

Open Labour

Open Labour is a Labour forum aimed at creating a kinder, more active and more equal society.

We seek a politics where power and wealth are more widely distributed, and in which we work more cooperatively to make sure that power, wealth and opportunity are for all of us - not just those who already have them.

We are part of the democratic left that believes that Labour governments are vital for achieving a country in which all citizens flourish. A Labour Party true to its values and fit for the 21st Century must be both radical and electable, built on a foundation of community, and around a culture which is modern, open and tolerant. Serious about fundamental change, it must also be honest with itself about the challenges it faces.

The political challenge

The national and global politics of the democratic left face unprecedented challenges.

The start of our century has seen the evolution of a global system based on debt not productivity, and on the concentration and restriction of ownership and power. Since the global banking crisis this system has failed in its own right and now risks failing even more seriously. It has also failed the people it serves, restricting aspiration for workers and their families with waves of seemingly endless austerity. Globally, inequality and climate change contribute to war, crisis migration and starvation - but this economy based on concentrated power casts responsibility aside merely to serve the few that accumulate ever greater capital.

In the UK, our economy is structurally unable to reduce income inequality, as the post war age did in developed economies. It fails to provide good work and balanced lifestyles, and lays innovation to waste in a digital age which calls for cooperation and open rights but instead delivers more competition and exploitation.

These rapid developments are creating ever more disconnected lives, breaking down natural communities and their innate power to enhance lives. Instead, community and solidarity are replaced with consumption and a 'me first' society, from our politics to our pastimes. Unregulated markets are distorting and dismantling the very civic and democratic values that create an equitable state and civil society - and as they recede, power seems even further away from the hands of citizens. 'Me first' ends up being bad for everybody.

But where are the alternatives? How can they evolve if the Conservatives are allowed to dominate? Labour seems ill equipped to meet these very modern challenges without a culture of open debate and tolerance, or without realistic strategies for persuasion and governance.

Where now?

Open Labour understands that the Labour Party is a necessary part of positive social change in modern Britain. We believe that this means understanding, occupying, commanding and transforming mainstream opinion and institutions, engaging with and shifting the centre and persuading mainstream voters to ally with our party and programme.

We also strongly believe that this cannot be done if Labour defers to establishment consensus rather than changing it. We want to ally the natural public instinct for social justice with a deliverable programme of reform - uniting “common sense” with the common good.

Our economics should recognise the role of workers as the creators of capital and that economic power must be more widely distributed throughout society. This means Labour should be investing in research and creating the skills and jobs which will tackle the great challenges of the 21st Century, and harnessing the new technology of the online age. But it must challenge power with democracy, ensuring that compassion, fairness and sustainability are built in. This is the natural role of Labour’s modern left.

We seek a renewed political settlement for Labour - focused on the future and based on first principles:

- Equality – people deserve much more equal access to wealth and power.
- Democracy – debate and accountability make us richer and build bridges between us.
- Solidarity – working with trade unions, civil society and international sister parties. Empowering marginalised groups in our politics and in our culture. Fostering equal societies, democracy, and respect for human rights both at home and internationally.
- Emancipation – the democratic left is about freeing us to be the people we want, making sure that freedom is something everyone can have access to.

We seek a new political culture within the Labour Party, freeing and empowering members to give these values a shape as policy and campaigns. From this, we seek to build the power to make those things real. Open Labour will bring people together from community level upwards, and will focus evenly on debate and learning alongside activism and doing. We welcome support and participation from everyone at every level of the Party equally.

We are proud of the wider Labour family in the shape of trade unions, cooperatives, campaigning groups and community organisations. Civil society should be at the heart of what Labour does. We will fight for the party to give democratic powers back to members and the communities that we serve, and to operate in a way which is accountable and transparent. We will welcome new members, supporting their involvement and seeking a politics which can inspire, a party which can empower, and a movement which respects us all.

We hope that you will join us.