

OPEN LABOUR

**LABOUR PARTY DEMOCRACY REVIEW
OPEN LABOUR SUBMISSION - PART 2**

Our priorities:

1. Reduce polarisation and challenge excluding behaviours
2. Encourage diversity of voices and left voices in particular
3. Protect federal/stakeholder version of party democracy
4. Empower members
5. Encourage inclusion, participation and escalation

How should Young Labour be organised nationally, regionally and locally?

We feel strongly that Young Labour needs greater democracy and greater autonomy. Regional representatives should have the ability to contact and organise their members, with the help of their regional party. The National Conference should come into line with the rest of the movement to allow motions with amendments to avoid absurd yes/no votes on nuanced positions. Officers of the party should follow committee direction in organising events and carrying out democratic duties. There should be a national safeguarding policy and full engagement with our international sister parties, as well as links with parallel trade union bodies.

Politically, Young Labour should be explicitly free to take policy or administrative positions at variance with those of the wider party, as long as they are compatible with Clause I and Clause IV, don't exclude certain groups of members, and are not discriminatory. Whilst it will require some level of support, perhaps in the form of a grant YL should also be as financially autonomous as allowed by audit etc. In short, membership should continue to be automatic, but it should work more like a socialist society.

Locally, we feel that setting up branches should be in the gift of local members and that regional boards and directors should be given a duty to support rather than a power to not allow groups. Groups should only be able to be closed down by the NEC on advice of the General Secretary or by local parties on condition that they consider the group inactive or moribund. We feel that a guide book for running a local group and building youth engagement should be available. Nationally, the YLNC should be entitled to officer time equivalent to that of Labour Students.

Finally, whilst we favour the current conference model for policy-making and debate, we also feel that OMOV will always be a more appropriate way to hold votes in YL when it comes to electing positions, and we favour an electoral college for this between members and affiliates. We should not on any condition return to elected posts being decided at conferences (except liberation positions, which should be OMOV rather than weighted delegate votes). Weighted delegate votes in Young Labour would open the door to disputes and create a disincentive to setting local groups up in ways which might be locally appropriate.

How can your local Party better reflect the local community?

Local parties should explore the model which works best for them, but should have to fill positions for liberation officers. We have come across proposals to widen the scope of what this means – for example, should CLPs consider having reps for older members?

We feel that local parties need to do much more work to better represent working class areas within their own constituencies, including many areas with high BAME populations in some seats. Given our large increase in membership, we recommend that the party maps the addresses of our members against lower super output areas or indices of multiple deprivation, and flags CLPs which are not particularly representative to be targeted with specific recruitment campaigns.

We would like to see more opportunities for members to be involved locally using online or postal methods, particularly given the low representation of people of working age and women in particular. In addition, we would like to see parties given access to guidance on accessibility for members with disabilities.

How should Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority members and organisations be represented in the Party?

We feel strongly that the NEC should have a directly elected BAME representative, to be elected by all members self-defining as BAME. We would advocate a merging of BAME Labour back into the party as an autonomous section rather than a socialist society – a similar setup to the one we advocate for Young Labour. We also advocate this solution for women members, members with disabilities, and LGBT+ members, as below. In each case we advocate political and financial independence, but within an oversight and governance structure which ensures that legality etc. is adhered to.

How should women's organisations operate and be represented in the Party?

In fitting with our other recommendations we advocate the creation of an autonomous women's section, to be voted on by OMOV by all members self-defining as women. We do feel that a stronger role is needed for Women's Conference, as explained below.

What role should Women's Conference have?

Women's Conference has a positive role at the moment. We feel that this role could be boosted by making it more powerful. Women's conference should have a policy making section which would allow it to submit policy to the NPF and national conference. Women's Conference should be entitled to have at least one resolution tabled at conference each year, to be taken with contemporary resolutions and subject to the same periods of limitation.

How do we improve the number of women candidates, and increase women's representation and the involvement of women in the Party?

