

Policies of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty

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The Constitution of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty

Preamble

Aiming for the liberation of the working class from wage slavery and state oppression;

Believing:

- That the emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings, regardless of sex or race;
- That the emancipation of the working class must be the task of the working class itself;
- That without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement;
- That without revolutionary practice and organisation, socialist aspirations, like "academic Marxism", will be sterile;

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty (AWL) aims to create an organisation of activists which can convince, mobilise and lead the working class to fight for workers' liberty.

To be effective, our organisation must be democratic; geared to the maximum clarity of politics; and able to respond promptly to events and opportunities with all its strength, through disciplined implementation of the decisions of the elected and accountable committees which provide political leadership.

Membership

The members of the AWL, here called "activists", are those who:

- Defend the basic aims of the AWL, in words and deeds;
- Engage in regular political activity under the discipline of the organisation;
- Are members of their appropriate trade union;
- Sell the literature of the AWL regularly;
- Pay regular money contributions to the AWL and regularly remit AWL literature sales money;
- Are loyal to the AWL at all times, and keep their links with other political groups under the supervision of the appropriate AWL committees;
- Educate themselves politically and attend structured education classes of the AWL.

All activists are obliged to support the majority decisions of the relevant AWL bodies in action. They also have the right to express dissenting opinions, to gain a fair hearing for those opinions, and to organise inside the AWL to change AWL policy.

Activists should not pretend to hold beliefs contrary to their real ones. Minority comrades have a right to state that they hold a minority position, and to give a brief explanation, but without making propaganda outside the AWL against the majority line. They have a duty to state to the best of their ability what the majority line is, and in any vote or practical action they must support the majority line unless a decision has been taken to have a free vote. This might, for example, apply where the AWL works in association with nonmembers who are yet for practical purposes very close to us.

Activists do not have the right to organise outside the AWL for minority views. Unless the organisation is to be allowed to dissolve under the stress of political differences, and thus be rendered incapable of acting as an entity, the properly established leading committees have to retain the right to determine at any given moment whether views other than those of the AWL, properly established, will be expressed in our press, and how. This, however, will be a reserve power. AWL "custom and practice" will be that usually minority views can be expressed, and majority opinion challenged, in our public press.

Activists have no right to take internal organisational disputes outside the AWL in any way, except as described in the Code of Conduct.

Activists should first raise political questions on the highest body on which they sit - branch, National Committee, Executive Committee. The matter must go to the National Committee for discussion if it is not resolved at the level raised. If after full discussion at the National Committee no agreement is reached, activists have the right to inform the National Committee that they are taking the issue to the whole membership or are forming a faction in line with section 7 of this constitution.

In AWL internal debates, equal speaking time at meetings, conferences, etc., shall be allotted to all the different points of view represented. Representatives of minority points of view have the right to demand relief from part of their normal AWL workload and financial assistance if these are necessary to enable them to travel to meetings, prepare documents etc. In any dispute between a minority point of view and the National Committee or Executive Committee, both the minority and the leadership have equal rights to use the organisation's apparatus.

All AWL branches, fractions and committees have the right to admit members. Any dispute over whether a particular person should be admitted should be referred to the Executive Committee, and then if necessary to the National Committee, which can make an overriding decision. Members will normally be admitted as candidates, to go through six months of education, training and disciplined activity before being admitted as full activists. A branch or fraction may, at the end of six months, extend

the candidate period if it judges that the above requirements have not been fulfilled adequately. In such a case the candidate has the right to appeal to the Executive Committee.

Candidates do not have the right to vote in the AWL.

Decision making

The supreme policy making body of the AWL is the AWL conference, convened annually and attended by all members, or by the outgoing Executive Committee and delegates elected by the branches.

The National Committee is responsible for preparing the main political documents for the conference, and the Executive Committee is responsible for practical preparations. A Standing Orders Committee, elected at the previous conference, is responsible for running the conference itself. The conference elects a National Committee, and the National Committee an Executive Committee; the Executive Committee may elect various officers and organisational sub committees. All these officers and committees have the right to make binding decisions for AWL activity. They must be accountable to the bodies that elected them, and governed by the prior decisions of those broader bodies. Each committee decides its own rules of functioning, within the framework set by the body which elects it.

A special AWL conference may be called by the National Committee when it wishes. The National Committee must call a special conference within two months of receiving a written demand for one signed by at least 25 per cent of the activists of the AWL.

The Executive Committee convenes the National Committee; it must do so at least every two months, or within one week of receiving a written demand for a meeting signed by at least 25 per cent of the National Committee members.

National Committee members must fight for the implementation of National Committee decisions within the AWL, and Executive Committee members for Executive Committee decisions, except where they have deep and declared political differences; and in that case they must at least maintain discipline. They should not, however, pretend to hold views which are different to their own.

Every activist or group of activists can submit resolutions and amendments to the conference or to the National Committee, and have the right to speaking time and participation in the debate on them.

Democracy is impossible without full and timely information. The Executive Committee must make minutes of conferences and National Committee meetings available to all members of the AWL and minutes of the Executive Committee

available to the National Committee members. Minutes must normally include the full text of all resolutions and amendments, together with an outline of the discussion and record of the vote. Skeleton minutes may, however, be circulated when security requires it.

The National Committee has the right to structure discussion within the AWL so that maximum political clarity may be attained. The National Committee may stop debate on an issue, but only after full discussion has led to a decision. Under no circumstance does this override the right of the membership to hold the National Committee to account at the conference. In all matters the National Committee may overrule the Executive Committee and the conference may overrule both the National Committee and the Executive Committee.

Branches and fractions

The AWL shall be organised in AWL branches in geographical areas or workplaces, and fractions in areas of work. The Executive Committee shall recognise, and where appropriate strive to initiate, branches and fractions in consultation with the members concerned. Every AWL activist should be a member of the appropriate branch and, if relevant, fraction.

