

Working definition of case confidentiality

as discussed in Safeguarding Team Huddle 31/1/25 - Jenny B, Steffie S, Franklyn R, C'tri, Sammi Searle, Simone Last.

Presented as BFS guidance beginning at GO Weekend Safeguarding session, 15/02/2025

The Safeguarding Team acknowledges that the current definitions in our Policies and Procedures of the requirement for complainants, witnesses and subjects of complaints are extremely vague.

This causes confusion and distress to people who are genuinely trying to follow the rules, and creates a space where people just have to give their best guess in the moment. It also allows people who disagree with the spirit of the rules space to bend them without a clear boundary.

We agreed on these working definitions for BFS's requirements of confidentiality for people involved in complaints cases. We plan to stick by this working definition with the intention to seek experienced advice about it then write it into our updated policies.

While a case is open confidentiality means

- Not telling people that you are involved in an open safeguarding case or that an open case exists.
- Not telling people in the community about the content of your complaint (what happened, who was involved) until the complaints process is finished.
- You may have a "confidentiality bubble" of a few trusted friends you can talk freely about your complaint with and seek support from, but please let us know who this is and ask them to maintain confidentiality too. Even within your bubble, please don't share things you learned from the complaints process, such as who else is involved or something the Safeguarding Officer disclosed to you.

The reasoning for this is so that the Safeguarding Team's investigation isn't compromised by second-hand information or community gossip. It also prevents well-meaning community members who only know half of the story from trying to fix it themselves.

After a case is closed confidentiality means

- You can tell people about your personal experience
- You can tell people that you made a complaint or went through a resolutions process
- Please don't share things you learned as part of the complaints process or from reading the Outcome Report
- Please be discrete about sharing the outcome of the complaint.

The reasoning for this is that It's fine to say "XXX was asked to leave the Society" but BFS isn't a court so even when we've made the best judgement we can it doesn't prove anything. Either yourself or us could be accused of slander if we advertise that e.g. "XXX was kicked out for stealing money".