



GREATER MANCHESTER TENANTS UNION

Member Rulebook 2025

This rulebook was ratified by the membership of GMTU at the AMM on the 22nd May 2025.

Amendments were made at the 2025 AGM, which created the Care Conduct and Culture group and the new guidelines of Sexual Violence, all laid out in section 5..

It is a binding document on all members of the Union. All members are subject to the processes and sanctions laid out below.

1. Membership.

- a) Membership of the Union shall be open to all tenants and residents living in Greater Manchester, with the exception of landlords. Persons without a fixed abode based in Greater Manchester may also join the Union.
- b) Membership will be contingent on paying a membership fee, on a pay what you can basis, but with the encouragement of that being set at the equivalent of one hour's wages per month.
- c) Individuals may also join the Union through the subsidised membership scheme, administered by the Secretary and Admin and Comms Officer. Subsidised members attain full rights after two months of membership.
- d) Members will be able to attend and vote at quarterly All Member Meetings (AMM), one of which will be the annual general meeting (AGM).
- e) Members will be able to attend and vote at their local branch meetings.
- f) All members will be eligible to stand for election for roles in branches and caucuses.
- g) Only members who do not own the property they live in will be eligible to stand for election for Committee roles. Staff will be ineligible to stand for Committee positions, regardless of whether they are members.
- h) Members must adhere to the values and code of conduct of the Union and will be governed by the disciplinary and safeguarding policies of the Union.

- i) Members may terminate their membership either through cancellation of their direct debit, or submitting a resignation notice in writing to a Committee officer, staff member or branch secretary or branch chair. Termination of membership should be recorded by the Administration and Comms Officer and removed from databases.

1.1. Obligations and expectations of membership.

- a) Members will be obliged to adhere to the values and code of conduct of the Union, and will be governed by the disciplinary and safeguarding policies of the Union.
- b) Members are expected to behave and act in line with the values and code of conduct in Union spaces, including Whatsapp/ messenger groups, and meetings both in person and online.
- c) A failure to comply with the above may result in sanction, up to expulsion from the union.

1.2. Membership arrears.

- a) Members whose subs are in arrears will have their membership terminated if their arrears pass a six month point.

1.3. Available sanctions on membership.

- a) Members may be sanctioned in the following ways, should they be subject to a fair disciplinary or grievance procedure. The below are the available sanctions that the Union can place upon its members.
 - i) Expulsion from the Union and termination of membership.
 - ii) Suspension of membership for a designated period.
 - iii) Restrictions from holding office or seeking election for a position at Committee, branch or caucus level.
 - iv) Restrictions on attending meetings and events for a period of time.
 - v) Removal from Whatsapp groups or access from social media channels.
 - vi) Requirement to undergo a mediation, accountability process or retraining. These may be related to issues such as hate speech, discrimination, bullying and harassment, and poor behaviour of all kinds. This would only ever be conducted with external support, and would be dependent upon the Union's ability to

resource it.

- vii) All members have the right to a fair hearing and due process, and should be afforded the opportunity put their position across.
- viii) Members will also have the right to appeal the judgement of a disciplinary or safeguarding process to the Complaints, Conduct and Culture committee, according to the guidelines set out in section 5.

1.4. Supporters.

- a) Tenants or residents who do not reside in Greater Manchester but who opt to give a monthly subscription to the Union will be classed as “supporters” and not receive voting rights or the right to attend meetings.
- b) Tenants and residents who do reside in Greater Manchester may pay a regular sub to GMTU but recuse themselves from membership, and be supporters. They may rescind this at any time provided they meet the criteria for membership.

2. Code of conduct - general remarks.

- a) GMTU seeks to create an inclusive and safe environment for its members. GMTU accepts and encourages differences of opinion but differences should be debated civilly. GMTU encourages a range of members from all walks of life to work collectively to advance the cause of renters and communities in Greater Manchester.
- b) The following set of principles of conduct were agreed by members at the 2023 AGM to foster a safe, inclusive environment in GMTU spaces. The standards are intended to make sure everyone is aware of the expected standards of behaviour.
- c) Failure to meet the standards set out in this code of conduct may be regarded as sanctionable, and subject to a disciplinary procedure.

2.1 Code of conduct for members.

- a) To adhere to and uphold GMTU’s constitutional values:
 - i) To be member led, with tenants voice at the centre of decision making.
 - ii) To promote self organisation and collective decision making by members.
 - iii) To be organised on principles of mutual aid and solidarity, not as a customer service or advice bureau.

- iv) To have respect for differences of culture, ethnicity, faith, disability, gender, sexuality, class and nationality.
- v) To be an active anti-racist organisation.
- b) To recognise that members come from all walks of life but are all working towards a common goal in GMTU, we respect and welcome this.
- c) To not discriminate on grounds of sex, gender/gender identity, race, immigration status, disability, sexual orientation, age, class, religion, parenthood etc. This list is non-exhaustive.
- d) To recognise the responsibility to challenge discrimination and inappropriate behaviour in GMTU spaces (meetings, campaigns, whatsapp groups and other online forums etc.) and take a zero-tolerance approach.
- e) To recognise that members come from a range of political backgrounds and leave these differences at the door when we enter GMTU spaces.
- f) To value GMTU as a member-led organisation, and make efforts to contribute to the work of the organisation. We also respect people's differing circumstances, and capacity, respecting when people can't participate for any reason.
- g) At in-person and online meetings to treat each other respectfully and in good faith.
- h) To endeavour to create accessible and safe spaces for GMTU.
- i) To respect others' right to privacy outside of GMTU spaces, including not utilising personal data gained from meetings, Whatsapp groups or events to contact other members uninvited outside of official channels. This includes adding people on social media platforms without prior consent, or messaging other members about non GMTU matters directly using their phone number in a Whatsapp group without invitation.
- j) To not act in ways that might bring the Union into disrepute.
- k) To not steal or defraud the union, or deliberately damage the Union's property.
- l) To not partake in bullying, physical violence, verbal abuse or disrespectful behaviour to other members, or to engage in discriminatory practices.

2.2. Code of Expected Behaviours for Committee Members.

- a) All of the above apply to the committee. In addition, Committee members will be expected to abide by the following codes of conduct.

