



LABOUR WOMEN'S NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter of the CLPD Executive Women's Collective
July 2022

CLPD

**CAMPAIGN for
LABOUR PARTY
DEMOCRACY**

Labour Women: what's it all about, then?

The structures of the 'Labour Party Women's Organisation' have varied over the years. Women members have often had to fight to improve them – and fight again to keep our victories in place. The point is to enable women to organise and make change, keeping the policies important to women, and women's representation at the top of the agenda. Here's what we have at the moment.

Women's branches

Women members of your Constituency Labour Party (CLP) can set up women's branches, in one CLP or across several CLPs. These are open to all women members for political discussion, training, getting more women involved in the Party, and much more.

National Women's Conference

Under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party, women won back the right to have a standalone, democratic, policy-making women's conference which sends motions and rule changes to Labour's Annual Conference. There's a lot of debate about what kind of conference we should have.

National Women's Committee

Mainly elected at Women's Conference and made up of representatives of CLPs, trade unions and other parts of the Party. It has a remit to, and tries to, lead the Women's Organisation, and raises issues in the Party of key importance to women. But the Party has not yet committed any serious resources to the Committee's work, despite demands to do so.

Women's Conference Arrangements Committee

Elected by delegates at Women's conference, with representatives from trade unions and CLPs, the WCAC works with the Women's Committee and staff on the organisation of Women's Conference and in particular groups motions, manages compositing, and rules motions and rule changes in and out.

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Why is the Labour Party deprioritising women?

This issue explains why our Women's Conference is so important to us, now more than ever, and why we are having to fight to keep it. Please help!



A rare sighting of a packed women's conference giving the Labour Leader a standing ovation. Archivists believe the image dates back to 2017.

Save our Women's Conference!

Under Tony Blair's leadership our Labour Party Women's Conference was run down. Democratic debate and elections were removed, and we ended up with a glorified training event/speech-a-thon tagged onto the front of Annual Conference. Women disengaged, levels of representation dropped and local women's organisations withered.

In contrast, under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership there was a focus on building dynamic, inclusive equality structures and our recent standalone, policy-making women's conferences have been dynamic and engaging. They have been a crucial opportunity to inform Labour's policy agenda through the voices of grassroots women.

We elected a Women's Committee of grassroots party and trade unionist activists to lead our campaigning, to support women organising locally and to take Conference decisions forward. Sadly, they have not

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been supported to do this by the Party.

Now we have heard that there are schemes afoot to remove our stand-alone conference and tack women onto Annual Conference as an afterthought once again – a massive deprioritisation and entirely outside the rulebook.

We understand the reasoning is around cost and resourcing. How-

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For a two-day stand-alone hybrid Women's Conference in Spring 2023!

We must not lose our two-day stand-alone Annual Women's Conference!

In 2018 a Women's Conference with proper motions and votes was reintroduced after many years of what was often a platform for MPs and councillors. Then in 2019 at Telford we experienced a weekend of vibrant debate, women speaking passionately from their own experiences, diversity, packed fringe meetings and round-table networking.

A Women's Conference continued online during the pandemic, with democratic and policy-making stand-alone conferences in 2021 and 2022 providing access to women who would find it hard to attend in person, and with the authentic voices of women at the centre.

Now we need a Women's Conference in spring 2023 which is shaped and contributed to by women, and both builds on the in-person success of 2019 and continues to offer online access too, to take us into the future as a key part of the Labour Women's Organisation.

The National Women's Officer has left and has not been replaced. Instead, a new post was advertised for a Stakeholder Engagement Officer with a focus on three equality groups (ie, women, youth and LGBTIQ+).

We understand the post has not yet been filled.

No meeting of the Women's Conference Arrangements Committee has been called since Annual Women's Conference in March. When it is called, queries and proposals for improvement which have come in from women can be put to the whole Committee.

In the meantime, we three CLP reps on the WCAC (Gillian Arrindell, Jean Crocker and Selina Norgrove) have met several times to prepare for the year's work, and in April we agreed some main priorities (see box).

Gillian Arrindell, Jean Crocker and Selina Norgrove, CLP representatives on the Women's Conference Arrangements Committee

The National Women's Committee (the higher committee elected at Women's Conference 2022) has met, and we understand that deeply felt views were expressed, but that there is not yet a plan for the stand-alone Conference in Spring that we need.