We believe that one key aspect to encouraging more activity from women – and men - is to offer an increased number of ways in which we can debate and make policy. At present, all policy making depends on an adversarial resolutions and amendments process. CLPs should be reformed to provide other ways of producing policy positions, for example through collaborative work.

We also believe it is essential to tackle abusive or bullying behaviour which can sadly occur locally. For women to be involved it is essential that the party sets high disciplinary standards, whether against physical and verbal abuse, emotional abuse, or sexual assault and abuse. All of our members should not just feel free to be involved and make their points, but actively empowered to be part of a vibrant and tolerant culture.

We also feel that there are positive aspects which can assist in building such a culture, and which we encourage in our own work, for example, setting respectful ground rules, empathy building organising techniques, and active listening. We seek a more inclusive and less confrontational pattern of participation.

In terms of increasing the number of women candidates, we support AWS and we think it is working. We feel that there needs to be an emphasis on recruiting women as members and escalating their involvement, and widening some of the very successful training programmes which exist in the party. We feel that it will be important to maintain broad support for AWS as we get closer to gender parity. Making sure that there are very early decisions on which constituencies are affected, and that these are well justified and explained, will be essential. All members in affected constituencies need to be involved when keeping AWS transparent.

Finally, we need to be aware that because of deep rooted social and cultural inequalities, women face particular barriers others do not. These often include childcare and family. We believe that CLP officers should move towards providing crèche facilities and formally allowing an open policy on breast feeding, for example. Children should be welcome at our meetings. In addition, working life presents particular barriers, with more women in part time, insecure or shift work roles. This demands close working with local union branches, and an expansion of involvement beyond meetings themselves. Perhaps proceedings should be recorded, or key votes offered via OMOV in advance of the meeting, for example.

How do we improve the number of candidates from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds and increase the representation and involvement of people from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds at all levels of the Party?

All selection shortlists should include a BAME percentage equivalent to that of the constituency or more, and every shortlist should have at least 1 BAME candidate. The party also needs a clearer process on how complaints around racism and discrimination locally will be handled, from CLPs to Labour Groups. Finally, the party should survey BAME members specifically on what they consider the biggest barriers to involvement.

How do we improve the number of disabled candidates we have and increase the representation of people with disabilities in the Party?

Thanks to helpful suggestions from our membership, we are able to urge the party to propagate the Disability Equity Act Labour guide on the Disability Equality Act. The publication raises a large number of barriers to access and advancement within the party and in line with good practice is available in a range of accessible formats. We commend it highly.

We feel that the party should engage in a full disability audit of structures, communications and processes, in line with the guide. This should have some clear and obvious results such as easy read materials or the provision of induction loops at events, but we do believe that many needs are as yet unclear, and this will remain so despite the democracy review. We also feel that activists should be offered training on becoming disability inclusive, but in particular that local councillors should push for this to become mandatory training within their local authorities.

We would like to see Disability Labour reformed as an autonomous section, in line with our other suggestions. We feel that an NEC rep elected by all members defining as people with a disability would be apt again here, not least given the toxic assault people with disabilities have faced under the Tories. The section should consider forming sub groups for those affected by particular disabilities, and look at some initial work with people whose conditions are not necessarily visible.

How do we improve the number of LGBT+ candidates we have and increase LGBT+ representation in the Party?

In common with our other proposals, we feel LGBT Labour should be organised as an autonomous section, and have a representative on the NEC voted for by all self-defining members.

In addition, we feel that the salient issue of trans people must be dealt with. We strongly support the party's current position on the inclusion of trans people and tough treatment of transphobia. People are entitled to their perspectives on gender, but this is still not a good basis for the exclusion of others who feel differently as a result of their lived experience.

What other groups should we focus on?

