

The Labour Party for Beginners

A Guide to the structure, policy making and election procedures of the Labour Party based on the 2013 Rule Book.

Structure

Branch Labour Party (BLP) The Branch Labour Party is the basic structure of the Party. It is usually based geographically on the local government ward boundary but this can be varied by the Constituency Party. Every Party member is allocated to a Branch based on where they are registered to vote and cannot be a member of another Branch unless for a short period after they have moved out of one and into another. Each Branch must elect a chair, vice chair, secretary and treasurer, two of which must be women, at the annual general meeting (AGM) and the Branch is responsible for raising and holding the funds to support its activities.

The role of the Branch is to give its members the opportunity to take part in the activities of the Party within its area and to play a role in policy making. Activities can include running election campaigns and issue based campaigns to both link up with and win support from organisations and individuals in the area. Each Branch selects its own local government candidates in line with the rules of the Party. The Branch can send delegates to the Constituency Party General Management Committee (see below) based on the number of members in the Branch. Where 3 or more of these are under 26, one can go as an extra Young Labour delegate.

Constituency Labour Party (CLP) The Constituency Labour Party groups the various parts of the Party together within the geographical boundary of the Parliamentary Constituency. These include the BLP's, affiliated trade union branches, Co-op Party, other affiliated socialist societies such as the Fabians and Socialist Education Association. Other eligible branches can include women's forums, ethnic minority forums and workplace branches, which can cover more than one CLP. The CLP can be organised in a delegate structure by a General Meeting, sometimes called the General Management Committee (GMC) and also by all member meetings. GMC's consist of delegates from all the bodies that make up the CLP. Trade unions can send delegates based on paying a standard affiliation fee per delegate to the CLP up to a maximum of 5.

The day to day running of the CLP is left in the hands of the Executive Committee, which is elected at the AGM and reports to General Meetings. The CLP must elect a chair, vice chair, secretary, membership secretary, treasurer and women's officer. At least 3 of these must be women and the all serve on the Executive. The CLP can also add other officers to the Executive, such as the trade union liaison officer, political education officer and election agent.

The role of the CLP is to promote the policies and principles of the Party throughout the Constituency and to secure the election of the MP and councillors. It should provide an opportunity for all individual members to take part in the development of policy and in Party activity and to broaden their political education. The CLP is also responsible for making sure that all Party Branches are operating properly and effectively.

Women's Forums Open to all women in the CLP. The CLP women's officer acts as chair/co-ordinator and 14 days notice, sent to all eligible to attend, has to be given of any meeting. Can make nominations to CLP positions, send motions and up to 2 delegates to GMC. Aims are to encourage women members to play a full and active part in the Party, to build links with women in the community by joint campaigning and encourage them to join the Party and to ensure women's voices are heard within the Party.

Ethnic Minority Forum Open to all Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) members in the CLP. The CLP ethnic minority officer acts as chair/co-ordinator. 14 days notice, sent to all eligible to attend, has to be given of any meeting. Can make nominations to CLP positions, send motions and up to 2 delegates to GMC. Aims are to encourage BAME members to play a full part in the Party, to build links with BAME voters and encourage them to join and to ensure BAME voices are heard in the Party.

Young Labour (YL) A Young Labour branch can be set up based on a Party branch, CLP or several CLP's and is open to all Party members aged between 14-26. The branch should elect a chair, secretary, membership and campaigns officer and women's officer. There is no automatic right to send delegates to a GMC but see above in BLP section. Two delegates from each Party Region attend the Young Labour National Committee. All Young Labour members are entitled to attend the YL Conference which is normally held annually. The aims are to help young members play an active role in the Party and to train and politically educate them, to organise social activities, to change the culture of Party meetings, to recruit young people, to campaign against all forms of discrimination and to persuade young people to vote Labour.

Local Campaign Forum (LCF) Still known as District or City Labour Party.