So how can you help? Please:

- raise the issue at your branch and CLP and with women's representatives in your region
- ask your Women's Branch or CLP to send a motion calling for a two-

day stand-alone hybrid Women's Conference in Spring 2023, and asking for a Women's Conference Arrangement Committee meeting to be called at an early date; please send it to the NEC, the General Secretary, the National Women's Committee and the WCAC.

●**STOP PRESS:** a long overdue meeting of WCAC has been scheduled. A small first step!

●Let us know about any local discussions or motions. Contact us at: **CLPDwomen@gmail.com**

Our priorities for Women's Conference

1. Must be a stand-alone two-day conference in Spring, at the weekend. We would also recommend a hybrid version, which will guarantee more participation and widen accessibility for disabled, low income, carers, mothers, etc., as well as providing the essential aspects of a face-to-face conference such as the shared response in a conference hall, networking, interaction, etc.
2. The dates and venue for Spring 2023 should be provided as soon as possible. The timetable should be decided on soon after. It should be noted that women, generally, have more stresses, pressures and responsibilities to organise for, when it comes to two days involved in conference, so the more time we can give them to prepare, the more accessible and easy to organise – therefore increasing participation. Also CLPs have to go through their internal processes before reaching decisions.
3. We need to ensure that the correct dates and deadlines are published, with plenty of advance warning for CLPs, delegates and visitors, as there were some issues regarding this in 2022.
4. One separate day of online fringe events for societies, unions, wider groups and CLPs. We should also push that these fringe events are free for CLPs to put on
5. A first WCAC meeting [which the reps wanted to be in May, but now asap] to discuss feedback and outline a plan of work for National Women's Conference 2023, so that a good draft agenda can be developed before the August break.
6. The two motions going to Annual Conference should be corrected. The first one has been correctly published as Violence Against Women and Girls, which was the first choice of both CLPs and affiliates, but the second should be Women Refugees, because when both sectors have the same first choice, the second one should be the second choice of the CLPs.
7. An early discussion of additional criteria for ruling motions and emergency motions out of order, with the aim of informing CLPs and affiliates.

ever, there appears to be no serious cost-benefit analysis. If there were, HQ would recognise that empowering and supporting women members is essential to getting Labour policy and campaigning right – addressing the needs of women. They would see that it also supports women's engagement locally – which is critical to dynamic, inclusive local parties which can reach out to diverse members and voters and win elections.

This deprioritisation of a democratic women's organisation is reflected in Labour policies (or lack of) addressing issues women find important. It is also behind the Party's failure to address the legal issues that lead to women's representation in elected office seriously deteriorating.

It is time for women members across the broad church of the Labour Party to work together to ensure that our women's structures are properly resourced, that our stand-alone Women's Conference takes place in Spring, as it should, and that women's voices are heard.

- Please see more information above and below and submit the draft motion from Labour Women Leading.



**CAMPAIGN for
LABOUR PARTY
DEMOCRACY**

**Join the Campaign
for Labour Party
Democracy (CLPD)**

Established in 1973,
CLPD fights for more
power for Labour's
members and affiliates.

Here is where to join:
<https://www.clpd.org.uk/join/>

Labour Women's Conference matters – please help!

The 2019 Labour Women's Conference in Telford was a truly ground-breaking event. Structures were introduced to ensure that it was vibrant, inclusive and diverse. Members still talk about it as the experience that brought them into party activity.

During the Covid pandemic the party developed means of holding successful conferences remotely, so allowing members unable to travel to take part.

We cannot allow these really positive means of engaging women members to be downgraded. We need to press for a standalone Women's Conference in the spring of 2023, which can also be accessed by women who cannot attend in person (hybrid technology).

Labour Women Leading plan to campaign with other Labour women to safeguard the advances we have made as a result of the Democracy Review. We want the status of the newly-elected National Women's Committee and the Women's Conference Arrangements Committee to be properly respected. This means adequate staff support and resourcing, and meaningful links with the National Executive Committee. It will also involve effective support for the ongoing roll out of

**Ruth Clarke, Secretary,
Labour Women Leading**

CLP women's branches.

