

## BYTES TECHNOLOGY GROUP PLC

(Incorporated in England and Wales)

Registered number: 12935776

### WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

30 NOVEMBER 2020

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#### 1. POLICY STATEMENT

**1.1** We are committed to conducting our business with honesty and integrity, and we expect all staff to maintain high standards. However, all organisations face the risk of things going wrong from time to time. A culture of openness and accountability is essential in order to prevent wrongdoing occurring and to address it if it does occur.

**1.2** The aims of this policy are:

**1.2.1** to encourage staff to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected;

**1.2.2** to provide staff with guidance as to how to raise those concerns;

**1.2.3** to reassure staff that they should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

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

#### 2. WHO IS COVERED BY THIS POLICY?

This policy applies to all individuals working at all levels of the organisation, including senior managers, officers, directors, employees, consultants, contractors, homeworkers, part-time and fixed-term workers, casual and agency staff (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

#### 3. WHAT IS WHISTLEBLOWING?

**3.1** Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work. This may include: criminal activity; miscarriages of justice; danger to health and safety; damage to the environment; failure to comply with any legal obligation; bribery; negligence; breach of our internal policies and procedures; or the deliberate concealment of any of these matters.

**3.2** A whistleblower is a person who raises a genuine concern relating to any of the above. If you have any genuine concerns related to suspected wrongdoing or negligence affecting any of our activities you should report it under this policy.

**3.3** This policy should not be used for complaints relating to your personal circumstances, such as the way you have been treated at work. In those cases you should use the Grievance Procedure.

**3.4** If you are uncertain whether something is within the scope of this policy you should seek advice from the Whistleblowing Officer, whose contact details are at the end of this policy.

#### **4. RAISING A WHISTLEBLOWING CONCERN**

**4.1** We hope that in many cases you will be able to raise any concerns with your line manager or the Human Resources department. You may tell them in person or put the matter in writing if you prefer. They may be able to agree a way of resolving your concern quickly and effectively. In some cases they may refer the matter to the Whistleblowing Officer.

**4.2** However, where the matter is more serious, or you feel that your line manager or the Human Resources department has not addressed your concern, or you prefer not to raise it with them for any reason, you should contact one of the following:

**4.2.1** The Whistleblowing Officer; or

**4.2.2** Protect, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline.

Contact details are set out at the end of this policy.

**4.3** We expect that any member of staff using this procedure to raise a disclosure will do so in good faith and will have a reason for believing that grounds for concern exist. No member of staff who discloses information in good faith under this procedure will suffer reprisals or victimisation nor will they suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of the disclosure.

**4.4** If a concern is raised in good faith, but after investigation it turns out that there is a genuine and innocent explanation for the matter of concern, the matter will simply be treated as closed. The fact of having raised the concern will in no sense reflect badly on the member of staff.

#### **5. CONFIDENTIALITY**

**5.1** We hope that staff will feel able to voice whistleblowing concerns openly under this policy. However, if you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret. If it is necessary for anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, we will discuss with you.

**5.2** We do not encourage staff to make disclosures anonymously. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information from you. Whistleblowers who are concerned about possible reprisals if their identity is revealed

should come forward to the Whistleblowing Officer or the other contact point listed in paragraph 4 and appropriate measures can then be taken to preserve confidentiality. If you are in any doubt you can seek advice from Protect, the independent whistleblowing charity, who offer a confidential helpline. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

## **6. EXTERNAL DISCLOSURES**

**6.1** The aim of this policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases you should not find it necessary to alert anyone externally.

**6.2** The law recognises that in some circumstances it may be appropriate for you to report your concerns to an external body such as a regulator. It will very rarely if ever be appropriate to alert the media. We strongly encourage you to seek advice before reporting a concern to anyone external. The independent whistleblowing charity, Protect, operates a confidential helpline. They also have a list of prescribed regulators for reporting certain types of concern. Their contact details are at the end of this policy.

**6.3** Whistleblowing concerns usually relate to the conduct of our staff, but they may sometimes relate to the actions of a third party, such as a customer or supplier or service provider. The law allows you to raise a concern with a third party, where you reasonably believe it relates mainly to their actions or something that is legally their responsibility. However, we encourage you to report such concerns internally first. You should contact your line manager or the Human Resources department or one of the other individuals set out in paragraph 4 for guidance.

## **7. INVESTIGATION AND OUTCOME**

**7.1** We will arrange a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss your concern. You may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this policy. Your companion must respect the confidentiality of your disclosure and any subsequent investigation.

**7.2** Following this meeting, we will carry out an initial assessment to determine the scope of any investigation. We will inform you of the outcome of our assessment. You may be required to attend additional meetings in order to provide further information.

**7.3** In some cases we may appoint an investigator or team of investigators including staff with relevant experience of investigations or specialist knowledge of the subject matter. The investigator(s) may make recommendations for change to enable us to minimise the risk of future wrongdoing.

**7.4** We will aim to keep you informed of the progress of the investigation and its likely timescale. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality may prevent us giving you specific details of the investigation or any disciplinary action taken as a result. You should treat any information about the investigation as confidential.

**7.5** If we conclude that a member of staff has raised a concern under this procedure maliciously, or without having any reasonable grounds for doing so, action may be taken against the member of staff under the disciplinary procedure. In extreme cases, this could result in dismissal.

## **8. IF YOU ARE NOT SATISFIED**

**8.1** While we cannot always guarantee the outcome you are seeking, we will try to deal with your concern fairly and in an appropriate way. By using this policy you can help us to achieve this.

**8.2** If you are not happy with the way in which your concern has been handled, you can raise it with the other key contact in paragraph 4. Contact details are set out at the end of this policy.

## **9. PROTECTION AND SUPPORT FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS**

**9.1** It is understandable that whistleblowers are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support staff who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

**9.2** Staff must not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform the Whistleblowing Officer immediately. If the matter is not remedied you should raise it formally using our Grievance Procedure.

**9.3** Staff must not threaten or retaliate against whistleblowers in any way. Anyone involved in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action.

## **10. RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SUCCESS OF THIS POLICY**

**10.1** The Board has overall responsibility for this policy, and for reviewing the effectiveness of actions taken in response to concerns raised under this policy.

**10.2** The Whistleblowing Officer has day-to-day operational responsibility for this policy, and must ensure that all managers and other staff who may deal with concerns or investigations under this policy receive regular and appropriate training.

**10.3** The Whistleblowing Officer, in conjunction with the Board should review this policy from a legal and operational perspective at least once a year.

**10.4** All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they use it to disclose any suspected wrongdoing. Staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved. Comments, suggestions and queries should be addressed to the Whistleblowing Officer.

## Contact details

Whistleblowing Officer	David Maw Per: WK Groenewald (Group Company Secretary) <a href="mailto:WK.Groenewald@Bytes.co.uk">WK.Groenewald@Bytes.co.uk</a>
Chair of the board of directors	Patrick De Smedt Per: WK Groenewald (Group Company Secretary) <a href="mailto:WK.Groenewald@Bytes.co.uk">WK.Groenewald@Bytes.co.uk</a>
Protect (Independent whistleblowing charity)	Helpline: 020 3117 2520 E-mail: <a href="mailto:whistle@protect-advice.org.uk">whistle@protect-advice.org.uk</a> Website: <a href="http://www.protect-advice.org.uk">www.protect-advice.org.uk</a>