The Local Campaign Forum covers the local government authority area and is made up of the Labour Group Leader and Deputy, local and regional Party organisers and delegates from CLP's, trade unions and other affiliated organisations. MP's and MEP's are also entitled to attend. The officers consist of chair, vice chair, secretary and treasurer, one of which must be a woman and these are elected at the AGM. The AGM also elects the executive committee, consisting of the officers, Group Leader and Deputy and other members as decided by the AGM.

The aims of the LCF are to co-ordinate the activities of CLP's and Branches in local elections and to work with the Labour Group on the Council to open up a dialogue with individual members, Branches, trade unions, affiliated organisations and community groups on local government issues. The LCF is responsible for developing the local election strategy and should work with the Labour Group to develop the election manifesto. It should also organise a rolling programme of policy discussion and development with the Labour Group throughout the year. The LCF is responsible for drawing up the panel of candidates for the local elections.

Regional Labour Party The Regional Labour Party tends to be an administrative unit comprising mainly full time Labour employees. It does organise an annual Regional Conference involving delegates from CLP's, trade unions and affiliated organisations based in the region. The Conference elects a Regional Board which has oversight of Party activity in the region.

Annual Conference The Annual Conference is made up of delegates from affiliated trade union, other affiliated bodies, CLP's on the basis of 1 delegate for the first 749 members and 1 further one for every additional 250, with each 2nd one being a woman. 2 delegates from Young Labour plus the chair, MP's and MEP's, parliamentary candidates, candidates for Police Commissioner, members of the National Executive Committee and members of the BAME executive committee are also entitled to attend.

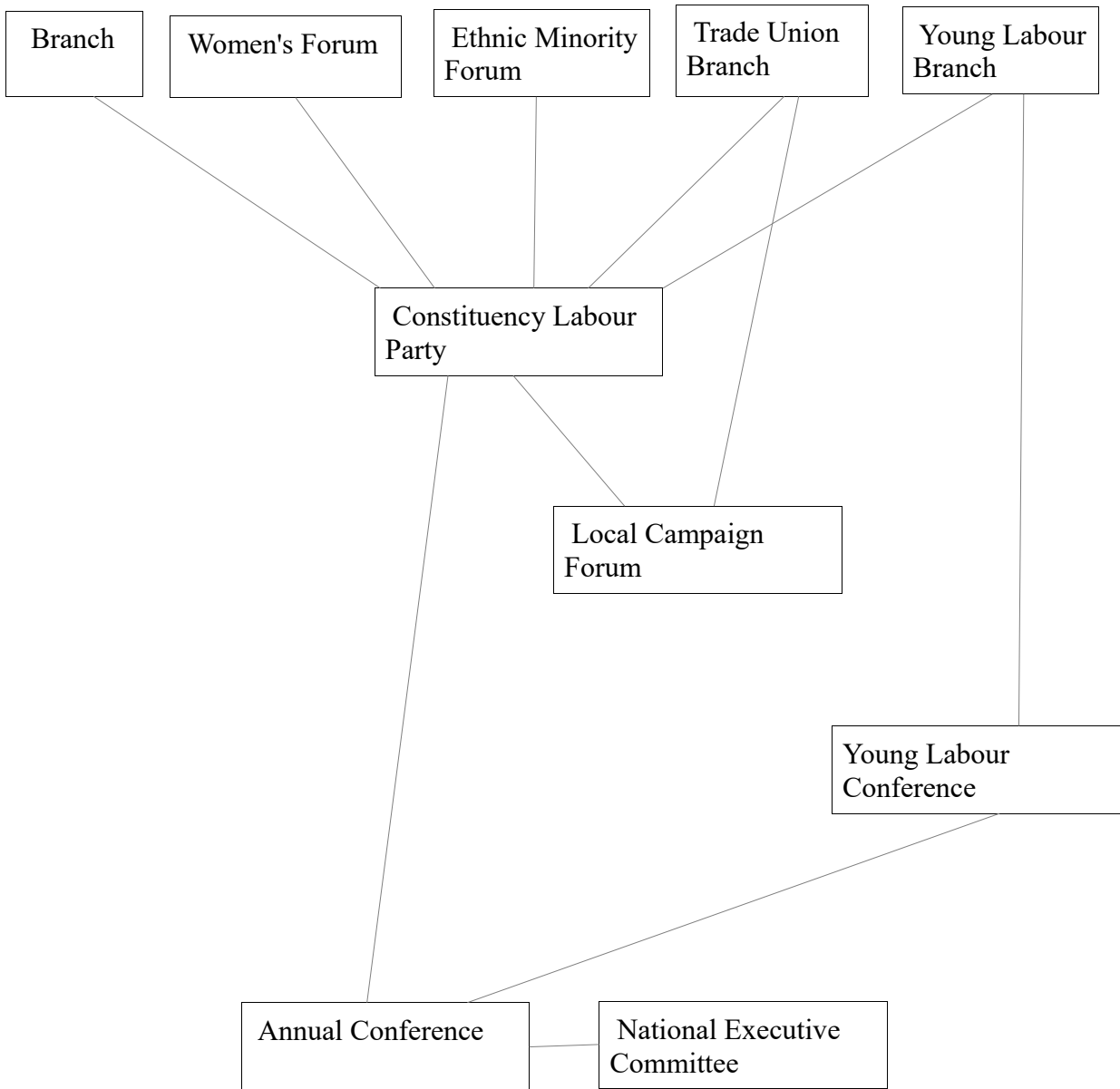
The agenda is arranged by the Conference Arrangements Committee which also acts as the standing orders committee. Annual Conference is not the debating chamber it once was. It deals with the report of the work of the NEC, the reports of the National Policy Forum (See below) and the documents coming from that body. It can debate 4 motions on contemporary issues submitted by CLP's and 4 from the trade unions plus any motions agreed as emergencies and constitutional and rule amendments.

