

Labour Women's Network (LWN) is a Labour Party affiliated organisation which works on two fronts: to train and support women to play a full part in the Party, and to work for women's power and agency in it. LWN was founded in 1988, and has been growing and developing ever since. We provide free or heavily subsidised training for Labour women at all levels, and are currently rolling out a new local training scheme, for which we have already trained over 50 grassroots trainers. We also run campaigns such as our #powerpledge, which over 1,000 people have signed to date. We are a member-led organisation run by an elected committee, and are funded almost entirely by our members' subscriptions and trade union affiliations.

The Labour Party has a proud record of promoting women in public office at all levels, and of ensuring high levels of women participate at Annual Conference and the National Policy Forum. These achievements are due to the work of both women and men members, and to sustained commitment from the Party and the leadership across two decades. However, there is still some way to go before true equality for women from all backgrounds and communities is secured, and we believe that this review offers the opportunity to make real headway on the outstanding issues.

We believe also that the recent historic expansion in Labour Party membership offers great opportunities for women in the Party, but also means that we need to resolve some issues if all Labour women are to play their full part in the Party's future, and especially in public office.

There are four broad areas in which we believe action needs to be taken.

1. Grassroots equality

Women in the Labour Party, like women in society as a whole, still face discrimination and unfair barriers. The Party has a good record in terms of intent to deal with this, but delivery has been patchy. To remedy this, we believe that:

- The Party should overhaul its complaints procedure so that women who have faced discrimination or sexual harassment are able to have their complaints heard and acted upon. This procedure should be easily available through the Party's members' website, and both Party staff and lay officers should receive training on it. We welcome the rule change to enable this, but the new rule will be meaningless without the resources and political will to enforce it.
- To remove unfair barriers that hold women back in selection procedures, the Party should draw up and widely consult on a new selection procedure for the 2020 general election, as well as for local government, the 2019 European elections and the devolved assemblies. This new procedure should include a cap on expenditure, rule clarification and a clear complaints procedure for discrimination and harassment during the informal and formal parts of the process, and greater transparency about forthcoming selections.
- To tackle sexism at all levels, the Party should run compulsory equality and diversity training for CLP officers and Party officials and all Selection Panels.

2. Fair representation

The Party has a range of rules to ensure the fair representation of women, but they are inconsistent and often not properly upheld. The Party should take clear and decisive action to ensure gender balance across all its structures. The Party should also continue to act to ensure women are fairly represented in parliament, local government and other bodies for which Labour contests elections.

- The Party should adopt a new rule for 50:50 representation across every part of the Party, from local council cabinets and executives to the Shadow Cabinet. It should publish its aim to have secured gender parity at every level of its organisation by 2020.
- In the interim, the Party should take action to ensure the current rules are properly enforced, conducting an audit of local parties to properly understand where rules are being ignored. This should include ensuring that local council cabinets all reflect the representation of women in the Labour group.

- To ensure that a diverse range of women are taking up office, the Party should monitor the diversity of office holders and candidates, and publish data and targets for LGBT, BAME, class and disabled women holding elected internal positions and standing as Party candidates.
- The Party should continue to use All Women Shortlists and other positive action measures to reach and maintain equal levels of representation in the PLP, local government and other bodies and assemblies in which Labour contests elections. To prevent these measures being undermined, central targets for AWS application should be published for each region. Under no circumstances should the practice of all-male shortlists be allowed to develop alongside AWS.
- The Party should significantly expand its training programme for future candidates, supporting local initiatives for future councillors as well. The Party should develop a mentoring scheme for women who would consider standing for national and regional selections. The Party should also consider a formal 'talent spotting' scheme that can operate both centrally and in the regions/nations.

3. Gender balanced leadership

The evidence shows that where positive action is not used, women's representation falls away. This is particularly the case when it comes to women holding leadership positions.

- In Refounding Labour in 2011, the Party committed to making a gender balanced leadership team a reality. It is time that was acted upon. The Party should urgently change the rules to guarantee at least one woman in Labour's Leader and Deputy Leader team. We support maintaining one leader and one deputy, with at least one of the two having to be a woman. If no agreement can be reached on this, we would also support a system of two deputies, with at least one having to be a woman.
- Women are underrepresented in leadership positions across the Party, so the Party should also develop a new gender balanced leadership rule. This new rule would mean that all internal positions, for example CLP Chair, Group Leader and PLP Chair, would be subject to positive action when vacancies occur. The Party should establish a working

group to consider how this policy would work, and should consult widely before piloting it.

- To counter women's underrepresentation in senior staff positions, the Party should publish diversity data for staff, ensure all appointments are advertised through a transparent and open process, and work to ensure that every senior team has gender balance, including in the Region's. All members of interview panels must undertake appropriate training, including on equalities.
- Under no circumstances should the Party's General Election strategy or implementation teams be exclusively, or overwhelmingly, male.

4. An equal voice

Women's voices are not heard as clearly as they should be in the Labour Party, from representation on political panels to the NEC and local parties.

- The Party should adopt a new rule that no Labour Party event may be organised without at least one woman on a panel. This will formalise the action taken recently to prevent all male panels at conference, and prevent unfortunate occurrences like the all male panel at the leadership conference in September.
- Women's conference is vibrant and well attended, but there has been increasing demand for the conference to be given more clout. LWN believes the Party should commit to a Women's Conference that maintains the grassroots feel of the current conference, but has the power to formally feed in to the Party's policy making process. Women's conference should be able to make submissions to the National Policy Forum, and those submissions should be given strong consideration by the NPF as the policy of Women's Conference.
- Women should have a formal voice in Labour's organisational structures at every level. We propose the Party takes action to ensure that every CLP and Regional Board has a women's officer, and we propose a rule change to allow for the election of a women's officer on Labour's NEC who is elected directly by women members in a ballot alongside the election of constituency party representatives. The new women's officer on the NEC

will have the specific responsibility of arguing for women's rights and representation within Party structures.

- To encourage more women to get involved in the Party, the Party should review how local meetings are conducted, moving towards a more participative and informal approach and away from rigid resolution based structures.

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