

Centre

Complaints
procedure

Safeguarding and
Complaints

Centre

Date these procedures came into effect: 31/12/2021

Date these procedures must be updated by: 01/01/2023

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This document sets out: the complaint's procedures for Centre, what to do if you have a complaint, what will happen if someone has made a complaint against you and how incidents are dealt with.

Who is covered by this policy? This policy is applicable to all members of Centre. This includes the: Administration, Spokespeople, Regional/State Chairs, ex-members of Centre and members of Centre Students. You can also make a complaint as a member of the public.

People mentioned in the procedure:

See our full safeguarding, complaints and pastoral care team:

<https://centrethinktank.co.uk/safeguarding-complaints-and-pastoral-careteam/>

Preventing issues from occurring. Within Centre we want to create an atmosphere and a culture that ensures as far as possible people are comfortable to make complaints and incidents do not occur to begin with. We will also learn from any past safeguarding breaches or complaints to prevent issues from reoccurring.

Who to make a complaint to? We have a team within Centre that deals with collecting complaints, either of which you can make a complaint to. This can either be our Head of Complaints or our Deputy Head of Complaints. However, the Deputy Head should only be used if there is a conflict of interest with the Head of Complaints. Both also have previously undergone Disclosure and Barring Service checks (DBS). Our complaints team is independent of Centre and it includes our Head of Complaints and the Deputy Head of Complaints. These members are not allowed to have a position anywhere else within Centre to maintain their independence

Methods to make a complaint. Complaints should be reported through the complaints form on our website in the complaints and safeguarding hub. This form can include your name, email address so you can be kept up to date with the process, whether you are a member of Centre, whether the complaint happened to you or someone else, whether you would like to remain anonymous, whether you have done anything to try and resolve the issue, the categories the complaint falls under, an explanation of the complaint, the URL of the post if it is a social media post, whether there is currently a police investigation into the issue, whether there is any additional evidence in the case, the name of the person you would like to make a complaint about, how old they are, whether they are a member of Centre, what region they live in, what position they hold, what you would like to see happen with your complaint, whether it is a joint complaint, if your complaint is an appeal and whether you agree to our privacy policy

Any communications about the complaint should then take place only through the contact details provided by the person making the complaint and the email for the member of the complaints team dealing with your case. To make a joint complaint, both people must mention the other person making the complaint alongside them in their own complaint.

The first email you will receive from our complaints team will simply acknowledge that we have received your complaint. If a member of our complaints and safeguarding team does not get back to you within a few days to acknowledge they have received your complaint, you can contact them by email. Our Head of Complaints, George, is at Centresafeguarding@gmail.com and our Deputy Head of Complaints, can be emailed at CentreDeputysafeguarding@gmail.com.

At both the beginning and the end of the complaints process the Head or Deputy Head of Complaints, depending on who is managing the case, should send a small report to the Director stating the random number given to the complaint. At the start it should simply say the rough nature of the complaint without any names or anything that could be used to identify the individual involved. At the end of the process, they will simply need to be told what action needs to be taken, if any.

If the Head or Deputy Head of Complaints leaves within this process the next person to hold that position will take over investigating the case. Once they are in the position, they will then have three months in which to investigate the case.

If you lose your email address during this process, then you should contact the head of complaints with your complaint number to change future emails to that address with your case number.

Anonymity. You should not mention the details of the people or person that the complaint is against publicly or to members of our team. However, you are free to discuss details of the case if identifying details about the person you have complained against are not included. This lasts for three months after submitting a case to us unless the person the complaint is against has left Centre or if the police are contacted in which case it lasts up until their investigations has concluded. This does not stop you from discussing details with the police, social services or councillors for issues such as mental health.

Where this information goes. Once the information is received by us, we will act as quickly as possible to respond to it. Complaints procedures are enacted by our Head or Deputy Head of Complaints. Depending on who the complaint goes to, only the person you send the complaint to will see who has made the complaint. The information will be anonymised by them to ensure no one else dealing with the complaint knows who the person making the complaint is. The only case in which the information will be shared is if the information needs to be shared with the authorities, the police or anonymous information with our complaints committee. Once an incident has occurred, or if there is a near miss, anonymous records will be kept so we can ensure our procedures learn from incidents in the future

Dealing with complaints. When complaints are received by the Head or Deputy Head of Complaints, they have 3 days in which to acknowledge the complaint and the complaint has to be dealt with in full, excluding any appeals, within three months of the complaint being made. They must also keep the person who made the complaint up to date with its progress.

Pastoral support. Members of Centre or those outside of Centre may also get support from the Pastoral Care Officer during the complaints process or more broadly during their time in Centre if they wish. This may necessary if the person is under 18 or a vulnerable adult. This can include when submitting a complaint, throughout the process and after the process is complete if requested.

Initially responding to the complaint. The first step will be to acknowledge the complaint from the person within three days. They can then request a copy of the latest membership data from the Director, the Deputy Director or the Membership officer. This can then allow them to email the person the complaint is against to tell them that there has been a complaint filed against them.

Anonymising the complaint. The Head or Deputy Head of Complaints then ensures that the information of the person making the complaint is anonymised. This will involve any details that may be used to identify the person such as their name, gender and age being anonymised so any details that go before the Complaints Committee will be purely about the case itself. To do this, each case will be assigned a number using Excel and the people within the case will only be referred to as person A, person B, person C and so on. The random number will be used for every email sent by the Head or Deputy Head of complaints during the process.