The branches and fractions are responsible for recruiting new members and organising the activity of the AWL in their areas.

Each branch or fraction shall elect an organiser and other officers. The organiser is responsible to the AWL and is subject to the political and administrative supervision of its leading committees for the functioning of the branch or fraction and for ensuring that AWL policy is carried out.

Branches shall normally meet weekly and fractions at least quarterly to educate members and contacts and to organise AWL activity in their areas. The organiser is responsible for convening meetings.

Decisions on matters specific to their area shall be made democratically by branches and fractions. Branches and fractions can be overruled in such matters by the Executive Committee, National Committee, or conference, in which case representatives of all viewpoints have the right to put their case to the overruling body. Branch and fraction organisers must report regularly to the EC, and this must include communicating all the opinions within the branch or fraction different from the organiser's own opinion.

Branch or fraction organisers can give binding instructions to activists in their areas on all day today matters. In any AWL activity, the right to take decisions and give instructions on the spot belongs normally to the branch or fraction organiser responsible, or other comrade delegated to be responsible. In the event of a big

political issue needing an immediate decision, the organiser can be overruled by the senior National Committee or Executive Committee member(s) present. The Executive Committee and the National Committee have the right in extreme cases, and after written notice and a fair hearing, to remove branch or fraction organisers from their posts and impose replacements.

Internal bulletin

The Executive Committee is responsible for producing an internal discussion bulletin, to be distributed to all AWL activists and candidates (and, unless the Executive Committee decides otherwise, to them only).

Any activist submitting a polemical document of fewer than 3,000 words has the right to insist it be circulated within two weeks.

The Executive Committee has no right to refuse for publication or delay unreasonably any article submitted for the internal bulletin, unless in line with any National Committee decision to close debate on an issue. They can, however, ask for a contribution and/or labour towards the production of articles over 6,000 words, and insist that any document over 12,000 words be produced at the expense of the author(s).

Disputes Committee

Conference will elect a Disputes Committee consisting of three people. They will not serve on the National Committee.

Membership of the Disputes Committee should be for a fixed term of two years. The organisation should ensure members have appropriate training. Three alternates should be elected at the same time as full members are elected (for situations of unavailability or potential conflicts of interest); if required to step up, an alternate will become a full member of the Disputes Committee for the duration and purposes of the particular case or investigation. If a member of the Disputes Committee is elected to the NC during their two-year term of office, a by-election will be held to replace them.

The role of the Disputes Committee will be:

- To investigate and adjudicate in complaints and disputes between members of the AWL (or members and non-members) at the request of a complainant or of one of the parties to the dispute or where a third party report has been made in line with our policy.

- To act for the National Committee or Executive Committee as an investigatory body. When it acts in this capacity it will report to the activating body.
- To:
 - receive and investigate complaints against the leading committees or individual members of the leading committees or officers of the AWL on any matter of concern to any member of the AWL.
 - present a report on any such investigation to the National Committee and, if it chooses, to present proposals and recommendations for action to the National Committee. Any proposal or recommendation from the Disputes Committee to the National Committee will be deemed to have a very strong moral authority. Where the Disputes Committee comes into irresolvable conflict with the National Committee on some matter which it considers of fundamental importance it will have the right to call a special AWL conference.
 - censure, where it thinks fit, after proper investigation and in line with the Procedure for Complaints in cases of personal complaints, any action of AWL committees, or any AWL officer, or any AWL member and present motions of sanction to the National Committee.
- To present a report of its activities over the previous year to each annual conference of the AWL.
- To keep accurate records of complaints and outcomes at all stages.
- To monitor sanctions and recommendations and the results of these where they have been applied in cases of personal complaints in line with the 'Monitoring Outcomes' section of the policy.
- To keep records of third party complaints and anonymous reports in line with the guidance on anonymised reporting.

Discipline

Where activists have become inactive or failed to meet their commitments to the AWL without adequate cause such as illness, and there is no dispute about this fact, branches, fractions, or appropriate committees may lapse them from membership with no more formality than a week's written notice. Activists who allege invalid lapsing may appeal to the National Committee.

Branches, fractions, or the EC or NC may suspend activists or candidates from membership (for up to six weeks), and the National Committee may expel them, in the event of:

Action contrary to working class principles e.g. strike breaking, racism, or significant harm to comrades and associates as defined by our Complaints Procedure and established as such under that Procedure

Action contrary to working-class principles:

Proof that the person in question has disloyal links with another political group;
Serious breach of discipline in AWL's public activity, or disruption of the AWL's functioning.

No activist may be subject to disciplinary action solely on grounds of their political views, as long as they remain loyal to the AWL's basic aims.

Members must not, however, use political differences as an excuse for inactivity or disloyalty. Any member who does so is liable to be expelled.

The EC may require a comrade to withdraw from areas of activity and communication for the period of an investigation on grounds set out in our Stage Two Complaints Procedure. In such cases the comrade does not lose their right to make political submissions or to vote, but must exercise them in writing or by proxy.

Branches, fractions, and appropriate elected committees may impose fines or reprimands for lesser breaches of discipline. Any activist has the right to due process and to defend himself or herself before a decision on disciplinary action is taken on him or her, except in the case of minor fines for absence or suspensions where the AWL's security or integrity are at risk.

For all disciplinary action other than minor fines or suspensions where the AWL's security or integrity are at risk, the following safeguards apply.

Any activist subject to discipline must have at least one week's written notice of the charges and of the time and venue of the hearing. If expulsion is proposed, he or she must have two weeks' written notice of the charges.

Any activist who is expelled may appeal to conference, and the Executive Committee must circulate the material relating to his or her appeal to all activists within 14 days.

