

# **Penplusbytes Safeguarding Policy**

## ***Introduction***

Penplusbytes is an equal opportunity employer and the organisation's outlook is to ensure the protection of people, particularly children, at risk adults and beneficiaries of Penplusbytes assistance, from any harm that may be caused due to their coming into contact with Penplusbytes in terms of the conduct of staff and others associated with our work and all those involved in our programmes and activities.

The policy lays out the commitments made by Penplusbytes, and informs staff and associated personnel of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding.

This means we make sure that every employee and all our organizational beneficiaries are protected in terms of upholding their health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect while at the same time ensuring all persons who come into contact with the organization are protected.

Penplusbytes also believes that equitable and sustainable development is only possible if both men and women have fair access to opportunity. To this end we provide the same equal opportunities for our programme beneficiaries. In essence we recognise that it is essential to provide equal opportunities to all persons without discrimination and commit ourselves diligently to ensuring this.

This policy sets out the organisation's position on safeguarding, including recruitment and promotion and project execution, giving guidance and encouragement to employees at all levels to act fairly and prevent discrimination and exploitation on the grounds of sex, race, marital status, part-time and fixed term contract status, age, sexual orientation or religion.

## ***Statement of policy***

(a) Penplusbytes deems it absolutely important that everyone that comes into contact with our work and personnel, regardless of age, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation or ethnic origin has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation. To this end, Penplusbytes has a zero-tolerance approach to serious misconduct and will not tolerate its staff, volunteers, consultants, partners or any representatives associated with our field of endeavour or our partners engaging in

any form of violence, abuse, harassment or exploitation.

(b) It is the policy of Penplusbytes to ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of sex, race, marital status, disability, age, part-time or fixed term contract status, sexual orientation or religion, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable. The organisation is committed not only to its legal obligations but also to the positive promotion of equality of opportunity in all aspects of employment.

(c) It is also the policy of Penplusbytes to ensure that no project beneficiary receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of sex, race, marital status, disability, age, part-time or fixed term contract status, sexual orientation or religion, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable which has the potential to lead to physical, psychological and emotional abuse.

(d) The organisation recognises that adhering to the Equal Opportunities Policy, combined with relevant employment policies and practices, maximises the effective use of individuals in both the organisation's and employee's best interests. Penplusbytes recognises the great benefits in having a diverse workforce with different backgrounds, solely employed on ability.

(e) The application of recruitment, training, and promotion policies to all individuals, programme beneficiaries, partners will be on the basis of job requirements and the individual's ability and merits.

(f) All employees and partners of the organisation will be made aware of the provisions of this policy.

### ***Penplusbytes Safeguarding***

#### ***Safeguarding***

- (a) **Awareness:** Ensuring staff and all personnel associated to Penplusbytes are oriented on regular basis on the organisation's safeguarding policy. This will involve having easy access to the policy, inculcate the safeguarding values, know their responsibilities within this policy and have the requisite knowledge to detect irregularities and abuse of any nature and form and be empowered to report and seek help in real-time. For Penplusbytes external partners, this policy

will be displayed and updated on the organisations website and shared with external parties during workshop and other engagements including online activities – Facebook and Twitter

(b) **Prevention:** Penplusbytes will design and implement all its programmes and activities in a way that protects people from any risk of harm that may arise from their coming into contact with the organisation. This includes the way in which information about individuals in our programmes is gathered and communicated and also promptly follow-up and take the requisite action on safeguarding reports received. In doing this Penplusbytes shall implement stringent safeguarding procedures when recruiting, managing and deploying staff and associated personnel. These stringent procedures includes the following:

- (i) Undertaking investigations into criminal records of new employees and volunteers before being engaged by Penplusbytes. Questionnaire for all applicants shall include disclosure records of all criminal convictions and ask for reference/endorsement letters from previous employers
- (ii) Ensure non-employment of convicts of sexual offences such as rapists and pedophiles
- (iii) Share information with other related partners on known criminals and seek out same to ensure criminals are not engaged to undertake work with children and other beneficiaries of our work

(c) **Reporting:** Penplusbytes will ensure the easy availability of both face-to-face and online (anonymous) reporting that safeguarding infringements for both staff (internal) and the stakeholders (external) we work with.