- i) To act in the best interest of GMTU and its members.
- ii) To uphold the democratic and member-led ethos of GMTU and adhere to collective decision-making processes.
- iii) To encourage participation in GMTU activities and structures.
- iv) To promote diversity and inclusivity at all levels of GMTU.
- v) To take collective responsibility for decisions of the committee, ensuring these adhere to the values of GMTU. To formally record decisions of the committee.
- vi) To honour our commitments to our roles.
- vii) To expect to volunteer 6 hours per month of our time to GMTU.
- viii) To be honest and realistic with our capacity.
- ix) To understand and carry-out any legal requirements as part of our roles and positions of directors of Tenants Union UK Ltd. (the company name of GMTU).
- x) To manage the finances and risks to the organisation and work in a collegiate manner with the GMTU staff.
- xi) To create a positive working environment for staff and members.
- xii) To declare potential conflicts of interest we hold with regards to the work of GMTU, and recuse oneself when a conflict of interest arises.
- xiii) To maintain confidentiality of discussions and decisions taken in the Committee.
- xiv) To ensure that interpersonal relationships between Committee members remain professional in character.

b) Failure to uphold these may result in a Committee member being asked to step down and a replacement being voted upon by the membership at the earliest convenience.

3. Democracy and elections.

- a) The Union is a democratic organisation, with an elected leadership. We encourage members to stand for positions and take on responsibilities at every level of the organisation.

- b) All members of the Union have the right to vote in union elections, provided they have been members of the Union for at least one month prior to the election date.
- c) The Returning Officers of the Union are the individuals responsible for ensuring democracy is upheld within GMTU at every level. They will be the Secretary, supported by the Admin and Comms Officer and the Finance and Operations Officer. These individuals will be responsible for running the elections according to the rules set out below. Candidates have the right to request additional tellers for a secret ballot if requested in writing.
- d) If there is concern that the Returning Officers are failing in their duty to uphold democratic practice, then concerns should be addressed to the Chair and Treasurer in the first instance; and failing that to the Committee and staff team at large.
- e) Members are unable to hold multiple roles on the Committee.
- f) The exception to this rule concern the finance roles. The Treasurer role may be performed by the Secretary in conjunction with the Finance and Operations Officer, in the event that the position falls vacant and there is no deputy Treasurer or Fundraising Officer to take the role. Additionally, should one of deputy treasurer or Fundraising officer roles be empty then the holder of the role that is filled will automatically assume the responsibilities of the vacant position, until such a point that both roles are filled. The purpose of these exceptions is to ensure that there are always people in office with responsibility over financial matters.
- g) Members who hold directorships of the Union (i.e. are directly-elected Officers) will be unable to hold the role of Chair and Secretary at branch level.

3.1. Election of the Committee.

- a) Committee officers will be elected annually at our annual general meeting, to a term of one year in office.
- b) Vacant roles may be filled at by-elections at All Member Meetings, with a term running until the next AGM.
- c) In the case of Committee officers who are re-standing for their post, they must indicate their desire to re-stand to the Returning Officers. In all instances, a re-standing Committee officer is required to provide a candidate statement, which should include a report on their work over the previous term.
- d) Individuals standing for a position for the first time will be required to indicate their desire to stand to the Returning Officers and submit a candidate statement outlining their

suitability for the role.

- e) Notice of roles available for election shall be sent out with the notice for the AGM or AMM, which should be no less than three weeks.
- f) Cutoff for nominations for roles and candidate statements shall be one week prior to the meeting. Late nominations will not be accepted.
- g) Nominations from the floor would only be taken under extraordinary circumstance, as determined by the Committee.
- h) A full list of candidates and statements should be circulated along with meeting papers, no less than 48 hours prior to the meeting start date.
- i) At an AGM or AMM the election will proceed according to the following process:
 - i) If a role is uncontested, the Chair will ask if there is a desire for a ballot. If there are none, then the candidate is duly elected.
 - ii) Should there be at least two members requesting a ballot (a proposer and a seconder), then the Chair will move the election to a vote, after the candidate has given a short 1 minute speech and taken questions. A secret ballot would then be presented with a yes or no option for the election of that individual to office. A candidate would be elected if their yeses outweighed their nos. If over 50% of those present abstain, the vote is ran again. If in the second vote over 50% of those present abstain again, the candidate would not be elected.
 - iii) If a role is contested, then the Chair will invite the candidates to address the meeting with short speeches of no more than 1 minute each. After these speeches, and an opportunity for questioning, the Chair will move the room to a vote. The election will be held using first past the post.
 - iv) All contested elections should take place using a secret ballot. In the case of an election for an uncontested position, should a ballot be requested then it would also be secret.
- j) At the start of an AGM where there are contested elections, a membership-check will take place, supervised by the Returning Officers.

3.2. Procedure in the event of the Chair or Secretary role becoming vacant

- a) It is acknowledged that the function of the Union requires there to be a Chair and Secretary. In years where we have failed to have both roles filled, our capacity to govern

the organisation effectively has been reduced, exposing us to organisational risk

- b) In the event that either role becomes vacant due to resignation, incapacitation or otherwise, the Committee must designate someone from their number as interim holder of the role.
- c) The role would then be open to election at the next AMM.

3.3. Co-option onto the Committee

- a) The Committee may co-opt individuals to the Committee to fill knowledge or experience gaps, should this be determined to be necessary. There may be no more than 2 roles filled on the Committee through this method.
- b) These co-opted individuals may be owner-occupiers, but if they are they would not hold voting rights. It will not be permitted to co-opt owner-occupiers as Co-chairs, Treasurer, Deputy Treasurer or Secretary.
- c) The decision to co-opt should be confirmed by an All Member Meeting, giving members the chance to overturn the decision should they wish.

3.4. Election of branch officers

- a) Branch officers should be elected at branch AGMs. It is not necessary for candidates for election for branch roles to submit written statements - a verbal statement can suffice - however it is encouraged in the interests of robust decision making.
- b) Vacant roles at branch level can be filled from the floor at any AGM, or at any branch meeting, provided that a candidate has a proposer and seconder.
- c) All contested elections, either at branch AGM or ordinary branch meeting, should take place according to the procedure laid out in sections 3.1.(h)(i-iv).
- d) A branch meeting where an officer is elected should be minuted as an accurate record of the meeting, and this record should be made available to the Returning Officers of the Union. Returning Officers should also, as good practice, attend branch AGMs to ensure due process is being followed, or delegate someone to do it on their behalf in the event that they are unable to do so.