To protect the confidentiality of complainants, activists expelled as a result of a Stage Two complaints process will have their appeal heard by a small committee delegated by conference.

Any AWL body taking disciplinary action (other than minor fines for absence) must immediately send details, including a copy of the charges, to the Executive Committee, which must make those details available to the National Committee and ensure they are kept on file. This procedure is for cases other than that outlined in the Complaints Procedure.

Previously expelled members may not be readmitted without the approval of the National Committee or conference.

If an AWL body imposes a suspension in a case where it believes the AWL's security or integrity are at risk, it must:

- communicate written reasons for the suspension to the person suspended simultaneously with the notice of suspension;
- accord them and immediately notify them of a right to appeal to the National Committee;
- immediately start proceedings for expulsion to be heard by the National Committee.

Where a member of an AWL body is a party to a disciplinary case, they must recuse themselves from that body for the purpose of decision-making on the disciplinary case.

Factions and tendencies

The AWL rejects the ideal of a monolithic, single-faction party, and strives to build a culture where differences are resolved by rational and constructive discussion without hard and fast factional lineups. It recognises, however, that as a last resort any group of members has the right to form a faction or tendency to fight for a particular point of view within the AWL, offer itself to the membership at the AWL conference as an alternative leadership, or campaign for election in the organisation.

The AWL recognises a tendency as an ideological grouping organised for an ideological discussion within the organisation. The AWL recognises a faction as a group which sets out to fight either for a change of policy of the AWL on a particular issue or to replace the existing leadership by members of the faction.

- Members wishing to form a faction must circulate to all AWL members a platform explaining their views, signed by all members of the faction. The faction must make an up to date list of its members available to any AWL member on demand. Membership in the faction must be open to all AWL activists who agree with its platform. Candidate activists can not be recruited to a faction.
- Factions can produce their own publications for circulation within the AWL, can hold internal meetings to put over their views, and can put up members for election on a factional platform. Factions have a right to proportional representation on the National Committee and in any election to delegates to conference.
- All faction meetings and documents must either be strictly internal to the faction, or open to all members of the AWL. This clause can not be used to restrict private conversation or correspondence between individual AWL

activists. A faction must not carry its platform outside the AWL without the permission of the conference or the National Committee.

The same rules apply for tendencies as for factions.

Leave of absence

A member suffering from illness or other distress may be granted a total or partial leave of absence from activity for up to two months; but the leave of absence must be ratified in writing by the Executive Committee, and the activist must continue to pay financial contributions to the AWL.

Full-timers

The appointment, pay, terms of reference, and dismissal of AWL full time workers shall be decided by the Executive Committee, subject to ratification by or (if factional victimisation is alleged) appeal to the National Committee. In the event that an appeal is to be made to the National Committee, the Executive Committee's decision will not come into operation unless endorsed by the National Committee.

Constitution

Branches, fractions, and appropriate committees must supply every new activist with a copy of this constitution. The Executive Committee must supply a copy to any activist on demand. The constitution can be changed only by an AWL conference.

Code of Conduct

These guidelines are intended to help us in our day-to-day dealings with each other, to allow us to function effectively politically as individuals and as an organisation.

In the AWL we call each other “comrades”, and our relations with each other should be comradely.

AWL expects its members to:

- Maintain a spirit of solidarity with each other, even though we may sometimes have angry and bitter political or organisational conflicts.
- Treat each other with respect, regardless of any personal friendship issues or fallings-out.
- Communicate our ideas and values positively to friends, work colleagues etc.
- Relate to other AWL members in a comradely way, regardless of personal fallings-out.
- Wherever reasonably possible seek to resolve personal conflicts by direct and comradely discussion. Where conflicts cannot be resolved in such a way, or where it is not appropriate, or where the person affected chooses to, comrades will use the AWL Procedure for Complaints (see the Guidance on Procedures for Complaints for more details).

The following points are the duty of all AWL members, in particular, of organisers:

- Work to safeguard the welfare of children (under 16) and young people (between 16 and 18) in and around the AWL.

AWL members should not:

- Engage in discriminatory language or behaviour (including, but not limited to, language or behaviour which is sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, disablist, discriminatory against people with physical or mental ill-health).
- Monopolise contact with a friend who wishes to talk politics with the AWL. That person should be introduced to, and be able to discuss with, a range of AWL members. Intensive political discussions should be had with a different AWL member: ask your branch organiser to arrange this. Discussion meetings should be held in a public place, and a café rather than a pub.
- Give signals to comrades, contacts or friends that joining us in political activity and discussion comes as a package with a close personal relationship. We discuss politics with our friends, and we seek to be friendly with people who want political collaboration and discussion with us. But we must avoid a confusion of personal and political relationships — they must be separable. For example, when someone is new to the AWL, or is attending intensive political events (such as IFF) do not use that as a chance to ask them for a date. Be especially sensitive to this in interactions with women contacts.

- Use any position of prestige or authority for sexual advantage (in particular, in relation to younger comrades).
- Use put-downs, talking-over, excessive sarcasm etc. Extended bad-mouthing of other comrades behind their backs is a significant breach of the code of conduct, even where there is criticism or conflict between members. This clause should not be used to block political polemic.

In addition, AWL organisers (and other members) should:

- Be sensitive to potential issues of power dynamics (e.g. gender, age, etc.) We seek to make the contact comfortable with the one-to-one discussions as political business separate from any personal friendship. One of several considerations is that asking a young woman to meet a man (of any age or sexual orientation) for regular discussions and one-to-one may evoke undesirable connotations.
- Seek to motivate AWL members, whether by positive motivation (encouragement, praise etc.) or, if necessary, criticism or rebuke, objectively (in terms of the consequences for the AWL and for socialism), not subjectively (in terms of the consequences for the organiser personally).

