



Bridging the Gap (Manchester)

Whistleblowing Policy

Registered Charity Number: 1170952

This policy and guidance will be reviewed annually or if there are any changes in the related legislation or when an incident dictates. This will ensure that this document is current and fit for purpose.

Date reviewed: 21st January 2023

Reviewed by: Michelle McHale & Lynda Mason

Next review due: 21st January 2024

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1. Scope of the Policy

It is important that any fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing by staff or others working on behalf of BTG is reported and properly dealt with. BTG, therefore, requires all individuals to raise any concerns that they may have about the conduct of others in BTG or the way in which the organisation is run.

This policy sets out the way in which individuals may raise any concerns that they have and how those concerns will be dealt with.

2. Background

The **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, amended the Employment Rights Act 1996** provides protection for workers who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters in the public interest. These are called 'qualifying disclosures'.

A 'qualifying disclosure' is one made by an employee who has a reasonable belief that any of the following is being, has been or is likely to be, committed: -

- a criminal offence
- a miscarriage of justice
- an act creating risk to health and safety
- an act causing damage to the environment
- a breach of any other legal obligation
- concealment of any of the above

It is not necessary for you to have proof that such an act is being, has been, or is likely to be committed; a reasonable belief is sufficient. You have no responsibility for investigating the matter – it is BTG's responsibility to ensure that an investigation takes place.

If a protected disclosure is made then the person has the right not to be dismissed, subjected to any other detriment or victimised because of making this disclosure. BTG encourages concerns to be raised using this procedure in the first instance.

3. Principles

- Everyone should be aware of the importance of preventing and eliminating wrongdoing at work. Staff and others working on behalf of BTG should be watchful for illegal or unethical conduct and report anything of that nature that they become aware of.
- Any matter raised under this procedure will be investigated thoroughly, promptly and confidentially, and the outcome of the investigation reported back to the person who raised the issue.

- No employee or other person working on behalf of BTG will be victimised for raising a matter under this procedure. This means that the continued employment and opportunities for future promotion or training of the worker will not be prejudiced because they have raised a legitimate concern.
- Victimisation of an individual for raising a qualified disclosure will be a disciplinary offence.
- If misconduct is discovered as a result of any investigation under this procedure, BTG's disciplinary procedure will be used, in addition to any appropriate external measures. Maliciously making a false allegation is a disciplinary offence.
- An instruction to cover up wrongdoing is itself a disciplinary offence. If told not to raise or pursue any concern, even by a person in authority such as a manager, you should not agree to remain silent. You should report the matter to BTG's Safeguarding Officer.

4. Procedure

This procedure is for disclosures about matters other than a breach of a staff member's contract of employment, which should be raised via BTG's grievance procedure.

Stage 1

In the first instance, any concerns should be raised with BTG's Safeguarding Officer, who will arrange an investigation of the matter.

The investigation may involve you and other individuals involved giving a written statement. Any investigation will be carried out in accordance with the principles set out above. Your statement will be taken into account and you will be asked to comment on any additional evidence obtained.

The Safeguarding Officer will take any necessary action, including reporting the matter to the Chair of the Board of Trustees and any appropriate Government department or regulatory agency.

The Safeguarding Officer will also invoke any disciplinary action required. At the conclusion of any investigation, the person raising the concern will be told the outcome and what BTG has done, or proposes to do, about it. If no action is to be taken, the reason for this will be explained.

Stage 2

If you are concerned that the Safeguarding Officer is involved in the wrongdoing, has failed to make a proper investigation or has failed to report the outcome of the investigations to the relevant person, you should escalate the matter to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

The Chair will arrange for a review of the investigation to be carried out, make any necessary enquiries and make their own report to the Board.

Stage 3

If, at the conclusion of stages 1 and 2, you reasonably believe that the appropriate action has not been taken, you should report the matter to the relevant body. This includes: -

- HM Revenue & Customs
- the Health and Safety Executive
- the Environment Agency
- the Serious Fraud Office
- the Charity Commission
- the Pensions Regulator
- the Information Commissioner
- the Financial Conduct Authority.

You can find the full list in **The Public Interest Disclosure (Prescribed Persons) Order 2014**: -

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/496899/BI_S-16-79-blowing-the-whistle-to-a-prescribed-person.pdf

5. Identified Persons within BTG

The persons identified for reporting purposes are as follows: -

Safeguarding Officers: Project Managers or Chair of Trustees

Chair of the Board of Trustees: Michelle McHale BEM