3.5 Election of caucus officers.

- a) Caucus officers should be elected according to the same process as branches.

3.6. Recall and suspension of officers.

- a) Members who are subject to a disciplinary procedure and who hold positions within the Union may be removed temporarily from their posts while the procedure is ongoing, and removed depending on the outcome of the process.
- b) Members may also recall the officer of a Committee, branch or caucus, and instigate a new election, provided they can produce a petition signed by 10% of the membership of that body, or five individuals from it, whichever is the greater. Committee officer recall would require 10% of the membership of GMTU as a whole. Should an officer be recalled, then an election would be held according to the process outlined in 3.1, 3.4 and 3.5. An up to date record of membership figures for each branch and the union as a whole is held by the Administration and Comms Officer.
- c) Recalls should be overseen by the Returning Officers, who reserve the right to visit a branch meeting where a recall is taking place to oversee due process is being followed.

4. Decision making and authority.

4.1. General overview of decision making fora within GMTU.

- a) The Union has a number of spaces where decisions can be made. These include the All-Member Meetings, the Committee, Subcommittees, Branches, Caucuses and the Anti-Racism Committee, Campaign groups and ad-hoc panels and working groups. Not all spaces have equal decision making power.
- b) Across the Union we would always aim for consensus in ordinary decision making, but where consensus cannot be reached a decision can be reached by vote, with a simply majority carrying the vote.
- c) Members of relevant fora may table proposals or motions to that body for consideration and vote. They should ensure that the proposals have a proposer and seconder. This power is available to both staff and members.
- d) Proposals or motions to a General Meeting can be sent by a branch or the Committee.
- e) Individual members or subcommittees may submit proposals to a General Meeting, subject to the review and approval of the Committee.

4.2 General Meetings

- a) The highest sovereign body is the Annual General Meeting, which is the only body with the power to alter the constitution of the union, set long-term strategy, hold annual elections and approve financial returns.

- b) Quarterly All Member Meetings may perform some of these functions, with the exception of amending the constitution. They may only elect roles that are vacant at the time.
- c) All Member Meetings have the power to allocate Union funds from the “member led budget” pot – subject to review by the Finance and Fundraising Committee.

4.3 The Committee

- a) The Committee is collectively responsible for the day-to-day leadership of the Union, will be responsible for implementing member decisions, and acting as political and strategic leadership of the organisation. It will hold legal and financial responsibilities. It will be responsible for the growth and functioning of the Union as a whole, including support for branches.
- b) The Committee has the power to allocate Union funds and approve budgets – subject to review by the Finance and Fundraising Committee.
- c) In the event that the Finance and Fundraising Committee disagree with a financial decision made by the Committee, or the Union as a whole, they may submit an objection to the decision, outlining their rationale and calling for a revote. An allocation of funds approved at an All Member Meeting may be overturned by a Committee vote, provided robust justification is given to the original proponent, subject to ratification at the next AMM.
- d) The Committee also has ultimate oversight and power over branch formation and dissolution, with a process for creating new branches being outlined in the Constitution article 8.5.
- e) Quorum for the Committee shall be 4 directly elected members.

4.4. The Finance and Fundraising Committee

- a) The Finance and Fundraising Committee is the only body of the Union that is able to propose central budgets. Other parts of the Union which want to propose budgets must first run them by the Finance and Fundraising Committee and receive approval.
- b) Budgets approved by the Finance and Fundraising Committee should be submitted to a vote at the Committee.
- c) The Finance and Fundraising Committee can review any resource allocation by any other body of the Union and recommend a different decision to the Committee, provided that they give sound financial justification for this recommendation.
- d) In such an instance, the Committee would hold the final power to determine resource allocation.

- e) Quorum for the Finance and Fundraising committee shall be a minimum of three officers, which must include one of either the Treasurer or Finance and Operations Officer.

4.5. Branches

- a) Branches will have autonomy over their campaigning priorities and public statements and comms channels, providing they do not contradict the core values, mission and overall image / branding of the Union.
- b) Branches may raise their own funds, which ought to be held in a ring-fenced pot in the Union general account.
- c) Branches may request resource allocation via motions passed at a branch meeting, subject to the approval of the Committee.
- d) Resource allocation may be queried by the Finance and Fundraising Committee, providing there is good justification.
- e) These resources may be drawn from standing budgets (for instance room hire or print costs) or from the membership income reserved for member-led activity, subject to the availability of funds. It is the responsibility of the Finance and Fundraising Committee to review resource allocation.
- f) Quorum for a branch should be 3 members of that branch.

4.6. Caucuses

- a) Caucus decision making power will follow that of the branches outlined above.

4.7. Ad hoc working groups

- a) a working group would typically be formed out of a larger body for the purpose of close and detailed working on an issue or project.
- b) Its powers would be limited only to providing a recommendation and working up a proposal - the parent body would have decision making authority over that proposal.

4.8. Voting processes and decision making within different fora of the Union

- a) All decisions within GMTU shall be made by a simple majority vote, with the exception of amending the constitution, which will require a two-thirds majority, and any other specific instance as outlined in the Constitution where the majority requirement differs.

- b) Discussion on an item of business should be conducted in line with the expected code of conduct. Failure to meet these could result in sanction.
- c) Any two members of a decision-making group may propose that a vote is taken on the item by proposing and seconding a move to a vote. In the event that there is opposition to an item being moved to a vote, then a vote will be taken on whether to move to a vote. If there is no opposition then a vote will be held on the item of business.
- d) The Chair may also propose that the item of business is moved to a vote without a seconder, provided this comes after there has been opportunity for discussion if required. If there is objection to the Chair moving the item to a vote then the attempt to do so will fail, with a vote being moved only then in the instance of 4.8.(c).
- e) In the Committee meetings, the Chair may not cast a vote, except in the instance of a tie where they can cast a deciding vote.
- f) Staff members may not cast a vote at Committee meetings, but may do so in their own branch or a caucus they are a member of. For the avoidance of doubt, their “own branch” means the branch that they live in, if they are a member, not the branch they work in if they are an organiser.