AWL organisers (and other members) should not:

- Bestow “patronage” – reward friendly personal relations with more prestigious roles in political activity (in particular, in relation to younger comrades).
- Pose the request as a personal favour when asking AWL members to undertake tasks or activities.

Safeguarding Policy

*Questions and advice on safeguarding should be sent to:
safeguarding@workersliberty.org*

Preamble to Safeguarding Policy

Our project is to build an organisation of active revolutionaries who are able to think for themselves, play a role in educating themselves and each other and be prepared to fight for their ideas within the organisation and wider movement and often in hostile environments.

We aim to persuade young people of our ideas and to go out and fight for them. Some of this work is tough and can be at times “uncomfortable”.

We are concerned that our organisation does not infantilise young people as many institutions and organisations in capitalist society do. We strive to always treat them as thoughtful, capable young adults, while at the same time recognising that young people up to the age of 18 and vulnerable adults are special groups that require some specific safeguarding.

Below is a safeguarding policy defining what we mean by safeguarding and the procedures we will adhere to if there are concerns for under-18s and or vulnerable adults in the AWL.

This policy can only apply to our own events and surrounding social activities and to our members and participants at such events and activities. It cannot apply to non-members/supporters or participants at other events. It is distinct from support we give members/supporters in experiencing abuse in other organisations and environments (eg. bullying at work, in their trade union, from other left groups, or from parents, carers or partners).

Safeguarding Policy

This Safeguarding policy applies to all participants, volunteers, helpers, members, staff, including senior organisers and anyone working or volunteering on behalf of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty

The purpose of this policy is:

- to protect young people (up to the age of 18 years old) and vulnerable adults who attend Alliance for Workers' Liberty branches and events and participate in social activities around these meetings and events. For all other participants see the Code of Conduct.

- to provide volunteers and staff with the overarching principles that guide the Alliance for Workers' Liberty's approach to safeguarding and child protection.

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding is the broader preventive and precautionary approach to planning and procedures that need to be in place to protect children and young people and vulnerable adults from any potential harm or damage. It is more than child protection, although child protection is one important aspect of safeguarding.

Child protection involves recognising signs of physical, sexual or emotional abuse or of neglect and acting on it.

Safeguarding Principles

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty recognises that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount, as enshrined in the Children Act 1989
- all young people, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- some young people and vulnerable adults are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues
- working in partnership with young people and vulnerable adults and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's and vulnerable adults' welfare. Outside organisations may inform and influence our practice and procedures.

Our underlying safeguarding principle is that all young people and vulnerable adult members/supporters should be protected from abusive behaviours and attitudes that fit the following areas of abuse: physical, sexual and emotional.

To achieve this aim:

The needs of the young people are central to all activity planning they will be involved in. This should include where possible careful consideration of venues booked and used. Where under 18s are participating, we should avoid 18+ venues where possible.

Open communication with members of all ages and effective planning will support safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults.

Anyone has the right to speak out about behaviour and attitudes they find uncomfortable within the three defined areas of abuse. They should know in advance whom they should speak to, and be confident they will be listened to

The Safeguarding Officer is responsible for seeing to it that sufficient organisers do basic safeguarding training (which can be completed online for free).

Risk assessments must be undertaken for work and activities planned involving young people and vulnerable adults, e.g. taking part in a potentially dangerous demonstration, sleeping arrangements at summer camp, particularly hostile political environments. This should not be done with a view to preventing anyone from participating but to consider what we can do as extra to help make participation as safe as possible.

Personal details of members are held securely in accordance with data protection policy.

The Safeguarding Officer and their Deputy will be appointed each year by the incoming National Committee, and generally will be chosen from among members with safeguarding experience in their outside work. They are the first port of call for all safeguarding concerns, and responsible for overseeing and monitoring safeguarding across our activities.

Any member of the AWL aware of concerns regarding a child or young person (under 18) or vulnerable adult must report them as soon as feasibly possible to the Safeguarding Appointed Person, even if this is against the wishes of the individual.

If concerns regarding any child or young person (under 18) or vulnerable adult are reported to Branch Organisers, Executive Committee (EC) Members or Disputes Committee (DC) members at any stage of this process, they must report them as above.

If the concerns are about the Safeguarding Appointed Person they should be reported to the Deputy Safeguarding Appointed Person and to the DC and EC.

Procedure for Complaints

General information

As stated in our Code of Conduct wherever reasonably possible comrades may choose to resolve personal differences and conflicts by talking directly to each other. In these cases we expect comrades to listen to concerns and criticisms when raised and to work to resolve minor disputes in a respectful and constructive way. In such situations comrades may ask another comrade to support them (their Branch Organiser may be a good first choice, but any other trusted comrade can be asked to do this). A supportive comrade can help talk through concerns, Such discussions need go no further and they do not need to be reported to the individual who has been the subject of the conversations. Supportive comrades can also “sit in” on any conversations, or speak on behalf of one comrade to another comrade.

Any outcomes from such discussions do not need to be reported to any AWL committee or organiser, but comrades may choose to write down outcomes and conclusions to share with each other. They may also speak to a Branch or Fraction Organiser or a member of the Executive Committee (EC) about those outcomes. However comrades should avoid wider “after-the-event” discussion so that a line can be drawn under disputes which have been successfully resolved. That should not inhibit comrades from re-raising issues if they reoccur.

Our Procedure for Complaints is a formal procedure. Comrades who wish to make a complaint may initiate a formal procedure at their sole discretion and under any circumstance. In addition we would expect and encourage comrades to make formal complaints in one or more of these situations:

- when normal comradely relations have broken down and/or no direct discussion is possible.
- when a dispute has not been resolved adequately through direct discussion or another intervention,
- when an issue is considered significant or very serious by the complainant or another comrade with whom the complainant has confided.
- when comrades consider a more definite formal process, involving written records of discussions and outcomes would be helpful or more appropriate.

