

Branch Chair

Branches depend on leadership from the Branch Chair and Secretary. Other branch officers often look to these role holders to provide support and direction and members depend on their leadership to organise and inspire them in effective local branch campaigns.

Effective Chairs facilitate meetings, decisions and ensure the branch operates fairly. The role requires impartiality, co-ordination, diligence and excellent communication and leadership skills.

Key Responsibilities and tasks

- Help to lead and build the strategic direction of the branch within the CLP.
- Support and encourage an effective team. The Chair should ensure all officers keep in regular contact with each other.
- Work together to provide a warm welcome for all members and ensure they have a stake in the direction of the branch.
- Chair branch meetings in a fair and open way in accordance with the Labour Party rules.
- Have an overview of all roles within the branch.
- Work with other officers- especially the branch Secretary, to put together a 12 month plan for your branch. This will help you focus on what you need to achieve over the year.
- Organise follow up meetings to ensure they are sticking to the plan.

Activity

A rich variety of activity throughout the year will not only ensure that the branch will have a strong presence in your area, but will also make sure that everybody gets the most out of their membership.

All officers of the branch have a duty to provide opportunities for others to become involved, and to make sure community events and activities are organised to involve people in the local community.

You should aim to have a range of different campaigning activities, working with colleagues across your CLP to plan joint social events, coffee mornings and policy discussions, as well as separate branch events and campaigning. You should try to bring guest speakers along to events as well as making sure every member has met your MP or candidate.

Meetings

Work with your Branch Secretary and CLP Secretary and Chair to organise the dates of meetings for the year and make sure the dates are communicated to members, with a reminder closer to the time, ensuring it doesn't clash with CLP meetings.

Set an agenda which will need to be circulated and agreed with the Secretary and other officers prior to the meeting. It would be beneficial to set a time limit for each agenda topic. If you have any hand-outs ready, get them ready in good time. Meetings in general should not last any longer than two hours. Where practical organise a campaigning or social event after the meeting.

Introduce the meeting with a clear outline of the main objectives. It is important to have political discussions and lively, respectful debates at meetings. You may wish to open by asking any newcomers to introduce themselves.

It is important to have political discussions and debates at meetings. However, it is also the Chair's responsibility to ensure that meetings and discussions relate to the following key functions of the branch:

- Campaigning – connecting with the local community and getting candidates elected in your ward and across your constituency.
- Support elected representatives to carry out working, campaigning and representing the branch.
- Membership work – welcoming new members, recruiting and retaining members.
- Fundraising – a programme of social events and other fundraising activity. You will need to work closely with other branch and CLP Officers to do this, particularly the Treasurer.
- Policy discussion – make it interesting and engaging.
- A report from your elected representatives– access to politicians is one of the benefits of membership; make sure that your meetings take full advantage.

At the end of each item, review what has been decided and who will be responsible for taking the task forward. Remember to be impartial even if you do not agree with certain points – allow for the widest possible participation.

Working with your CLP

As a branch, you should work closely with CLP officers to ensure you are all working towards the same goals and sharing information.

- Keep in regular contact with your CLP Secretary, and ask them to keep you informed of training opportunities and campaign information.
- Ensure all campaigning and membership activity is co-ordinated with the CLP.
- Ensure you discuss with your CLP Secretary and Chair what you'll both be covering at CLP and Branch meetings, so this isn't duplicated at branch meetings and so you can make sure important information is discussed at branch level. Think about

appointing branch captains or buddies who can help with member engagement work and to welcome new members in your branch.

The rule book

As Branch Chair, members and officers will look to you for leadership when constitutional matters arise. Issues of this nature often occur around the time of selection procedures; local, devolved or parliamentary.

Remember, your first port of call for any guidance should always be your CLP Secretary – but you can always refer an issue to your Regional Office or find out more information by visiting members.labour.org.uk/legal_and_compliance_downloads (you'll need to be logged into MembersNet).

Useful links and contact details

- Your first port of call for things you can't get help with from your CLP. To get in touch with your Regional Office, visit labour.org.uk/pages/scottish-welsh-and-regional-offices
- You can find out more about governance and legal issues by visiting members.labour.org.uk/legal_and_compliance_downloads
- You'll find lots of useful guides and resources on member engagement, as well as membership forms and the full MemberCentre guide in the Membership & Supporters area on Membersnet> members.labour.org.uk/members--supporters
- Our on-line training offer can be found at members.labour.org.uk/about-training-2016# , and you can subscribe to our regular training emails by visiting labour.org.uk/w/training-emails
- Keep up to date with our latest campaigns by visiting members.labour.org.uk/campaign-resources