5. Grievance, complaints and disciplinary

- a) The aim of the procedures outlined below is to deal with issues employees, members, external individuals or organisations, and Committee members raise in a swift and fair way, and to provide appropriate sanction to members who have broken our code of conduct or values.
- b) It also covers the process of dealing with grievances. Grievances are concerns, problems or complaints that individuals involved with GMTU have with others in the organisation, or the organisation itself. A collective grievance is where a number of individuals have the same grievance at the same time. This procedure aims to outline a process for both individual and collective grievances.
- c) A grievance or disciplinary should always clearly state:
 - i) If appropriate, the issue at hand, including dates, names of individuals involved, and any other relevant facts to enable us to review the complaint. It is also helpful if it can set out steps taken to try to resolve matters informally.
 - ii) If possible, what rules of the Union have been broken.

- iii) What the preferred outcome would be for the process, what you would like to see GMTU do and/or your suggestions for how it may be resolved.
- d) Grievances and complaints can be submitted to any member of the Committee or staff, or member of the Care, Conduct and Culture Committee”.
- e) “Grievance and complaints should be handled by the Care, Conduct and Culture Committee according to the guidelines set out in this section”.
- f) It is the responsibility of the entire Committee to monitor the implementation of this policy.
- g) All grievances should be handled with complete confidentiality, taking into account the wishes of the individual who has raised the grievance, subject to the guidelines of the Care, Conduct and Culture committee on complaints and sexual violence and harassment policies set out in section 5.

5.1 Foundational Principles

- a. **Positive union culture.** We aim to create a union with a positive, comradely culture, where members and staff can work in an environment free from harassment and bullying, where we support one another and try to resolve problems fairly and with care and compassion.
- b. **Good faith.** Wherever possible, all members, including those on the CCC group, should enter into conversations in good faith. This means they should enter in the spirit of resolution, give others the benefit of the doubt where possible, and try to be reasonable and fair to other people in the process, including being honest and sincere about what has happened. The goal of the below policies is to reach a resolution for parties where possible to ensure as many people can be fully involved in GMTU as possible.
- c. **Fighting all oppression.** GMTU aims to be an organisation where people can be free from discrimination and oppression. We should be aware that often greater difficulties are faced by people who are women or trans, disabled, LGBTQ, racialised, or face other structural oppression. Who handles complaints and the way they are handled should be sensitive to these factors.
- d. **Understanding our limitations.** GMTU is a tenants union and we may not have the specialist skills or knowledge to handle all disputes or work through extensive processes of mediation. We are not a court and do not usually have access to all the information we may need to decide if something is ‘true’ or ‘untrue’. Many issues will involve people we

are friends with or work with regularly, and we cannot be objective. Where a complaint includes issues that may be more appropriately dealt with by specialist services (e.g. complaints involving children or domestic violence), the CCC group should not seek to replace these services and should point people towards them with their consent where possible (except where safeguarding is required). This doesn't mean the group shouldn't consider the complaint, but we should recognise our limitations and explain clearly to complainants when we are out of our depth as volunteers.

- e. **Sexual harassment and violence.** We should approach examples of sexual harassment and violence separately from the standard complaints procedure. This is because often the issues are highly traumatic for those who have experienced them, there is often no “evidence” even when incidents did take place, there is often little justice in the justice system for survivors, and mishandling sexual violence poses a serious risk to trust and safety within organisations and in the wider movement. Therefore the below guidelines reflect a split between dealing with general complaints and dealing with issues of sexual violence, domestic abuse or harassment. Where there is a sexual element to the allegation, this should be dealt with under the separate guidelines below.

5.2 The Care, Conduct and Culture Group

- a. How is the CCC group selected:
 - i. The CCC group is a group of up to 5 members, who should be elected in a vote open to all members of GMTU for one year terms by majority secret ballot at an AMM or AGM. Any member may stand, except for a member with an open formal complaint against them at the time they stand. Ideally those members should be a diverse cross-section of our membership, and each member should consider if they have the capacity, personality (e.g. patience) and experience to do the role. However, they will receive appropriate training in this guidance and Safeguarding and Data Protection if elected. If someone has to step down, a replacement should be sought to be voted on at the next AMM, and they will be on the CCC group for a year unless they have to step down. This may mean that members of the CCC group are not all elected at the same time.
- b. The role of the CCC group
 - i. Conflict is inevitable in any group of people, especially in an organisation of the size and nature of GMTU. The role of the CCC group is to help build a union where we respond to conflict in a way that reflects the values we aspire to, and to ensure that our spaces don't allow for harm to be perpetuated - particularly along lines of structural oppression.
 - ii. A key part of this will be that the CCC will deal with concerns and complaints, managing each step of the process and eventually making formal recommendations if a formal complaint is reached.

- iii. The CCC's goals should not be limited to complaints, but instead take a wider view of what ongoing structures and dynamics were creating friction in the union, and making recommendations for how to improve on them when capacity allows. This could include going to branches and engaging with them on how to improve the culture and inclusivity of the branch.
- iv. The CCC also has access to a wellbeing fund (the size of which is decided by the Committee once a year, but is no higher than £1000 a year), which it can use to give members one-off grants of up to a pre-determined figure for self-care and wellbeing - for example, accessing counselling. GMTU members will be able to email the CCC group to ask for a grant at ccc@tenantsunion.org.uk. Members will be expected to provide some evidence of what the grant is intended for and its cost. Grants are discretionary and the CCC group will have the right to refuse a grant. Grants for those who are actively involved in GMTU and need the financial support due to burnout or to help them engage in GMTU more effectively should be prioritised. These grants should be recorded by the CCC group and reported back to the Committee at least once a year.
- v. Though we recognise that members may benefit from financial help to resolve their housing issues, GMTU cannot offer this through the wellbeing fund because there would be likely to be too much demand on the fund, and GMTU is here to try and seek justice from tenants' landlords and authorities for this purpose.
- vi. We recognise that branches and caucuses will continue to make their own decisions collectively on what happens within their branch or caucus, and branches and caucuses have the autonomy to try and resolve issues of conflict and culture in their local groups, with the support of their local organisers. We encourage them to do so by reference to our principles in this document. However, where they cannot do so, the CCC can be approached in relation to people's concerns.