As per our previous submission:

- People from industrial and manual working class backgrounds, and also non-graduates.
- Immigrant workers and other groups who may not visibly BAME e.g. traveller communities
- People without stability of income ('precarious workers') who might work random shift patterns, have roles in the 'gig economy', apprenticeships etc.
- New joiners generally, where we feel that there may be a lack of information on the party's structure, history, intellectual traditions etc. There should be greater emphasis on induction, and a strong emphasis on Labour as a broad party – being involved in it will mean being involved with people who see things differently to you, and that's a good thing. We all matter.

How do we get our increased membership more involved in the party?

Our members have submitted a range of concerns under this heading, for example

- A call for greater regional representation on the NEC, and also in how campaign efforts and resources are divided
- A request that the Party maintains strict rules on those who have campaigned against Labour candidates for other parties
- Inducting new members must take a much higher priority
- More online votes on OMOV for policy
- We should not dilute the rights of affiliates (unions or socialist societies) and should seek a closer local relationship with both in order to deepen representation from industry shop floors and from left wingers in expert fields.
- TULO to be better resourced and strengthened nationally, and to start a project of becoming much more localised in terms of aims and outcomes.

One of the chief concerns raised by National Committee members was the aversion held by many new activists to the harder more attritional type of activist work which is sadly required in party politics. The party needs a 'pyramid of engagement' for activists and to reward less involved activists who up their level of engagement and performance, and make sure electoral politics at grassroots level is well understood.

In addition we believe that improving meetings is very important. Firstly more speakers and debate would be extremely useful, and maybe this should be conducted separately to 'business' meetings or fundraisers.

Secondly we need less confrontation and more construction in our meetings – again we emphasise collaborative policy making, empathy tools, active listening, good ground rules for conversation, and better political education.

How do we recruit more people into the Party?

We have more members now. It would be good if we could keep subs under control. Our members also asked Labour to shift to a more pro-EU alignment, to adopt policy on the basis of relevance and mass appeal, and offer the public changes to get involved alongside members and affiliates in policy-making.

We do want public involvement, but our view it is also time for us to return to a place where paying members have more power than member of the public who support us. We propose the abolition of the 'registered supporters' scheme with a 1 year discounted membership scheme to replace it, to be replaced thereafter with payment at the appropriate full rate.

Last of all, we desperately need to recruit from trade union branches, and in particular those at the face of the changing economy. The PLP, party staff and TULO should set up a working group on this matter where they can be joined by shop stewards and regional officials. Labour needs a recruitment strategy, not just a membership form, and we propose that this strategy is aimed at returning us to roots in working class communities and day-to-day life.