More guidance on criteria is given below. General advice on the appropriate use of the procedure can be sought from any member of the EC, the National Committee (NC), a member of the Disputes Committee (DC) or a Branch Organiser. All these comrades will have received training in the use of the procedure. Up-to-date emails and phone numbers for all these people are available on the AWL Online Members Forum.

The procedure is to be used in conjunction with the AWL Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Policy which together set out a general framework for comradely behaviour and protection of comrades. These policies, this Complaints Procedure and our Constitution will be accessible on our website.

The procedure is open to non-members. If you are not a member of the AWL and wish to make a formal complaint please contact the Disputes Committee Secretary at: disputes@workersliberty.org. The procedure can be used for collective complaints.

If you have serious concerns regarding any child or young person (under 18) or a vulnerable adult please consult one of the Safeguarding Officers or the Safeguarding Appointed Person at an AWL national event. It may be necessary to report these concerns outside the organisation even if this is against the wishes of the individual. In these instances confidentiality cannot be protected. However, we will always handle cases with sensitivity to the person making the complaint or the young or vulnerable adult affected. Please contact the Safeguarding Officer and Safeguarding Deputy here: safeguarding@workersliberty.org.

If at any stage it is decided that a course of action involving external organisations should be followed (e.g. reporting to the police) this will be done promptly.

How to support a comrade who tells you they have harmed by another comrade and are considering making a complaint

As stated, if the comrade is a child or a vulnerable adult you must report to the Safeguarding Officer or the Deputy, using our Safeguarding Policy as your guide.

There are a number of ways that comrades can offer practical support to other comrades. These include:

- Support in raising a complaint using our Complaints Procedure, e.g. reading and discussing the guidance together.
- Support in reporting to external agencies.
- Signposting to external support organisations.
- Help getting a separation of political work to avoid unnecessary contact with the person causing harm. This can be arranged with a member of the EC and no such measures will be taken without the permission of the victim.
- Anonymised Reporting is possible in some instances. Please read the guidance below.

Please bear in mind that incidences of significant harm may make a Stage Two complaint appropriate and information about that can be found below.

Guidance on Anonymised Reporting

If the victim is an adult then they may or may not wish to pursue a complaint. It is very important not to break confidentiality, except as outlined below [text to come]. If a perpetrator becomes aware that the victim is making a disclosure this may increase the risk to the victim.

You can discuss the general issue, to seek advice, with one comrade from the DC or EC. You must, where feasible, seek consent from the victim before doing so. But if you require such advice and cannot obtain consent it is permissible to break confidentiality for this. As far as possible, you should not disclose identities. For example, you should not disclose names.

If the matter involves significant harm (see below) you will definitely consider taking advice from a comrade on the DC or EC in confidence. The AWL also expects you to read and follow the guidance above about what to do if a comrade discloses harm.

If you directly witness an event of serious concern you can pursue a complaint under our Complaints Procedure, without an additional duty of confidentiality to those involved, by reporting this to the DC. Wherever possible the consent of the victim should be sought prior to commencing the complaint and investigation.

Additional action that can be taken where you have a credible third party knowledge of abusive behaviour.

Our Disputes Committee are due to draw up guidance on this (April 2024)

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Principles of the Procedure

The Procedure for Complaints consists of two stages.

The first stage is designed for complaints that have not or cannot be resolved through direct discussion or where a comrade considers, or has been advised that, a more formal approach is necessary, appropriate or helpful. It should not generally be used for complaints involving significant harms as defined above except where the complaint wishes. The first stage consists of an informal investigation followed by discussion with the subject of the complaint, or mediated discussion between parties (described below).

Second stage complaints are handled by the Disputes Committee (DC) who will make a definite recommendation about a way forward. The second stage should generally be used for complaints involving significant harm. The sorts of things this

might include are described under the specific guidance for these complaints. The second stage is also to be used where complaints that cannot be or have not been resolved at the first stage. It may also be invoked by the complainant if they consider a formal investigation is necessary or preferable.

Where comrades directly witness behaviour which they consider would be grounds for a Stage Two complaint they should always refer their evidence to the DC who will pursue the complaint.

Comrades under 18 and “vulnerable adults” (as defined in the Safeguarding policy) are given further protection by the principles in our Safeguarding Policy.

In the case of a complaint from a non-member, a member of the EC (or DC if the complaint is against a member of the EC or NC) will handle the complaint following either First Stage or Second Stage procedures. Initial processing of the complaint will be handled by the DC. Both committees have the option of responding that they consider a complaint vexatious or outside its competence. The EC/DC will report to the National Committee, following principles of confidentiality, on any complaint and actions taken.

Stage One Complaint

1. Criteria

If you feel you cannot resolve an issue by talking to the person directly or in writing or if the behaviour persists beyond a direct intervention you should consider making a stage one complaint. The behaviour will be unacceptable, but perhaps not of the most significant harm. The issue could be, for example, feeling undermined in organising, or appropriateness of language or behaviour, or a longstanding, or frequently experienced problem. It may be an issue of perceived minor bullying and harassment, or a one-off event that you want to stop from being repeated. You can seek advice in making your decision from a Branch Organiser or National Committee member.

2. First steps

- a. Write down the behaviour you are not happy about. Keep a diary of incidents, records of times and your feelings.
- b. You are strongly advised to ask another AWL member of your choice, a trusted comrade at this early stage to talk over your complaint and support you in the process.
- c. Send an email to your Branch Organiser, or an NC or an EC member of your choice, stating you wish to make a stage one complaint and a brief description of the complaint. This person should not be involved with the dispute. This person will either be the “lead” and oversee your complaint, or they will arrange an alternative lead (if, for example, there is an issue of capacity, or conflict of interest).