5.3 General complaints process

- a. These guidelines are for use in complaints against a member or about the union itself. In order to ensure compliance with employment law, complaints against staff should be dealt with by their line manager according to the guidance in the staff handbook.
- b. Non-members can make complaints, but the CCC group will need to consider the nature and severity of the complaint as to whether the complaint from a non-member will be heard. Non-members should not be excluded from raising issues of sexual harassment or violence about members.
- c. Submission stage
 - i. Complaints or concerns that a member/person wants help with should be submitted to the dedicated CCC group email at: ccc@tenantsunion.org.uk

- ii. Complaints or concerns should be in writing and should ideally include:
 - 1. Details of what has gone wrong and why the person raising the concern is unhappy;
 - 2. Any evidence of what happened (such as screenshots, email chains or reports from people who saw the incidents);
 - 3. What the person raising the concern would like as an outcome.
 - iii. Not including the above should not automatically disqualify a complaint or concern from being considered. If someone needs help to put their concerns in writing, a member of the CCC should help them to do this - for example, when a person with a concern has a disability or does not write in English as their first language/at all.
 - iv. As a general rule, unless there are specific reasons why not to and it is requested by the person with the concerns or they are a survivor or reporter of a sexual violence/harassment concern (see SV and Harassment Policy), a complainant should expect their identity to be shared with the person they have complained about. This is to ensure it can be properly addressed and resolutions sought as transparently and fairly as possible.
- d. Initial consideration by the CCC
- i. The issue raised will initially be treated as a concern and will be looked at by the CCC group, ideally within 2 weeks of submission.
 - ii. If a complaint is to be considered, the CCC group should agree who will take it forward. No less than 1 but no more than 3 members of CCC group should be selected to lead on it (the “complaints handler(s)”). There may be a meeting to decide this if necessary.
 - iii. Anyone on the CCC group with a conflict of interest in relation to either a complainant or anyone complained against should not be involved in the complaint handling, and can be asked to stand down if they do not indicate themselves. A conflict of interest could be:
 - 1. Any financial relationship with a party;
 - 2. Any family relationship with a party;

3. An ongoing close personal friendship or romantic/sexual relationship with a party;
 4. An ongoing work relationship with a party (e.g. as colleagues).
- iv. If the conflict of interest rules leave no-one eligible on the complaints group, the complaints group should approach someone appropriate with no conflicts of interest who is willing to take on the complaint. This should ideally be a lay member first, a committee member if a lay member cannot be found, a staff member if no committee or lay member can be found, and external help may be sought if there is no-one in the above categories able to take it on who is willing or who doesn't have a conflict.
 - v. If no-one on the CCC group at the time feels competent to handle a particular issue raised, or where another party would be best placed to handle it, then the CCC group may contact other parties to handle the complaint, following the same order as above. This should be able to be justified to the committee and, for accountability purposes, ideally would not be used often.
 - vi. If the complaint is by a non-member, the CCC group may choose to look at it (especially if it is a complaint relating to sexual violence or harassment, using the separate policy below), but they do not need to accept the complaint if it is from a non-member and is not caught under the sexual violence and harassment guidelines below.
 - vii. Where possible given the personnel of the CCC group, where a complaint involves an accusation of oppressive behaviour (e.g. racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism etc), at least one CCC member handling it should have lived experience of the oppression at issue.
- e. Informal stage
- i. No less than 1 but no more than 3 people should consider the complaint. They should decide who will be in charge of handling it and how contact should be made.
 - ii. If a complaint is clearly in bad faith (e.g. repeatedly complaining about an issue that has already been examined, an unfounded retaliation to a complaint against themselves, or using complaints to try and subvert the democratic process), the CCC group can explain to the complainant that they believe the complaint to be in bad faith and do not intend to progress to the next stage. The complainant still has the right to appeal as below.

iii. The complaint handler(s) should:

1. Speak or write to the complainant to inform them who will be dealing with the complaint and ask for information on what has happened and keep notes. Ask for any evidence of what is being complained about, if any exists. Find out what the complainant wants as an outcome. Agree these notes with the complainant.
2. If the complaint is about a particular person or people's behaviour, the complaint handler(s) should approach the person complained about, explain what has been raised, and ask if they would be willing to resolve it informally, on a Zoom call or in a meeting with the complaint handler(s) present. Where possible, an informal resolution should be sought.
3. Informal resolution could include:
 - a. An apology;
 - b. An agreement to change behaviour in future;
 - c. An agreement for the union to take an action, with a named person approached to do this (for example, where someone is complaining about how their member solidarity case was handled, it could be agreed that a new member solidarity contact will be assigned and looked at again).

iv. As GMTU has limited resources, informal resolution should not require ongoing supervision from GMTU members. Where this stage has already effectively been tried, the complaints handler(s) can skip to the formal stage.

v. The parties to a complaint may want a mediation, and the complaint handler(s) may consider that mediation is appropriate. However, this should only be considered if the GMTU Committee agrees that we can allocate the resources to involve an external mediator to get to agreed outcomes. GMTU members should not try to engage in extended ad-hoc mediations with members on a volunteer basis, as these can be draining and time-consuming and escalate conflict when not handled properly.

vi. If a mediator is wanted, the complaint handler should seek out and contact appropriate external mediators, get a quote for their work, and ask the Committee to decide if we can afford this.