*How to report a safeguarding concern*

*Staff members who have a complaint or concern relating to safeguarding should report it immediately to their Safeguarding Focal Point or line manager. If the staff member does not feel comfortable reporting to their Safeguarding Focal Point or line manager they may report to any other appropriate staff member or use the organisations online platform.*

*Alternatively, all reports can be sent directly to the Executive Director Juliet Amoah at [Juliet@penplusbytes.org](mailto:Juliet@penplusbytes.org). Confidential reports can be sent to the Penplusbytes Board of Directors at [board@penplusbytes.org](mailto:board@penplusbytes.org)*

(d) Penplusbytes will follow up safeguarding reports and concerns according to the

organisations internal policy and procedure manual, in combination with the legal and statutory obligations of Penplusbytes. Penplusbytes shall apply appropriate disciplinary measures to staff found in breach of policy as it is spelt out in the organisations employee manual. Penplusbytes will offer the relevant support to the victim of abuse to ensure they are put back on their feet.

- (e) Confidentiality: This will be maintained at all stages of the process when dealing with safeguarding concerns. Information relating to the concern and subsequent case management would be shared on a need to know basis only, and shall be kept secure at all times.

### **Abuse, harassment & Vilification**

Penplusbytes will not tolerate sexual harassment or disability harassment or on any other grounds, such as race, age and sexual orientation. Harassment is behaviour that is not welcome, not asked for and not returned, and which is likely to cause an uncomfortable workplace by humiliating, seriously embarrassing, offending or intimidating someone.

- (a) All employees are responsible for their own actions and should not engage in potentially offensive behaviour.
- (b) It is not necessary for the person being harassed to have to tell others that they were humiliated or offended by the behaviour.

Penplusbytes by this policy abhors all forms of abuse, which include inflicting harm or failing to prevent harm. This abuse includes but not limited to what has been defined in Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states:

- Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

- (a) Under this policy abuse includes both physical and emotional and includes the following:
  - (i) Torture, cruelty, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, hitting, kicking or shaking
  - (ii) Persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection, such as degrading

punishments, threats and not giving care and affection, medical care and protection resulting in adverse effects on behaviour and emotional developments of a person

- (iii) Sexual abuse and exploitation which includes rape, incest and exposure to pornography and all other forms of sexual activities. Penplusbytes takes a strong exception to the intentional exchange of favours and benefits for sexual gain. Sexual abuse also includes jokes and behaviours that violates ones dignity, causes intimidation, offend and humiliates another person
- (iv) Other forms of sexual abuse includes unwelcome sexual advances, touching and various forms of sexual assault, displaying nude pictures, photos or drawings and sending texts or emails with a sexual content both explicit or implied.
- (v) Vilification of an employee because of their disability or gender is unacceptable in this workplace. Vilification is any activity in public that incites hatred, serious ridicule or contempt of a person because of their disability. Where such behaviour includes threats of harm or property damage, it may constitute serious vilification, which is a criminal offence.

We take reports of discrimination, harassment, vilification and victimization very seriously and will handle such complaints as quickly, confidentially and fairly as possible

### ***Discrimination, Grievances and Victimization***

Penplusbytes believes that everyone has the right to work in an environment free of discrimination, harassment, vilification, and victimization. Direct discrimination is when you are treated less favourably because of your sex, disability or other protected characteristic previously mentioned

We will not tolerate such behaviour under any circumstances. We will not tolerate direct or indirect discrimination based on sex, pregnancy, disability, marital status or family status or [add any other grounds, such as race, age and sexual orientation.

- (a) Penplusbytes emphasises that discrimination is unacceptable conduct, which may lead to disciplinary action under the organization's Disciplinary Procedure.
- (b) Any complaints of discrimination will be pursued through the organisation's Grievance Procedure.

(c) Penplusbytes will not disadvantage staff for complaining about unlawful conduct in the workplace or for helping someone else to do so.

***Who this policy covers***

This policy covers management, supervisors, all employees, including those on commission, casual and contract staff. It also covers customers, partners, project beneficiaries and anyone else to whom we provide goods, services or facilities.

Employees found to have engaged in unlawful behaviour will be disciplined and, in serious cases, dismissed and legal options undertaken.

**SIGNATURE**

By signing below, I hereby acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand the Penplusbytes Safeguarding Policy and fully commit to uphold and abide by this policy.

Name of Employee/Partner:

Signature:

Date: