

How the Labour Party Works

Individual membership

When you join the Labour Party you are entitled to:

- Receive details and attend local meetings and other activities.
- Take part in the selection of candidates for Parliamentary and Local Authority elections (after six months membership).
- Join specialist sections or groups within the Party, such as Women's Sections, Young Labour and the Socialist Health Association.
- Access a members only section of Labour's website, known as 'Membersnet', at www.labour.org.uk.
- Be a visitor to Labour Party national and regional conferences. You can be a delegate after 12 months membership.

Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs)

Constituency Labour Parties cover the same area as the local MP (or MSP in Scotland).

Usdaw affiliates to CLPs and sends delegates to the General Committee (GC) meetings which are open to all Labour members.

The work of the CLP includes:

- Selecting Parliamentary candidates and campaigning to get them elected.
- Discussing matters raised by trade union branches.
- Discussing policy ideas to send to the National Policy Forum.
- Electing delegates and sending resolutions to national and regional conferences.
- Co-ordinating campaigns on local and national issues.
- Organising local policy forums for members in their area.
- Electing officers and an Executive to look after the CLP's finance and admin.

Branch Labour Parties

Most individual members have a local Branch Labour Party. Branch Parties normally cover the same area as your local Councillor. Everyone living in that area is entitled to attend meetings. The main work of the branch includes:

- Campaigning in the community to put forward the Labour Party's views on issues such as the health service, education and jobs.
- Organising fundraising and social events.
- Campaigning to recruit new members.
- Choosing Labour candidates for Council elections and working to get them elected.
- Discussing policy issues.

Branch Labour Parties also elect their own officers (Chair, Secretary, etc.).

Developing good links

There are many benefits to the Union – and the Party – when your Usdaw branch affiliates to the Constituency Labour Party.

For the branch it means that all members can be kept informed of what the Labour Party is doing locally and the branch can be involved in running the Constituency Party.

For the Labour Party, it means that they have direct links with working people and their families in the area – people who know at first hand what it is like to work and live in the local community.

Working with other local bodies

The Constituency Labour Party also elects delegates to the Local Government Forum, which covers the same area as your local Council and acts as an advisory body for Labour Councillors.

Regional Labour Parties

Labour has National Parties in Scotland and Wales and Regional Parties in England. They hold Conferences which are made up of delegates from Constituency Labour Parties and trade union delegations.

The Conference elects a Regional Executive Committee which co-ordinates regional policies and campaigns and liaises with the Party nationally.

The Regional Party also provides back-up and support in elections. In particular it co-ordinates European election campaigns under the regional list system.

The Labour Party nationally

● **Annual Conference**

Conference decides the policies of the Party. It is attended by delegates elected by:

- Constituency Labour Parties.
- Trade unions nationally.
- Specialist Socialist societies.

Labour MPs also attend but without voting rights.

Conference debates reports submitted by the National Policy Forum (NPF). Organisations which attend may also send resolutions for debate on contemporary issues not covered by the work of the NPF. When these documents or resolutions are passed they become the official policy of the Labour Party.

● **Women's Conference**

A Women's Conference is usually held on the weekend before Labour Party Annual Conference. It is open to all women members and delegations from trade unions.

Attending National Conferences

If you are interested in attending the Labour Party Conference or the Women's Conference as part of the Usdaw delegation, ask your Usdaw branch to nominate you when papers are sent out in October/November.

● **National Policy Forum**

The Forum examines all areas of Party policy over a three-year rolling programme. It has representatives of all sections of the Party, including trade unions, constituency and regional Parties, MPs, MEPs and local government.

The voice of local Party members is heard on the NPF by the regional representatives, but individual members can also make their views known at local and regional policy forums whose reports go to the NPF.

● National Executive Committee (NEC)

The Committee is elected each year at the time of Annual Conference.

It is made up of representatives of trade unions, CLPs, MPs/MEPs, local councillors, Young Labour and socialist societies, with each separate section having a quota of women. The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Party are also members.

Trade union members of the Committee are elected by all the trade union delegates at Party Conference. Similarly, Socialist society members are elected by Socialist society delegates. CLP members are elected by a national one-member-one-vote postal ballot. MPs/MEPs and local councillors are elected by their colleagues.

The NEC is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Party in between Conferences. This includes campaigns, policy development through the national and local policy forums and financial matters. It is also responsible for the running of the Labour Party's headquarters and staff.

● Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP)

Labour Members of Parliament group together with Labour Lords to form the PLP.

The PLP works with the National Executive Committee on policy and tactics to be used in Parliament.

● European Parliamentary Labour Party (EPLP)

British Labour Members of the European Parliament act in a similar way to the PLP, working with the National Executive Committee on policy and tactics to be used in the European Parliament.

Labour MEPs are also members of the wider Party of European Socialists (PES), which includes socialist MEPs from all Community countries.

If you would like more information about getting involved in the Labour Party, please contact Usdaw's Political Office on 0161 249 2452 or email usdawforlabour@usdaw.org.uk

To keep up-to-date with our campaigns please visit www.usdaw.org.uk/campaigns

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