Labour Women Leading have drafted a model motion that we'd like women's branches and other party units to pass, adapted as you wish (see page 4).

- Please send the motion to some or all of the following:
- the General Secretary David Evans
- NEC members Yasmine Dar, Mish Rahman, Gemma Bolton,
- James Asser (Chair of Equalities Sub-committee)
- Ann Black and Nadia Jama (Joint Vice-Chairs for Women of the NEC's Equalities Sub-committee)
- Ann Henderson (also on the National Women's Committee)
- National Women's Committee members Ruth Hayes (Chair), Solma Ahmed (Vice-Chair) and Jean Sharrocks (Vice-Chair);
- Jean Crocker, Gillian Arrindell and Selina Norgrove, CLP reps on the Women's Conference Arrangements Committee (WCAC)
- You can write to them all c/o the Labour Party, Southside, 105 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6QT. Look out too for our forthcoming petition and media campaign!

Why you should lobby your NPF reps

Women's issues often take a back seat in society and in the Labour Party too. It's well worth letting the National Policy Forum (NPF) know your view on issues that particularly affect women – both policy demands and internal organisation and processes.

After several years of disorganisation, the National Policy Forum seems to be getting its act together. Policy Commission (PC) members now have a list of future dates for meetings, a timetable for agreeing the annual report, etc.

In addition, each agenda now includes an item on submissions

Carol Turner, NPF Member

which are made on the Policy Forum website, where PC members can raise particular submissions or issues. Your views or those of your local Labour Party or Women's Branch don't have to fall into a black hole. Send a copy to your NPF reps and ask them to pursue it.

- Carol Turner is a London CLP rep on the Britain in the World Policy Commission, standing for re-election as part of the Grassroots NPF Candidates for London with Adrian Weir, Dave Levy, and Cam Rose

Motion for a stand-alone National Labour Women's Conference in Spring 2023

This women's branch/forum notes:

- The success of recent stand-alone Labour Women's Conferences, starting with the face-to-face 2019 event in Telford, which brought together a uniquely diverse range of women, to participate in networking, elections and policy debates. Women members still refer to this as the event that brought them into party activity.
- The ongoing popularity and success of online annual conferences during the covid pandemic. While many participants missed the opportunities for informal connection that in-person meetings provide, and not everyone had access to online provision, many with caring responsibilities or with health/disability issues found it easier to participate online.
- The development since the Policy Review of inclusive women's structures, including women's branches, a National Women's Committee and the NEC Equalities Sub-committee.

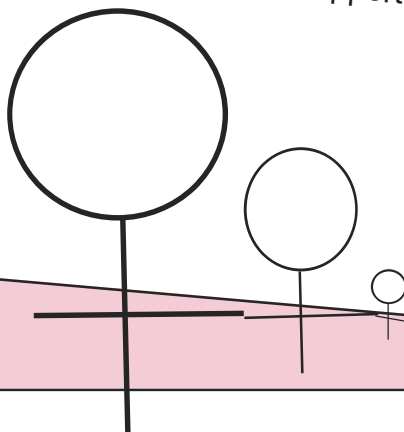
We call on the National Executive Committee to take steps to facilitate the ongoing development of democratic women's structures in the party, including effective liaison (representation from the National Women's Committee, as well as minute sharing, on other national committees), as well as adequate staffing and resourcing.

The General Secretary should take responsibility for ensuring that a timetable is set towards the organisation of a standalone National Women's Conference in March 2023 (including researching and booking a suitable venue).

It will be vital to maintain and develop the already-established structures that so successfully achieved inclusivity and diversity in 2019. The feasibility of hybrid events should now be considered throughout the Labour Movement, so as to ensure the inclusion of vulnerable participants and those who find travel problematic.

The organisation of the Conference should be overseen by the elected Women's Conference Arrangements Committee, which needs to meet regularly with appropriate staff support.

The development of inclusive equalities structures within the Labour Party must not be allowed to stall, and it will be necessary to appoint staff whose brief will include the organising of Women's Conferences and support for the ongoing establishment of CLP women's branches."



‘Roe -v- Wade’ overturned – fight for abortion rights!


The Trump-packed US Supreme Court has overturned the 1973 Roe v Wade ruling that established a national framework decriminalising abortion. This contradicts public opinion which favours abortion rights by 60:40. The announcement, which confirmed weeks of rumour, was met by immediate demonstrations in the USA and around the world, instant fundraising appeals – and protests from a very small number of celebrities.

The ruling will enable US states to implement their own criteria on allowing abortions – or not. There are already 536 restrictions to abortion access in 42 states, and over half the states are set to ban access to abortion. Some will even criminalise travelling out of state to obtain an abortion.

Overturning Roe v Wade will seriously impact the education, employment and earning prospects of women and other pregnant people as well as affecting their physical and mental health. Marginalised groups will be significantly affected, in particular black people and those who fall below the poverty line. Young people will be hit by the ruling too: once abortion was legalised, teenage pregnancies fell by one third.

The impact of the ruling will be global, as anti-abortionists will be emboldened internationally. In the UK Abortion Rights activists demonstrated outside the US embassy before the ruling was announced to show our solidarity with nationwide actions in the US. A very in

BANS OFF OUR BODIES!



Jeremy Corbyn
independent MP

On Roe V Wade

“The US Supreme Court decision to overturn Roe v Wade is devastating for the millions who have fought and won reproductive rights in every state. We stand in solidarity with all fighting for abortion rights and access to healthcare around the world.”

formative meeting heard from US Abortion Rights activists.

Solidarity activity will continue, as developments in the US and elsewhere show that we cannot take our hard-won rights for granted.

•For updates and news of activities sign up for the Abortion Rights dynamic and informative weekly newsletter (it's free!) here:

bit.ly/ARRoundUpSignUp

BANS OFF OUR BODIES!




Dr. Susie Orbach
Psychotherapist & psychoanalyst

On Roe V Wade

“I was thinking of the 1970's and all the wins for women and what they heralded. How we made the world a little bit safer and more interesting as we built solidarity with sisters all over the world whose conditions were adverse and treacherous. We felt hopeful. Then the reaction built. The war on women's and girls bodies intensified: rape As a weapon. commercial exploitation, the triumph of the fetus over the mother with cancer, poverty. We lost so badly over the years. We didn't give up. We can't give up. We won't give up.”

BANS OFF OUR BODIES!



Myriam Kane
Black Liberation Alliance

On Roe V Wade

“Striking down RoeVWade is a grotesque attack on human rights and will have a disproportionate impact on black women. Due to institutional racism black women are 3 times more likely to die in childbirth than white women in the US. In 2019 per 1,000 women, 23.8 abortions were carried out on black women compared to 6.6 white women. We send solidarity to women in the US, pledge to fight this ruling and redouble our efforts to defend abortion rights here.”



US nukes are returning to Britain, bringing the danger of nuclear war closer

When two nuclear powers confront each other – as NATO and Russia are doing today – it makes excellent sense to de-escalate military action and encourage negotiations. This is exactly what Boris Johnson's Government has failed to do.

Instead, Johnson is talking up the possibility of a long war with Russia while the UK Government ships offensive weapons to Ukraine – a sure way to make that happen. Between them, Russian and NATO have around 12,000 nuclear weapons.

In the context of growing international tensions, the

Carol Turner, Chair, Labour CND

news that US nukes will be returning to Britain and at the service of NATO is pretty scary. Hosting them puts Britain on the front line. It paints a target on the back of everyone in this country.

CND held our first protest at Lakenheath airbase at the end of May. Our second in early autumn is already in the planning stage. Say no US nukes at Lakenheath – you know it makes sense.

Remembering Bruce Kent 22 June 1929-8 June 2022

Sisters will join me in regretting the sad death of Bruce Kent and in celebrating his contribution to the peace and anti-war movements. He was a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) for over six decades, General Secretary and then Chair of CND during the crucial Greenham Common years.

It is a sad irony that, unable to attend the Lakenheath protest on 21 May against the return of US nuclear weapons to Britain, one of his last acts was to record a video urging supporters to go along to the Suffolk airbase where they will be housed.

**Carol Turner,
Chair, Labour CND**

At the time of his death, Bruce was a Vice-President of CND and a spokesperson for the Campaign, President Emeritus of the Movement for the Abolition of War, Vice-President of Pax Christi and Patron of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

CND's current General Secretary Kate Hudson described his leadership as 'the embodiment of integrity, creativity and sheer determination', praising his 'total commitment to his faith and principles.'



Justice for Palestine!

At a time when Palestinians are being pushed to the limit by an increasingly emboldened Israeli occupation machine, we need to examine the Labour Party's positioning and the extent to which the leadership is following party policy as outlined in recent conference resolutions.

Labour Women's Conference 2021 enthusiastically passed a strong motion in support of Palestinians. It asked that the Party 'draw attention to the brutality and discriminatory situation documented in the recent reports by B'Tselem and Human Rights Watch', which identified the conditions imposed by Israel on Palestinians as an apartheid regime.



Annual Conference 2021 and Trades Unions Congress 2020 passed equally powerful motions calling for 'effective measures' against illegal actions by the Israeli Government, including sanctions. The TUC motion identified Israel's

ongoing annexation of the West Bank as 'another significant step in the creation of a system of apartheid.'

These are the unequivocally strong policies we need the Labour leadership to be acting on, now more than ever. May 2022 has been a particularly dangerous time for Palestinians: journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, killed while reporting on an Israeli military raid; mourners and pallbearers at her funeral procession in Jerusalem, attacked by Israeli police; 87 Palestinians, nine of them children, injured by Israeli forces during the provocative desecration of Al-Aqsa mosque by Israeli settlers on 29 May; the shameful 'Jerusalem Day'. In the West Bank, the 10-30 May OCHA report documents six Palestinians killed and 1,240 injured by Israeli forces; 48 attacks by Israeli settlers; 58 structures demolished; 110 Palestinians displaced. Israel's Supreme Court recently ruled that over 1,000 Palestinians can be forcibly evicted from their homes in Masafer Yatta, to make way for an army firing zone, even though such forced transfers are illegal under international law, which prohibits any country from using occupied territory only for the purposes of the occupier and not the occupied population.

Labour Women: what's it all about, then?

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Women's organisation in the nations and regions

Organisation of Labour women in Scotland, Wales and the regions is patchy – in Scotland there has been a well-organised and active Committee and Conferences. There have sometimes been other regional Women's Committees and Conferences too, but these are mainly absent at the moment.

Other structures

Women also have ring-fenced representation in most Labour Party bodies, often set at at least 50%, which is set out in Labour's rulebook. In particular CLP delegations to Conference have to be balanced

and there is provision for additional women delegates.

CLPD Women's Collective

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy Women's Collective campaign and organise to try to ensure the structures above are accessible and democratic, and that CLP positions are won by grassroots women who support an active, inclusive Labour Women's Organisation, locally, regionally and nationally. We also suggest draft motions and rule changes for Women's Conference and work closely with trade unions where we can.

To keep in touch with the CLPD Women's Collective, please complete the form at <https://forms.gle/SvD2XqCNgHNZuBS08>

Carmen Williams, CLPD Executive Committee

Meanwhile, in the UK, we witness a similarly deteriorating political scenario for Palestinians and their supporters. Tucked away in the Queen's Speech was an announcement that the Government will introduce a Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions Bill that will stop public bodies introducing sanctions against other countries. As for Labour, in an interview with the Jewish Chronicle in April, Keir Starmer openly rejected the Amnesty International report findings, reiterating that he doesn't believe there's apartheid in Israel.

It is obvious that, as Labour Party members who strive for peace and justice in Palestine, we must demand better from this leadership, exposing and denouncing their failure to implement party policy, while looking elsewhere for inspiration and leadership in this particular area of policy.

We must:

- demand from the leadership unequivocal condemnation of Israeli illegal actions that violate Palestinian rights
- demand Labour call on the British government to introduce sanctions in such circumstances
- support Labour & Palestine model motion calling for Labour to oppose the 'anti-BDS' bill
- promote and support moves from other countries and organisations to refer Israeli illegal actions to the ICC
- call on Labour to pressure Foreign Secretary Liz Truss to make it known that if the Israeli Government proceeds with forced transfer in Masafer Yatta, there will be severe political and economic consequences for UK/Israel bilateral relations, including sanctions.