- d. You may also directly approach a DC member if the complaint involves an officer of the AWL or an NC or EC member. If you are in any doubt about who to ask to handle your dispute consult the Secretary of the Disputes Committee or a member of the Executive Committee.
- e. Up-to-date email addresses of the EC and the DC are available on the AWL internal Forum.
- f. The lead will initiate and conduct a stage one procedure or, having discussed the issue further with you, they may advise you that a stage two procedure is more appropriate. The lead, with the complainants permission, may consult other members of the EC or DC for advice at any time. They are obliged to report the complaint to the Safeguarding Officer if the complaint involves a comrade covered by that policy.
- g. The lead may help with getting a separation of work between the parties to avoid contact and potential unnecessary further conflict.
- h. The lead will be independent between the parties. They will aim to be supportive and comradely but support is not their role. They will ensure all parties have access to support.

3. Next steps

- a. The lead's job is to conduct an investigation. The investigation should attempt to establish the facts of what has happened, including speaking to the complainant, anyone accused and any witnesses.
 - b. Communications between the lead and all parties will be in strict confidence. A written summary of the complaint, direct discussions between the parties and outcomes and the results of the investigation will be made by the lead and made available to all parties.
 - c. After establishing the facts the lead will try to resolve the situation guided by their investigation. They will do this through:
 - a mediated discussion (a discussion where both parties and the lead are present, with the proviso that all mediated discussions are strictly voluntary);
 - separate structured discussions between themselves and the parties
 - arranging a more formal mediation with the agreement of the parties.
 - d. If no resolution has been found, or if the parties do not agree with the lead's interpretation of events, the lead will initiate a stage two complaint so that a more significant investigation can be conducted.
 - e. A report on the facts of the procedure and its outcome including any move to stage two should be lodged with the Disputes Committee, and made available both to the complainant and the subject of the complaint.
- Mediation can also be asked for by any party at any stage (see note on mediation below).
- Comrades can also ask for and be asked to take a "break" from AWL activity in order to allow discussion, mediation or the separation of the parties to take place. Or on grounds of well being.

Stage Two Complaint

All stage two complaints are dealt with by the DC of three comrades, with a further three DC alternates available as substitutes if necessary, on the request of the parties. The complaint will be handled by at least two comrades from among these six comrades. Every effort will be made to ensure that the investigative body is acceptable to all parties to the dispute but the DC's decision on final personnel will be final.

1. Criteria and support

Stage two complaints may take place in one or more of the following situations

- the stage one procedure has failed to resolve matters:
- where the complainant considers a formal investigation is necessary or preferable.
- where the complaint involves significant abuse, discrimination, bullying or harassment (see note below).

These complaints may be matters which could otherwise be pursued through the criminal justice system and where the complainant/victim is over 18 and not a vulnerable adult, but does not wish to go to the police. We will always support complainants in their choice of procedure whether it involves contacting the police or seeking professional help or using the AWL Complaints Procedure. We recognise, given the police's record in these matters, and for other reasons, complainants may choose not to go to the police. If you are in this situation you may want to talk to people closest to you before making a complaint. You may also want to access professional help (see section on 'Further Help'). You can also discuss what to do, and how to make an internal complaint with either a member of the DC or a member of the EC. They will guide you through the process and talk with you about the other support you have. All emails and phone numbers are published on the AWL Members Forum or are available by writing to office@workersliberty.org.

We will always conduct our own investigation whenever a complaint is made and we are asked to do so but we will seek to ensure that our investigation does not interfere with or compromise any potential police investigation.

Given our resources we cannot replicate anything like the best professional standards of investigation. We will make complainants and alleged perpetrators fully aware of this deficit at the beginning of the process. We will seek whatever outside professional advice is deemed appropriate and within our resources at every stage.

We are aware that in our society people who complain of sexual harassment or abuse are often subjected to victim blaming; we should consciously work against this. Our starting point is such complaints will be dealt with as any other kind of complaint — at face value.

We will not prioritise our public reputation over ensuring an open and fair process. If a public allegation is made against one of our comrades we will always investigate to

the best of our ability and make a public statement outlining what action we intend to take. We will seek to involve the complainant / victim at the earliest possible stage. We will co-operate with external investigations. We will share information about that investigation as appropriate with the complainant/victim.

However the running of these processes will be conducted with the strictest confidence at every stage. See below for more on this confidentiality. We have no “statute of limitations” on complaints and all complaints will be heard and supported.

Mediation can be asked for by any party at any stage but either party has a right to refuse mediation without judgement. With a stage two complaint the Disputes Committee has the power to decide that mediation is not appropriate.

Comrades can also ask for and be asked to take a “break” from AWL activity in order to allow discussion, mediation or the separation of the parties to take place. Or on grounds of well being.

Note on significant abuse, bullying, discrimination and harassment (hereafter referred to as “significant harm”)

Significant harms include abuse, bullying, discrimination and harassment. These definitions overlap. Investigations will always consider whether there is intended harm as well as an effect of harm. For example, actions which cause mental and emotional distress may happen through ignorance of their effect, or they may be intended to cause distress. Both intention and effect is relevant and important. Such distinctions will affect the findings and outcomes of investigations.

Abuse includes:

- actions which involve physical force and mistreatment which may or may not cause injury
- actions which involve sexual activity and behaviour without consent or understanding
- actions which cause significant, repeated, or ongoing mental and emotional distress, and/or isolation
- actions which manipulate or control another person

Bullying is repeated behaviour which is intended to hurt. It may involve malicious gossiping, name-calling, unreasonable requests. The behaviour is intended to make a person feel unhappy, isolated or undermined.