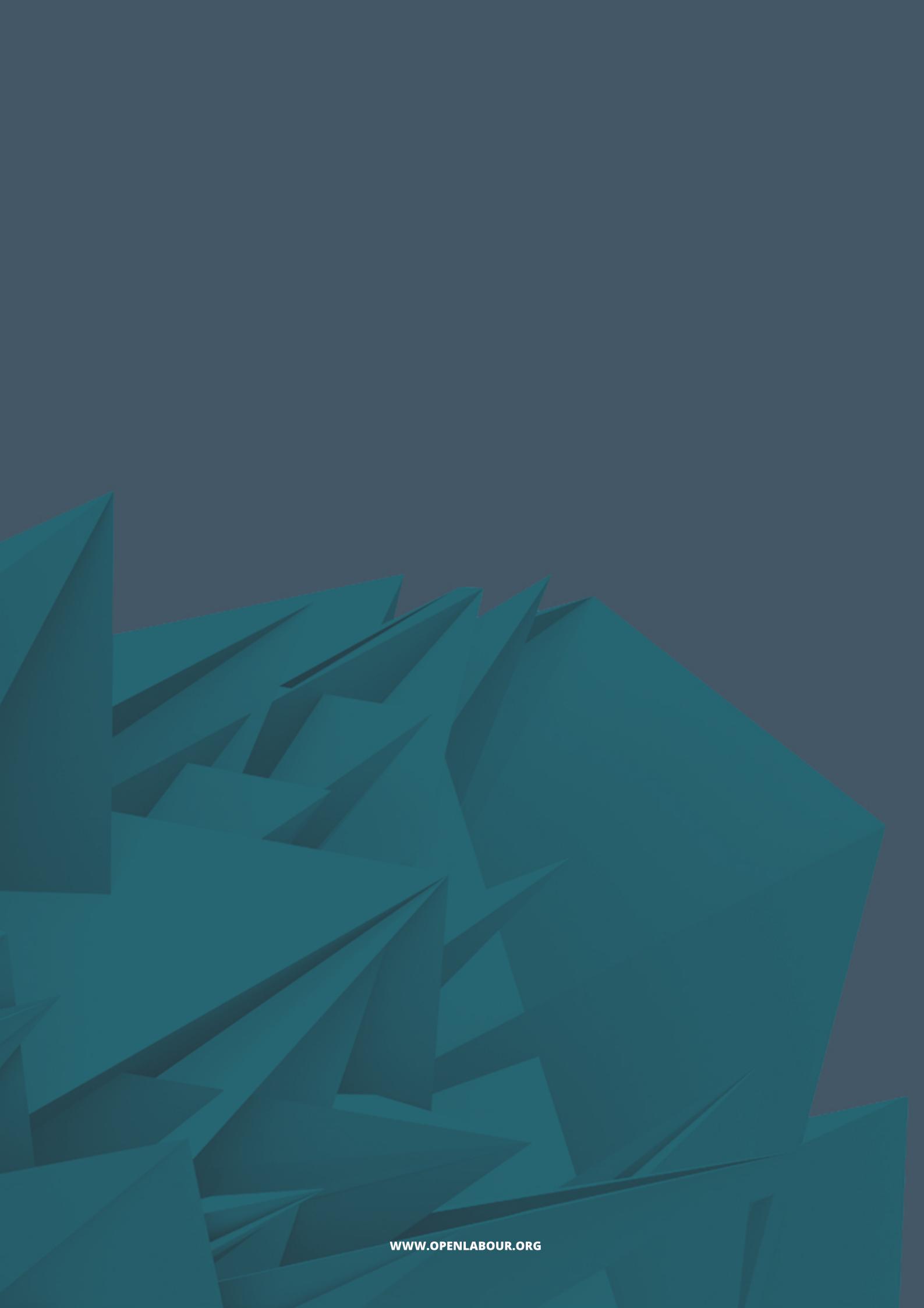
What changes (if any) are needed to the way we work at Constituency level?

We feel that the party should develop a digital platform to cover the entire administration of CLPs, cleaning up the mess of privileges and passwords which has been carried into 'login with Labour' from the Membersnet system, and the various different platforms which revolve around it.

We feel that meetings should be less formal and take advantage of some less confrontational techniques alongside current fare. This means a more open debating structure, more speaker-led debates to form policy, and basic changes of format, for example more group work type approaches.

We believe CLPs should move away from delegates to All Member Meetings with OMOV, or hybrid models with an 'indicative vote' type system as some CLPs are pioneering. We would point out however that AMMs can move democracy away from inclusion of people who are not time-rich, have caring responsibilities or disability related barriers, for example. More online votes or postal democracy could help with this, but we would still want people to be involved. Perhaps issue debates could be recorded or streamed for members only, with votes to follow if necessary?

We are aware that there are a range of different proposals for management of Labour Groups, and accountability in particular. We feel that Labour groups work fairly well, but would encourage the party to push nationally against mayoral and strong leader type situations except in the case of City Regions. We would rather have our Councillors able to hold each other to account. Likewise, we feel that the abolition of LGCs in Refounding Labour may not be fully successful. Local members are increasingly disconnected from decisions taken by councils, and we can put that right without splitting Labour groups.

The background of the image is a dark teal color. Overlaid on it is a large, abstract geometric shape composed of numerous sharp, angular facets. This shape has a complex, jagged form, resembling a stylized mountain or a series of sharp teeth. It is rendered in a lighter shade of teal than the background, creating a sense of depth and perspective.

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