f. If a complaint cannot be resolved informally

- i. At the point at which the complaint handler determines that the complainant and/or anyone complained about cannot agree on an informal resolution:
 1. Initial communication. The complaints handlers should explain to the complainant and anyone complained about that this will now be looked at according to the complaints policy and conclusions proposed by the complaint handler. They should also propose a reasonable timeframe for dealing with the complaint and make a plan of when the outcomes should be achieved by. This can be reviewed. We should normally try to get to a resolution on complaints within 2 months.
 2. Collecting information. The complaint handler(s) should speak to other parties where they have been highlighted as having information and where the handler feels they need more information, with their consent.
 3. Reasonable basis? If the handler of the complaint considers that there is a reasonable basis for the complaint after collecting more information, consider whether any member complained about should be suspended while the complaint is investigated. For example, this may happen where the complaine is alleged to be intimidating the complainant in an ongoing way, or where they are accused of an ongoing harm, rather than an isolated event.
 - a. If the complaint handler decides there is no reasonable basis for the complaint (e.g. where there is no evidence the incident complained of happened), or the complaint can be dealt with through the provision of more information (e.g. explaining that the complaint is based on a misconception about the facts) the complainant should be informed of this, and that they have a right to a second look at the complaint, in accordance with the appeal process below.
 4. Making a decision. If the complaint handler(s) consider there is a reasonable basis for the complaint, the complaint handler(s) should make a decision on the practical and achievable next steps that are within the CCC group's powers, and agree these with the complainant. These should be considered reasonable by the person handling the complaint. They can include:
 - a. A record being kept of the incident and flagged up to the Committee in case it happens again in future;
 - b. Asking for an apology from a member being complained about;

- c. Placing conditions on someone's membership - e.g. requiring them not to contact the complainant again by direct message, or asking them not to attend particular branch meetings or events, such as social or public events;
 - d. Removing someone from a WhatsApp or Tenants Union group;
 - e. Preventing someone from standing for elected positions in GMTU at any level for a specified length of time, or asking them to stand down from a position;
 - f. Termination of someone's membership of the union;
 - g. Another reasonable sanction or next step that can be justified by reference to the specific facts of the incident(s) complained about.
5. Factors to take into account. In order to decide if any sanctions on membership should be required, the complaint handler(s) should consider factors such as:
- a. Does the complaint handler think that the behaviour complained of broke the union's agreed Code of Conduct and/or caused harm?
 - b. Has the behaviour complained about been repeated over time?
 - c. Is the behaviour complained about discriminatory on the basis of race, gender, disability, religion, sexuality etc?
 - d. Will the parties to the complaints and others in the union be able to work together in a comradely way if the person complained about is allowed to stay in the union/in particular spaces of the union such as online forums or local meetings?
 - e. What resources will it take to continue to manage the conflict or behaviour if no sanctions are imposed?
 - f. Does the person complained about understand why their behaviour has affected someone and show a willingness to change their behaviour?
 - g. Does the person complained about commit to not repeating the behaviour again?

- h. This is not an exhaustive list.
 - 6. Write down the decision. Using the criteria in paragraph 5 as far as possible, the complaint handler should make a decision and write it down to explain their reasoning, then send their decision and reasoning to both parties and explain when the decision will apply from and how long any sanctions will last for.
 - 7. Information sharing. After deciding a step or sanction, or actioning an agreed resolution, information will need to be shared for the purposes of carrying that step out. For example, where a member is told to stop attending a particular branch or caucus, that branch's committee or caucus leadership would need to be informed. Where a member is suspended or has their membership terminated, the committee and staff may need to be informed of an overview of the complaint and the sanction proposed to enable the relevant parties to remove the member formally from the organisation. Turnover may mean that information will need to be passed on on a need-to-know basis.
 - 8. Non-engagement. If someone complained about refuses to engage with the process or adhere to a decision made, the complaints handler can recommend that a sanction is issued as appropriate, up to and including their membership being terminated for this reason. The complaints handler should inform the GMTU Committee if they decide a member's membership should be terminated on this basis, with an explanation of why.
- ii. The CCC group must report back to each other, and to the GMTU Committee at least once every 3 months, and whenever the Committee should take an action. These reports should be in summary, including a report of what actions are currently being taken and whether anything currently needs to be actioned by the committee or staff. Information should be shared sparingly and without unnecessary detail for people's privacy, but what needs sharing is at the discretion of the CCC group and committee.
 - iii. If a member was suspended for the duration of a complaints process, they should not be suspended after a complaint is resolved. If a complaint is resolved without termination of their membership, that member should be allowed to return to their full union life, except where a particular decision about engagement has been reached (e.g. not going to a particular branch meeting, or standing for elections).
 - iv. The CCC group should keep notes from the complaint, plus any correspondence and the reasons for their decision, in a storage space specifically for the CCC

group within Tenants Union drives for record keeping. This should be accessible by the Chair and Secretary for future reference if needed.

g. Appeal process

- i. If a complainant or someone complained about is unhappy with how a decision was reached or wishes to add more evidence or information, they can ask in writing for the complaint to be looked at again by another member of the CCC or a third party, chosen in accordance with the conflict of interest guidance above.
- ii. If this happens, the second complaints handler should:
 1. Speak to the first complaint handler(s).
 2. Read over any notes or written comments.
 3. Read over or listen to any new evidence or information.
 4. Check if they feel the above policy was applied fairly and correctly.
 5. Where they feel a step or sanction was unreasonable, decide an alternative (effectively this will involve repeating steps 4-8 above).
 6. The final decision should be written and communicated to the complainant and anyone complained about, and both sides informed that this is a final decision and GMTU can't take further formal steps.
- iii. Complainants and people complained about are not sworn to secrecy about the processes - they may need guidance, support and help from friends and others in the union. People may want to bring a friend to any meetings. However, complainants or people complained about may be asked to engage in the above process in good faith to reach resolutions, which may include being asked not to post about it publicly or on GMTU's platforms while the process is ongoing, to keep GMTU spaces positive and constructive.
- iv. Complaint handlers should be aware they are in a position of power and should avoid sharing more information about individuals without it being necessary for the handling of the complaint - in other words, there is a higher duty of confidentiality from those handling complaints than for those party to the process.
- v. The decision of the appeal process is a final decision.