We recognise that harmful behaviour is often underpinned by forms of discrimination — racism, sexism, homophobia and so on. Given the normalisation of discrimination, the accompanying abusive or bullying behaviour may not be recognised by victims and others. Such discrimination can also be grounds for complaints. Discriminatory behaviour may include derogatory remarks, failure to make reasonable allowances for differences, unreasonable verbal pressure.

Harassment is unwanted behaviour that has the purpose of violating a person's dignity or creating a degrading, humiliating, hostile and intimidating environment for someone. It could be the result of and include sexism, racism or other discrimination. The unwanted behaviour could include spoken or written abuse, comments about you on social media, physical gestures, jokes and banter that is offensive to you.

These notes are not exhaustive. Further information can be found here:
<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/recognising-adult-abuse-exploitation-and-neglect>.

2. First steps

- a. In the case of a complaint referred from a failed stage one procedure, the lead will contact the Secretary of the DC in writing. They will provide a written report of relevant facts. For example: the details of their investigation, matters in dispute in that investigation and a description of unresolved issues.
- b. To initiate a stage two complaint you should either contact the Secretary of the DC, or, if you prefer, any member of the EC (please also read the section "Getting Help" on page one of this guide). After discussion with you, and with your permission, the DC will start the process or the EC member will contact the DC to start the process.
- c. The EC can initiate a Stage Two complaint where there is evidence which can be investigated and tested by the person complained against.
- d. The DC Secretary will have an initial conversation with the complainant at the earliest possible opportunity. Together they will discuss accessing support, agree which members of the DC will be involved and go through the basic details of the complaint. This will be reported to the DC Secretary.
- e. The DC Secretary will write to the subject of the complaint setting out the charges, the details of the procedure, informing them of any decision about suspension, advice about accessing support and agree with members of the DC will be involved.
- f. This business may be conducted by phone; it should be expedited as soon as possible.
- g. The DC Secretary will call a meeting of the DC. The DC will agree charges and will consult with the EC about other measures that need to be in place (e.g. keeping the parties apart).
- h. According to our constitution complaints are not grounds for suspension from membership. However the EC may require a comrade to withdraw from areas of activity, for the period of an investigation. In such cases the comrade does not lose their right to make political submissions or to vote, but must exercise them in writing or by proxy. Such decisions may be made on the grounds of safety to comrades where there is credible evidence of immediate danger of repetition of abuse, if not yet proven. Members withdrawn from activity on these grounds will be given a week's notice and will be allowed to appeal to the EC. The EC's decision is final. Conditions will vary. It may preserve comrade's activity in the class struggle. The conditions will be written down by the EC and lodged with the DC. The EC will help implement these decisions. At this point the investigation will begin (see Next Steps

(3.a) below).

- i. Comrades can also be advised to take a leave of absence on grounds of well-being.
- j. As stated above, alternate DC members will be asked to investigate where there are objections. Every effort will be made to ensure that the investigative body is acceptable to all parties to the dispute but the DC's decision on final personnel will be final.
- k. The DC Secretary will soon afterwards inform the EC of the charges in writing. This will be reported to the EC as a whole, at a meeting, respecting confidentiality as appropriate and as agreed with the complainant (e.g. anonymising the complainant). If the complaint is against an EC member, they should withdraw from those parts of EC business to do with hearing about or managing the complaint.
- l. If the complaint is against a member of the DC they will be required to stand down from their role on the DC and their place will be taken by a DC alternate. If the complaint is against the DC Secretary then, this comrade having stood down from their role, the DC will elect a new secretary.

3. Next steps

- a. One member of the DC will agree to be the lead and they will set out the terms of the investigation including timescales. These will be communicated to both/all parties within 24 hours.
- b. The complainant and the alleged perpetrator will have the right to, and are strongly advised to have, support and representation. The lead will check both parties have this in place.
- c. The investigative body will conduct a formal investigation, including at least:
 - Separately interviewing both the complainant and alleged perpetrator, where possible
 - Interviewing any witnesses. Both parties will have the right to call witnesses to be interviewed.
- d. Particular attention will be given to supporting the complainant through the process. Subsequent lines of investigation and questioning may need to test the evidence but will be compatible with the initial approach of support. This should not contradict a fair process for all parties.
- e. Records and details of meetings will be completely confidential to the investigative body throughout in matters relating to the organisation as described above except when reporting to the EC, the rest of the DC and ultimately to the NC (see below).
- f. The DC has the authority to seek paid-for expert advice outside the organisation.
- g. A final meeting of the investigative body will be held within 60 days of the complaint to discuss the complaint, investigation and outcome. This can take the form of a hearing with the body and both parties present to give their point of view, separately if necessary.
- h. The investigative body will write a report for the NC and other members of the DC/alternates covering the facts of the investigation, discussion and recommendations. Recommendations may include:

- No case to answer
 - Outside the competence of the investigative body
 - Mediation
 - Moving comrades' activity
 - Training
 - More serious disciplinary measures including: motion of censure, suspension from membership of a leading committee, suspension from membership, expulsion. In cases of expulsion from the organisation the NC will follow guidance in the constitution in relation to appeals.
- i. Where serious disciplinary measures have been made the investigative body will be obliged to identify the comrade being sanctioned to the NC. Where a disciplinary measure involves an expulsion, this will be reported to the organisation.
- j. The NC can accept the recommendation or propose alternatives. The NC must have a good, evidenced reason to propose any alternative. Recommendations will be voted on.
- j. In cases of a very serious nature e.g. serious bullying, predatory sexual behaviour, sexual harassment, where the investigative body feel it would be useful or either party requests it, the report should be open to confidential, independent scrutiny.
- l. Both/all parties have the right to be heard in person by the NC.
- m. There will be an appeals procedure, open to both parties, see below.
- m. Parties will be consulted regarding records retained by the organisation, but in all cases the DC is responsible for keeping one full record of all cases. This full record will remain accessible to all DC members and alternates, to future DCs, and to the current and future ECs. It will be kept in a secure place and should not be reproduced in any form.

