

centre

Whistleblowing policy

Safeguarding and
Complaints

centre

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

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

Written by: Torrin Wilkins.

This document sets out: What counts as whistleblowing, who you can tell about an issue, how to 'blow the whistle' and what will happen once a whistleblowing issue is known.

Who is covered by this policy? This policy is applicable to all members of Centre. This includes the: Administration, Spokespeople, Regional/State Chairs, members of Centre Students, ex-members of Centre and members of the public. You can either make a complaint about an incident that has happened to you or someone else.

People mentioned in the procedure: See our full safeguarding, complaints and pastoral care team: <https://centrethinktank.co.uk/safeguarding-complaints-and-pastoral-careteam/>

Complaints that count as whistleblowing

You're protected by law if you report any of the following:

- A criminal offence, for example fraud.
- Someone's health and safety is in danger.
- Risk or actual damage to the environment.
- A miscarriage of justice.
- The company is breaking the law, for example does not have the right insurance.
- You believe someone is covering up wrongdoing.

<https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing>

You can also report issues that happened in the past or in the present.

Who to make a whistleblowing complaint to? We have a team within Centre that deals with dealing with whistleblowing issues, either of which you can make a complaint to. These are our Head of Complaints and our Deputy Head of Complaints. You can raise an issue with either and both 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 report an issue. In order to 'blow the whistle', you should use the whistleblowing form on our website in the complaints and safeguarding hub. This form can include your name, contact details such as an email address so you can be kept up to date with the process, whether you are a member of Centre, whether you would like to remain anonymous, whether you have a personal interest in the issue, any extra information on any personal relationship you may have with the issue, an explanation of the issue, whether there is a police investigation into the issue, what they would like to see happen as a result of the report, if there is any additional evidence of the issue, whether it is a joint report, if it is a joint report the people filing it alongside you, whether the report is an appeal and that you agree to our privacy policy.

Any communications about the whistleblowing issue 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 whistleblowing report. If a member of our complaints 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.

Vacancies in our Complaints Team. 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.

Anonymity. You should not mention the details of the people or person that the whistleblowing relates to 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. Depending on who the whistleblowing report goes to, only the person you send the report 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 or the police.

Dealing with whistleblowing issue. When whistleblowing reports are receive by the Head or Deputy Head of Complaints, they have 3 days in which to acknowledge the report and the whistleblowing issue has to be dealt with in full within three months of the whistleblowing report being made. They must also keep the person who made the whistleblowing report up to date with its progress, how it is likely to be dealt with, how long it will likely take and, if no further investigation will take place, why it is not something that will be investigated.

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 a month 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.

Acknowledging the report. The first step will be for the person dealing with the whistleblowing report to acknowledge that the whistleblowing report has been received.

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

Anonymising the complaint. The Head or Deputy Head of Complaints then ensures that the information about the person making the complaint is anonymised if the person making the report wants it to be. This will involve any details that may be used to identify the person such as their name, gender and age being anonymised. To do this, each case will be assigned a random 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.

Protecting the person raising the whistleblowing report. We will not only protect the identity of the person making the whistleblowing report within Centre if they want it, but our complaints team will also ensure they are not removed from their position for making a report.

Investigating the issue. The Head or Deputy Head of Complaints then compiles any evidence on the whistleblowing report. This includes a description of the whistleblowing report and any evidence supporting the report. This can include emailing questions to the person who filed the report and those involved in any potential issue. It will be investigated regardless of whether the people involved are members or ex-members.

Both at the start and end of the investigation, the Head or Deputy Head of Complaints should email the person who submitted the whistleblowing report. This will be to update them of what is happening regarding their case.

Acting on the report. Once the whistleblowing report has been investigated, the person investigating the issue should create a list of appropriate actions which can involve suspending members of Centre or drawing up an action plan to correct any issues. This list should be passed onto the Director who will then implement its recommendations. However, if it implicates the Director it will be passed onto the Deputy Director or, if there is not someone in that position or it implicates them, the Head of Policy.

Breaches of the law. If a breach of the law is believed to be involved, then the issue will be reported to the police by the Head or Deputy Head of Complaints.

Informing the person or people about the outcome of the whistleblowing report.

Once the issue has been dealt with the Head or Deputy Head of Complaints should email the person or people that made the whistleblowing report about the outcomes. This should include any new policies put in place, whether any members were suspended or removed although not using any information that could identify them.

However, if no action is taken, the Head or Deputy Head of Complaints should email the person or people that made the complaint as to why no action has been taken.

Appeal the decision. If you believe that the investigation was either wrongly dropped or the outcome was not sufficient, you can appeal the decision. This involves making a whistleblowing report with the person you did not originally file your report with. For instance, if you filed a whistleblowing report with the Head of Complaints then you file an appeal with the Deputy Head. They will then go through this procedure again either changing the original decision or keeping the original one.

Learning lessons from whistleblowing issues. To learn the lessons from any issues we will keep anonymous records of whistleblowing report. This involves 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.

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.

Links to more information on whistleblowing:

- <https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing/who-to-tell-what-to-expect> (“Whistleblowing for employees”. This should be read with this policy for more information).

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