5.4. Sexual violence and harassment policy

a. Specific principles

- i. Survivor-centred approach. We should aim to act in a way that empowers the person who has been impacted by the instance of sexual violence or domestic abuse. We should support them as best we can, and try to ensure their comfort and safety. We should be aware of the ramifications of trauma due to experiences of sexual violence, harassment or domestic abuse.
 - ii. Containment and safety. We should try to ensure the comfort and safety of other members. We should create an environment which minimises the chance of sexual violence (SV) or domestic abuse (DA) from taking place, and which minimises the risk of people accused of sexual violence from doing (further) harm or creating an unsafe or unwelcoming space for people who want to come forward in future.
 - iii. Sensitivity to forms of oppression and discrimination. We should consider the impacts of people's own identities and experiences of oppression - e.g. sexism, racism, transphobia and homophobia - when thinking about complaints. For example, we should be aware of the ways that women and marginalised genders can be belittled or disbelieved when raising issues of sexual violence or harassment, and the ways that racialised people can be depicted as 'aggressive' when they try to raise concerns. We should seek to learn and skill ourselves up on the ways these can affect any of the parties involved and bear them in mind when dealing with an issue raised under this policy.
 - iv. We should not aim to replace the legal system. Where behaviour has been in private and between individuals, it is unlikely we will ever 'know' what happened precisely, and it can be damaging to try to enter into a fact-finding exercise that potentially retraumatises a victim of unwanted sexual contact or harassment. A survivor may want to report an incident to police or other authorities. However, they should not be forced to report the allegation to the police before we consider an issue, and should not be discouraged from reporting something if they want to. If someone is accused of serious sexual harm or misconduct, there may be no option but to suspend or terminate a member's membership without detailed 'investigation', and this does not need to come with an assumption of guilt to be necessary to ensure members' safety in GMTU and that others feel able to engage with the space.
- b. Where contact with the CCC includes an allegation of sexual violence or harassment against a member, the below policy should be followed instead of the standards complaints procedures. This includes any form of unwanted sexualised contact, whether verbal or physical, whether once or repeated.
- c. Where someone reporting sexual harassment or violence expresses that they felt something was sexually inappropriate, the CCC should not try to play down the sexualised element, and should accept that the contact was perceived as sexual harassment/violence if that is how the person reporting conceives of it.
- d. The CCC group should aim to carry through the below process in a survivor-centred way. This involves ensuring a survivor feels heard and supported and that their consent

for information-sharing is secured as far as possible, their words used (i.e. they are able to describe and name their own experiences and don't get others' narratives imposed on them) and their anonymity protected if they wish it to be. Survivors should not be required to make all the decisions, but their wishes should be taken into account and the process should seek to avoid retraumatising them or provoking negative consequences for them, e.g. retaliation or further contact by the person they're raising the concern about, or their friends.

- i. Selecting people to handle the situation. For a sexual harassment or violence issue, at least 2 people but no more than 3 people should be asked to carry through the process below. One should primarily act as a contact and support for the person reporting the issue. The same conflict of interest approach applies as in our Care, Conduct and Culture guidelines above. Ideally both members should be on the CCC group, but another person may be asked if this is not possible, ideally someone with lived experience of sexual violence/harassment and other forms of oppression where relevant, and ideally a lay member of the union. However, another member or staff member without a conflict of interest may be asked, or an external organisation with expertise (e.g. Cradle Community).
- ii. Try to speak with the survivor. The next step is to try and make contact with the person who feels they have experienced the harassment or violence being raised. This may be the person reporting, but if it is not:
 1. If the information has come second or third hand, the complaints group should sensitively try to find out if it is possible to speak to the survivor to hear what they have experienced.
 2. If a survivor is unwilling or unable to speak to the CCC panel, or they have not heard from a survivor within a month of trying to get in contact, and it is therefore unclear whether they would want GMTU to take any action (i.e. if neither the person who raised the issue nor the complaints group can find the survivor) the CCC panel has permission to stop applying this policy and stand down. This is to remain survivor-centred and limit action that could have consequences for the survivor. However, the team may choose to continue with some action (such as suspension or termination of membership) especially if the allegation is serious and serious harm is alleged, bearing any consequences for the survivor in mind.
 3. If they choose to take action without speaking to the survivor directly, the CCC group should consider if, given the allegation, there would be no practical way to reach a point where other members, especially survivors of SV, could feel safe from violence and harm and able to engage with the union if the alleged was to remain a member, the CCC group should request the alleged perpetrator has their membership terminated by the committee.
- iii. Understanding what is alleged. If the CCC has contact with the survivor, they should try to understand what that person says has happened. If an allegation is passed on verbally, the CCC group should ask permission to write down a summary of what they have been told that they can store to explain their

decisions. We should ask the survivor what they want to happen next, and note this down. We should start from the assumption that the survivor's perspective on what happened is valid and does not come from nowhere, even if the member accused may disagree with their perspective. We should tell the survivor or reporter that we intend to suspend the member, and do this unless the survivor confirms that they do not want this to happen.

- iv. Suspension of the accused member. Once the team assembled has got enough information to be sure this is a sexual harassment/violence issue, they should ask the Committee to suspend the accused member and communicate that to the accused member, without naming the survivor or reporter if they do not have permission to do so. This is not an assumption of guilt; it comes from recognising the specific risks of a member accused of sexual harassment or violence remaining in union spaces, in particular the risk that others will feel unable to engage with the union while the accused member continues their activity. The only time not suspending the alleged perpetrator can happen is when a survivor clearly and directly opposes a suspension.
- v. Talking to the accused. The CCC group should keep the member accused updated with permission from the survivor or person reporting the incident. They should be compassionate about the way they communicate, and may wish to clarify what the person accused thinks happened, but this is not a process of collecting an 'alternative' account and deciding the 'truth'. Where there is a disagreement on what happened, it should be presumed that the allegation may be true unless it is absolutely irrefutable that it couldn't be (e.g. the member accused was clearly out of the country during the time of the alleged event).
- vi. Taking action. The CCC group should consider whether what the survivor wants to happen would be achievable and reasonable in the circumstances, and ideally this is the decision that should be taken. This may include:
 - 1. A record being kept of the incident and flagged up to the Committee in case it happens again in future;
 - 2. Asking for an apology from a member being complained about;
 - 3. Placing conditions on someone's membership - e.g. requiring them not to contact the person raising the issue again by direct message, or asking them not to attend particular branch meetings or events, such as social or public events;
 - 4. Removing someone from a WhatsApp or Tenants Union group;
 - 5. Preventing someone from standing for elected positions in GMTU at any level for a specified length of time, or asking them to stand down from a position;
 - 6. Termination of someone's membership of the union;