Monitoring of outcomes

The investigative lead is responsible for monitoring less serious outcomes, in consultation with the DC. In the case of mediation, reorganisation of activity and training these outcomes should be implemented (or begun) within 60 days. In the case of more complex and longer-term rehabilitation measures the EC will appoint one of its members to oversee this work, set a deadline for progress to be made, and review it with the DC investigative lead every six weeks. Where progress has not been made after three months the DC lead and EC member has the power to recommend further measures. This should be discussed and voted on at the NC with all parties being informed of that discussion. Both have the right to be heard in person by the NC. The DC investigative lead and or EC member will keep the complainant informed of progress or lack of progress with outcomes.

Appeals procedure

Appeals against an outcome or recommendation can be heard by an ad hoc Appeals Committee appointed by the National Committee (except in the case of expulsions where procedures in the Constitution will be followed). The Appeals Committee will be made up of at least two members of the AWL who are not NC or DC members or known friends of either of the parties.

To lodge an appeal either party should write to the Secretary of the Disputes Committee, copying in the Secretary of the National Committee indicating which body they wish to hear the appeal.

At its next meeting the National Committee will appoint two people to hear the appeal if asked to do so.

The person making the appeal should prepare a document making additional points and testimony backing up an argument that either the Stage Two ruling be quashed or that the original complaint is upheld, or that an alternative, lesser or more severe, sanction be made.

The DC Secretary will ensure that the party making the appeal has representation (a comrade who can offer support) throughout. The appointed committee will review the original investigation(s), the appeal document and question the comrade making the appeal. They may ask further questions of the other party in the dispute. The Appeals Committee will report to the NC on whether or not they have found in favour of the appeal. That decision will be final.

If an Appeal involves an expulsion, under the terms of the constitution, the basic facts of the expulsion (respecting confidentiality of complainants) will be reported to the membership.

Exception to the Complaints Procedure (officers of the AWL)

AWL office, branch and fraction organisers and members of the Executive Committee embody the authority of the group and are usually its most important ambassadors. We expect the highest standards of conduct from these organisers.

While organisers have a responsibility to issue instructions about collectively-agreed political activity, they should not personalise or try to use intimidatory pressure in discussions and disagreements over those instructions. Similar standards are expected in interactions with non-members.

As stated, our Complaints Procedure is open to both members and non-members and all are entitled to raise a complaint with the AWL if they believe our organisers have not acted as they should. We recognise that it may be particularly difficult for a

variety of reasons to institute complaints against organisers (e.g. lack of confidence, confusion over personal and political roles). Non-members may not realise it is possible, or may consider it inappropriate, to raise complaints.

The EC has a responsibility to protect members and contacts from harm and uphold the integrity of our organisation. Although it is better for complaints to be made by the person affected through the Complaints Procedure, individual EC members, or the EC as a body, may need to take swift action against an organiser or other EC member when there is good evidence for doing so. Such action is appropriate where, if a complaint had been brought, it would be a stage one complaint.

Action may consist of direct discussion with a member of the EC who is not involved in any dispute and this should always be conducted promptly. In this case the nature of the complaint and outcome will be reported to the whole EC and also to the Disputes Committee.

As stated above, the EC should initiate a formal stage two complaint within the terms of the guidance above if it is appropriate. This will be conducted by the Disputes Committee as outlined above.

Further notes on outcomes, confidentiality and communication

As stated above, in cases where complaints have been made to the DC and have been upheld, written or verbal reports will be made to the NC at the discretion of the DC. These will identify the comrade being sanctioned. The NC must vote on recommendations. The person sanctioned has the right to make a verbal or written statement to the National Committee but that is not a formal appeal. Appeals procedures are outlined above.

Otherwise we have a responsibility to respect the confidentiality of all parties. This is essential for comrades to feel they can trust the processes we set up and that they will be treated with respect and sensitivity.

Prompt and comprehensive communication is also essential for trust in the process. All conversations should be recorded and circulated promptly as appropriate as described in the Procedure to the parties concerned.

Particular attention should be made to keep complainants fully informed of progress or lack of progress with complaints, outcomes and sanctions.

The lead person dealing with a complaint will explain the general rules of confidentiality to the complainant and explicitly ask what protection of their identity they wish to be made.

In any written reports circulated via email all parties will be anonymised and marked as confidential (they must not be circulated except as indicated by the originator of

the report). Internal lists will not be used for circulating documents (to avoid duplication of archiving). In verbal reports the identity of victims/complainants will be anonymised. Verbal reports will normally only be given to responsible committees and individuals as outlined above. In any written reports for general circulation details will be changed to ensure anonymity.

In cases where complaints have been upheld and serious sanctions given, verbal reports e.g. to the EC or NC will identify the comrade being sanctioned.

The DC and Safeguarding Officers will set up and maintain a secure archiving system as described above. The EC will not archive documents originating from the DC to avoid duplication and limit circulation of information.

Witnesses will be asked to keep details of their evidence and their participation in an investigation confidential. All parties with contact with the investigation (DC and EC) will be asked to keep the investigation confidential. Members who fail to respect confidentiality will be regarded as being in breach of discipline.

The parties involved should be able to consult and discuss with personal supporters and members of the DC and EC.

Note on mediation

The AWL does not have expert skills in mediation. However some comrades in their professional roles will have some skills in general “common sense” mediation. Those comrades, when requested, may be asked to help mediate in disputes. What is expected in this role will be outlined to them by the lead in any investigation.

Mediation will only be used to help resolve less complex or particular issues. It should not be used where there is an extensive history or power imbalance between the parties. The lead has the power to refuse any request to arrange mediation for any reason. We may employ professional help where mediation is complex but also seen to be the best course of action by both parties.