Complaints against members of our team. If a complaint is made against a member of the Centre team then they will not be allowed to take part in the process other than to appear before the Complaints Committee. If this is a member of the Administration, a Spokesperson or a Regional/State Chair has a complaint made against them, then they will immediately be suspended from their position until the process has been completed. If the Head of Complaints is the person the complaint is against, then the Deputy Head of Complaints will take on the roles originally carried out by the Head of Complaints in the process set out below. When this person is suspended, the Head or Deputy Head of Complaints will need to send an email to inform them that they have been suspended from their position within five days.

Complaints against or by former members. If the person making the complaint, or the person the complaint is against, leaves Centre then the complaint will still go through the complaints system. This is to ensure we do not allow people into Centre that could harm our members and members who have broken the rules are not allowed to remain within Centre. However, this means there will be no emails sent during the complaints process to former members if the complaint is against them.

Investigating the complaint. The Head or Deputy Head Complaints then compiles any evidence on the complaint. This includes a description of the complaint, any evidence supporting the complaint and statements from any witnesses. It can also involve emailing questions to the person who filed the report and those involved in any potential issue.

When the investigation begins, the Head or Deputy Head of Complaints will email both the person who submitted the complaint and the person the complaint is against to inform them that the investigation has begun. Once the investigation is completed, both the person who made the complaint and the person the complaint was against should be informed that the investigation has concluded.

Clear breaches. When there is a clear breach of safeguarding, our code of conduct, our safeguarding code of conduct or our privacy policy, then our Head or Deputy Head of Complaints must immediately suspend that member. Once this has taken place, any appropriate actions or repercussions will be put in place.

Possible breaches. In situations where it is unclear as to whether there is a breach of safeguarding procedures; our code of conduct or our safeguarding code of conduct, then the complaint will go to our Complaints Committee. This committee is made up of Mathew Hulbert, Ashley Routh and Louise Jenifer. This allows the person the complaint has been made against to appear in front of the committee along with the person who made the complaint, who can write down what happened anonymously, which will be alongside any evidence gathered by the Head or Deputy Head of Complaints. Appearances are held remotely unless a physical meeting is needed and meetings will be recorded. There will then be a secret vote which will look at whether safeguarding rules or code of conduct were broken based on the balance of probabilities (whether it is more than likely the complaint is true). They also consider any previous complaints in the past four years to make their decision. Once this has taken place, any appropriate actions or repercussions will be put in place.

Possible incidents and repercussions. If repercussions are needed, these are the minimum repercussions depending on the nature of the incident. The full definitions for all of these terms can be found in our “definitions” guide.

An apology which may also include training during which time the person will be temporarily suspended as a member of Centre. If the person has already been suspended, for any reason, then this should instead result in their membership of Centre being revoked and a permanent ban.

- Drinking during meetings.
- General unkindness or disrespectful behaviour towards another member of Centre or a member of the public.
- Using Centre social media accounts for personal purposes rather than their role within Centre.
- Agreeing to partnerships without a vote by the Centre team.

A temporary suspension of the persons membership, this can be permanent depending on the nature of the incident. If the person has already been suspended, for any reason, then this should instead result in their membership of Centre being revoked and a permanent ban. This often depends on the scale of the incident.

- Breaking GDPR rules.
- Bullying or cyberbullying.
- Harassment.

- Defamation/libel.
- Intimidation.
- Violent behaviour.
- Posting content of a violent nature.
- Breaking our safeguarding rules.

This will result in their membership of Centre being revoked and a permanent ban.

- Breaking the law.
- Rape.
- Assault by penetration.
- Sexual assault.
- Taking photos or videos of members without their consent.
- Discrimination, bullying or derogatory behaviour based on: age, gender, sex, disabilities, sexual orientation, race, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnerships, religion, pregnancy and maternity or other characteristics.
- Sexual harassment.
- Physical, emotional, sexual, discriminatory, financial or material and psychological abuse.
- Homophobia.
- Islamophobia.
- Racism.
- Transphobia.
- Antisemitism.
- Sending unwanted messages of a sexual nature.
- Ableism.

May fall into any of these categories.

- Conduct on social media or online that breaks any of these rules.

Once an outcome has been decided. The Head or Deputy Head of Complaints will email both the person who submitted the complaint and the person the complaint is against explaining the outcome of the case and what the next steps are. This may include training or an apology which will be arranged by the Head or Deputy Head of Complaints. It can also include their membership being revoked or suspended in which case they will need to arrange this with the Administration section of the team in order to change the membership list.

Breaches of the law. When a breach of the law is believed to be involved, then the issue will be reported to the police by the Head of Complaints. If this happens Centre will wait until the police investigation has been completed. If this takes more than 6 months, then we will follow up with the police to check when an internal investigation can take place.

Appeals process. If either the person who made the complaint or the person who was complained against is unhappy with the outcome of the case, then an appeal can be made. This would go to the Complaints Committee and decisions can only be appealed once or, under exceptional circumstances, where new evidence has been found.

Malicious complaints. If a person makes three or more complaints that are proven to be untrue, the person can be reported for making malicious complaints.

Learning lessons from breaches of Safeguarding or the Code of Conduct. To learn the lessons from any breaches or near misses we will keep anonymous records of complaints. This involve storing the information on a password protected Excel document that only the Head or Deputy Head of Complaints can access. The records will be kept for four years and, after that, date, this will be deleted.

Ensuring these measures are kept up to date. These measures will be kept up to date to ensure our organisation can prevent mistakes from happening or to learn from them if they do occur. They will be reviewed once a year, if an incident occurs or if there is a 'near miss'. In order to improve these measures, we will also talk to survivors of incidents to ensure our practices are as effective as possible.

Availability of these measures. To ensure these measures are accessible to those that may need to consult them or to go through the processes in this document, this will be available on our website. A copy of this policy will also be sent to every member of the Centre when it is updated via email.

Have any ideas to make these procedures better? Let us know by submitting any ideas on the "Contact" page of our website.