National Executive Committee (NEC)

The NEC is composed of the Party Leader & Deputy, Leader of the European Parliament Labour Party, Party treasurer, 3 front bench MP's, 1 youth member elected at their conference, one BAME member elected at their conference, 12 from the trade unions, 6 from the CLP's, 1 from the Co-op or other socialist society, 2 from local government and 3 back-bench MP's or MEP's.

The role of the NEC is to provide strategic direction for the Party as a whole, to contribute to policy development and to work with the representatives of the Parliamentary and European Parliamentary Party and local government. It has to prepare a report of its work to the Annual Conference, submit any resolutions and declarations affecting the Party's programme, principles and policy and suggest any changes to the constitution and rules it considers necessary. It also has the power to adjudicate in any disputes that arise within the party.

Party Structures



Policy Making

Any member wanting to either establish new Party policy or change an existing policy, ask the Party to take action on any issue or make changes to the Party constitution or rules, must first bring a resolution to that effect to their BLP, Women's Forum, Ethnic Minority Forum or trade union branch. If carried and that is the intention of the resolution, it will then be forwarded to the CLP to be discussed and voted on at the General Meeting. A Young Labour branch may also discuss and approve resolutions brought to it and although there is no obligation under the rules for the CLP to discuss them, many will do.

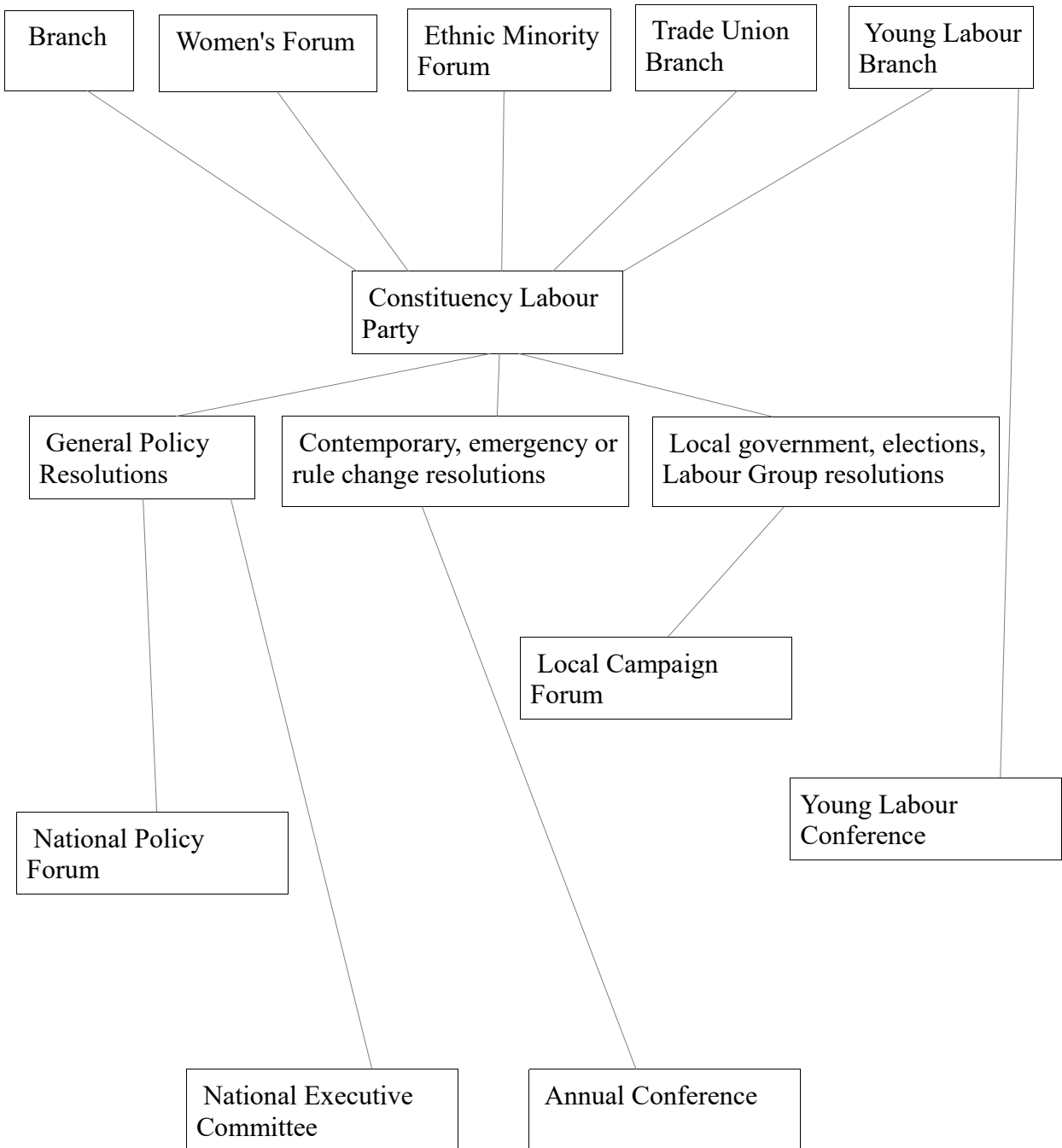
If the resolution is carried at the CLP and, again, if that is the intention, the CLP will forward it to the appropriate Party organisation. Resolutions relating to local government, local elections or the conduct of the Labour Group and its members will be sent to the Local Campaign Forum, providing the rules of that body allow for their discussion. There is no automatic provision for this in the Party rule book but it is not precluded and the model standing orders detail how resolution should be dealt with. Affiliated trade union branches can send resolutions direct to the LCF providing they have delegates to that body.

Resolutions concerning general political issues can be sent to the National Policy Forum (see below). If the issues raised relate to those under consideration by the NPF or to documents produced by Labour's 8 policy commissions, drawn from the NPF members, they may be taken into account in drawing up the final reports that are presented to the Annual Conference. There is no obligation under the rules for the NPF to consider the resolutions from individual CLP's. CLP's can also forward such resolutions to the NEC for their information, although again there is no obligation under the rules for the NEC to consider them.

Resolutions concerning changes to the rules or constitution, emergency resolutions and resolutions on issues considered contemporary by the Conference Arrangements Committee at the time of submission can be sent by the CLP direct to the Annual Conference. Resolutions sent to Annual Conference of a similar nature and on a similar subject will be composited together before being discussed.

