern anonymously or in confidence, we will not disclose your identity unless required by law. However, it may be more difficult for us to look into the matter directly if you do not wish to disclose your identity. Your identity will be kept confidential within The BIT Collective Core Team (the board).

4. How we will address concerns

Concerns of malpractice or wrongdoing within the organisation will be dealt with promptly and transparently by The BIT Collective Core Team (The Board). Appropriate care will be taken to keep the identity of the Whistleblower confidential.

Upon receiving a report of potential malpractice or wrongdoing, The Board will meet promptly and an internal investigation will be conducted within 45 days by an allocated team within The Board. Where a member of The Board has a personal stake or conflict of interest in the case, they will be excluded from the investigation. If appropriate, such as where there is reported to be urgent and direct threats to the health and safety of a BIT Collective volunteer, contractor, or team member, the Subject(s) implicated in the disclosure will be temporarily suspended from participating in The BIT Collective. During the investigation, the allocated investigation team shall keep matters confidential from the rest of The Board.

The BIT Collective may at its discretion, consider involving any external investigators for the purpose of investigation.

The decision to conduct an investigation is by itself not an accusation and is to be treated as a normal fact-finding process. The outcome of the investigation may not support or may not specifically align with the conclusion of the Whistleblower.

The Subject(s) will normally be informed of the allegations at the outset of a formal investigation and will have opportunities for providing their inputs or defense during the investigation. The Subject(s) shall be free at any time to engage external counsel at their own cost to represent them in the investigation proceedings, should things be escalated to an external body. However, the Subject has a responsibility not to interfere with the investigation. Evidence shall not be withheld, destroyed or tampered with and witnesses shall not be influenced, coached, threatened or intimidated by them.

The Subject(s) has a right to be informed of the outcome of the investigation. If allegations are not sustained, the Subject should not continue to be treated with any suspicion or with any indifference.

Whistleblowers will not suffer from unfair treatment, and The BIT Collective condemns any kind of discrimination, harassment or victimization or any other unfair employment practice being adopted against Whistleblowers. We will take steps to minimise difficulties which the Whistleblower may experience as a result of making the disclosure. If the Whistleblower is required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, The BIT Collective will arrange for the Whistleblower to receive appropriate external advice.

The identity of the Whistleblower shall be kept confidential to the extent possible and permitted under law. Whistleblowers are cautioned that their identity may become known or deduced for reasons outside of The BIT Collective's control.

5. Decision

If an investigation concludes that an improper unethical act has been committed, the BIT Collective Board shall take such disciplinary or corrective action as they deem fit, in line with our Constitution and this whistleblowing policy.

6. Amendment

The BIT Collective Board reserves its right to amend or modify this policy in whole or in part, at any time.