7. Another reasonable sanction that can be justified by reference to the specific facts of the incident(s) raised.
 - vii. The CCC group may decide to take more or less action than a survivor or person reporting requests, but this needs to be explained to the parties. In most circumstances where serious harm is alleged, the accused member will need to have their membership terminated without an assumption of guilt to ensure that the space feels safe for survivors in future (e.g. "I don't know if this happened, but if there's even a small chance that it did, we can't ensure GMTU will feel safe for survivors of sexual violence if you stay in these spaces").
 - viii. Safeguarding. If a survivor is in mental health crisis or feeling isolated, they should be signposted to appropriate support and checked in on if they want to be. If anyone - including either the survivor or accused member - appears to be at risk of harming themselves or others, this should be reported to the union's Safeguarding Lead.
 - ix. Information sharing. The CCC group should give the committee, staff and any relevant members (e.g. a member's branch committee) enough information to explain their decision and carry through what they decide needs to happen next, but should not disclose the name or details of the survivor if the survivor has not given permission for this, and should not share direct evidence (e.g. screenshots or pictures) they do not have permission from a survivor to share.
- e. Anonymity of the survivor and anyone passing on concerns is paramount to ensure people feel safe to bring forward these issues. The CCC group can recommend to the Committee that anyone who shares these names without the consent of that person is removed from the union or access to GMTU communication channels.
- f. If a survivor disengages during the process, they cannot be forced to participate - the CCC group should take necessary actions with the survivor's best interests in mind. This may involve stopping a process if it is felt it is causing harm, or may involve carrying through some limited actions that do not pose a risk to the survivor.
- g. Appeals process in instances of SV cases.
 - i. If any party, for example the survivor, their advocates who reported the issue, or the accused member, is unhappy with how a decision was reached, they can ask the CCC group in writing to check over the decision and reasoning. This should be handled by one member of the CCC group or a third party who wasn't previously involved in looking at the matter, chosen in accordance with the conflict of interest guidance above.
 - ii. But this second check should only be carried out with the survivor's consent, or, if that can't be obtained, should be sufficiently anonymised so that the survivor's identity is not disclosed.

- iii. If this happens, this check should include:
 1. Speaking to the initial group who dealt with the issue.
 2. Reading over any notes or written comments.
 3. Checking if they feel the policy was applied fairly and correctly (avoiding 'fact-finding' or decision-making about the 'truth' of the allegations).
 4. If the checker is concerned that the policy was not applied correctly, they can send the decision back to the original group of people who looked at the issue to be reviewed again, with an explanation of why they feel it was not handled correctly.
 5. The original group should take appropriate actions to remedy the issues raised (e.g. change their decision or make an apology).
- iv. The second check is the final check, but a survivor or their advocate who is still unhappy can inform any elected member in GMTU.
- v. If anyone on the committee inside GMTU is informed by a survivor or their advocate that this policy has been applied wrongly or not applied at all when the CCC group were asked to, they should report this to the Chair, Secretary and/or Treasurer, who may choose to contact the CCC group to select a new group of between 2 and 3 people without conflicts of interests to apply the original SV process again. If the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer decide not to do this, they should give a written explanation of why.

5.5 Applicable to both policies 5.3 and 5.4.

- a. Who carries out decisions?
 - i. The Chair, Secretary and staff team of GMTU should action decisions made by the CCC group in most circumstances. The only exception is where the Chair and Secretary have a serious misgiving about the way the complaints process has been handled, in which case they should trigger the appeal process in each case. The Committee should action any decision that has been made after it has been through the appeal process.
- b. How this policy applies to staff
 - i. Where an allegation of sexual violence, domestic abuse or harassment is made against a staff member, it should be dealt with in accordance with the relevant section of the staff handbook due to the need to follow the union's legal obligations as an employer. However, the above 'principles' should be taken into account even in the situation where it is a staff member accused.
- c. Safeguarding

- i. The Tenants Union should make funds available to ensure that members of the CCC group can access Safeguarding Training and reasonable support for their own wellbeing if they want it (e.g. private counselling).
- ii. Where the CCC group identifies vulnerability or a mental health crisis in a party they are communicating with, they should report the issue to the Safeguarding Lead. In the event that the Safeguarding Lead is unavailable or the position vacant for any reason, a CCC group or committee member who has had Safeguarding Training should apply the Safeguarding Policy. This is limited to where there is an ongoing risk of harm to someone (e.g. where ongoing abuse is reported or threats to safety have been made, or where someone is in mental health crisis and may harm themselves), and should not replace the process above.

6. Safeguarding

- a. Safeguarding is identifying vulnerability and advocating. GMTU is not equipped as a counselling or therapeutic service, and any attempt to overstep the mark and try to help in a way that is not advocating to external services should be avoided. Instead the Union will focus on making its spaces a safer environment for anyone to raise a concern.
- b. The Union will have at least two named Safeguarding leads for the organisation, this should be one member of Staff and non-Staff member. Who holds these roles should be clearly outline in the Union documentation and publicised internally to members and officers, and noted clearly on our website with clear instruction on how to raise a concern. Only one safeguarding lead can be a man.
- c. Our safeguarding policy should be available to all members, and circulated to all newly elected officers at Committee and branch level. [This policy is the relevant Safeguarding Policy as voted on in the September 2025 AGM and subject to subsequent review.](#)
- d. Committee meetings should have a standing item on safeguarding - giving all present the opportunity to raise issues. Strict confidentiality would apply, and details should never be shared in that meeting, rather a private hearing with the Safeguarding Leads should be arranged after the meeting to discuss the issue.
- e. Should a safeguarding issue arise then the safeguarding leads will be required to review, and may seek information regarding the case. We may refer to agencies and authorities as and when necessary if a risk of harm to self or others is identified as the Union is not in a position to investigate safeguarding cases.
- f. We will never dissuade someone who feels harmed from contacting any authority that they believe may be able to support them, including the Police if they wish.

- g. If it is deemed necessary - due to the size or complexity of the case, or conflicts of interest within the leadership team - then a Safeguarding Panel will be formed to deal with the issue. Its operation will be overseen by the Care, Conduct and Culture Committee and governed by the same principles and framework.
- h. Safeguarding policy and best practice should be embedded within the union through training. This may require the use of external organisations which will be made privy to limited information.