National Policy Forum (NPF) The National Policy Forum consists of 167 delegates. 55 are from the CLP's and are elected every 2 years in a regional ballot of all party members. 5 delegates are elected from each region. The NPF is responsible for developing Party policy and bringing reports back to the Annual Conference detailing its conclusions. NPF members have an obligation to respond to submissions made by Party organisations and feed those into the process.

Making Policy



Standing for Election – Internal Party

Elections for BLP officers and delegates to the CLP are held at the Branch AGM. All members should be notified of this in advance, usually 7 days or more. Elections for CLP delegates from trade union branches and Women's and Ethnic Minority Forums will be elected at their respective AGM's . Elections for CLP officers and delegates to the LCF (City Party) are held at the CLP AGM and delegates will be notified in advance of the positions up for election. Annual Conference delegates will be elected at a GMC a few months before the Conference.

Any member wishing to stand for the National Policy Forum or the NEC must first secure the nomination of their CLP. NPF elections are carried out by a ballot of all individual members in the region concerned, with the proviso that 2 places are reserved for women and one place for a Young Labour representative elected by YL members. NEC elections for the Constituency section are carried out on the basis of a ballot of all members nationally, with the proviso that 3 of the 6 must be women. All the other sections represented on the NEC elect their representatives from among themselves. Any member wishing to stand for Leader or Deputy Leader of the Party must be an MP and secure the support of 15% of Labour MP's. The ballot is open to all members, affiliated supporters and registered supporters.

Public Office – Council and Parliamentary

Any member considering running for public office on behalf of the Labour Party must have been a Party member for the previous 12 months and a member of the appropriate trade union unless prevented from joining. The LCF will issue an invitation to all Party members every year to consider if they wish to join the panel of available candidates. The LCF is responsible for drawing up the panel and will interview all those who apply. Any member not admitted to the panel is entitled to appeal to a regional appeal board. BLP's are responsible for selecting their own candidates and short-listing and selection meetings will be called with all members of more than 6 months standing entitled to attend. Where there is more than one person short-listed, the vote will be carried out by an eliminating ballot of all those present.

Any Party member of more than 12 months standing can register their interest in becoming a parliamentary candidate for a constituency. Where there is no sitting MP the CLP will form a short-listing committee that will consider the applications they have received and draw up a shortlist. This is normally done on the basis of the level of nominations received by the applicants from Party units. The CLP will then call a selection meeting at which all members of more than 6 months standing will be entitled to attend and vote on the basis of one member one vote.

If the CLP is already represented in Parliament and the sitting MP wishes to stand for re-election, a trigger ballot will be held throughout the Party units and affiliates. If successful, the MP will be selected as the prospective parliamentary candidate. If not successful, the MP will be entitled to stand in the selection procedure and must be included on the short-list. If the sitting MP is then not selected, she/he will have the right to appeal to the NEC but only on procedural grounds.

Members should be aware that the rules and structures of the Labour Party can and do change over time. This guide will inevitably become out of date in parts and therefore you should refer to the most recent edition of the rule book (available online) if in doubt.

Glossary of Abbreviations

ALC Association of Labour Councillors
CLP Constituency Labour Party
CAC Conference Arrangements Committee (see also 'SOC')
EC Executive Committee
EPLP European Parliamentary Labour Party
GLLP Greater London Labour Party
GS General Secretary
LCF Local Campaign Forum
LGU Local Government Unit
MEP Member of the European Parliament
MP Member of Parliament
NCC National Constitutional Committee
NCO National Constitutional Officer
NEC National Executive Committee
PEO Political education organiser
PLP Parliamentary Labour Party
PPC Prospective Parliamentary Candidate
RD(GS) Regional Director (or General Secretary in Scotland and Wales)
SEC Scottish Executive Committee
SLP Scottish Labour Party
SOC Standing Orders Committee (known as CAC prior to Conference)
TUC Trades Union Congress
TULO Trade union liaison officer
YL Young Labour
YCC Youth campaigns committee
WEC Welsh Executive Committee
WLP Welsh Labour Party