



Setting up a Local Group

Who are Labour First?

Labour First is a network for Labour's moderate members, originally set up during the 1980's to combat infiltration by the Hard Left. In recent years, Labour First has gained increasing prominence due to the concerns of ordinary Labour Party members about CLP takeovers by Momentum.

We are not a think tank and so do not take specific policy positions which could result in dividing the coalition of members we are seeking to build. Our absolute priority is to return Labour to power and elect the largest possible number of Labour MPs and councillors.

Everyone involved in Labour First is first and foremost an active campaigner for a Labour victory. We put our party above any internal faction or current of opinion, hence the name "Labour First".

Our interventions in internal debates, elections and selections are all with the objective of making Labour a party with the policies and candidates and office holders best suited to returning it to power.

Why should you consider setting up a Labour First group?

There is a growing understanding amongst Labour's active membership that there is a new dividing line within the Labour Party – you are either a member of Momentum, or not. We hear stories every week from members active in the Labour Party for decades, who have lost every officer position in their CLP in a single evening against a Momentum slate, backed by members who have never attended a meeting before.

We want both to prevent this from happening and to help people regain control of their CLPs.

Contrary to how the Hard Left and their fake news websites try to portray us, we believe in the collective wisdom of members and the experiences they have gained

over many years campaigning for the Labour Party, engaging with their communities and often helping to run their CLPs. We are not a closed shop, and encourage our groups to engage with new members and take them campaigning so they can listen to the concerns of traditional – and potential – Labour voters.

There are dozens of Labour First groups already established across the country. However, we are currently being out-organised by Momentum who have far greater resources at their disposal.

We can offer advice and training on how to grow your local moderate network. We'll also help facilitate local events which will act as a local forum for moderates to exchange information and tactics. We will be providing briefings on the state of the party to all those signed up to the mailing list as well as information on national and regional Labour First events.

What do we require from you?

To convene a local group, we only ask for two things:

1. That you share our values and have a genuine desire to grow your own moderate network in order to be beat Momentum in internal elections over the coming years. We are not interested in requests for our data, just so it can be used for the short-term personal ambition of winning the next selection.
2. That you ensure you keep an up-to-date mailing list of those in your network and make sure they are signed up to updates at www.labourfirst.org. We simply cannot compete with Momentum in Labour's national OMOV Ballots without a comprehensive national list of moderate party members.

How to set up a local Labour First Group

- 1) If you have a pre-existing network of moderates in your area, please encourage them to immediately sign up for our updates at www.labourfirst.org.
- 2) Check with Matt Pound at Labour First (Matt@labourfirst.org) in case there is already a group in your area or nearby that you can work with.
- 3) If not, agree with Matt what boundaries you are going to cover – your ward, CLP, borough, or a whole county?
- 4) Begin to contact those members in your area who you know share your politics. In particular, reach out to local councillors as active members of the Labour Party who tend to be in touch with the views of the public and create a list of moderate contacts who you can call upon to turn out to vote in branch or CLP AGM.

How to grow your Labour First Group

Attending you CLP/Branch Meetings

The easiest way to grow your moderate network is to attend your local branch/CLP meetings and simply speak to members you don't already know. Listen out for points raised in the meeting that you agree with as well as for the often vocal opposition to

certain points from the Momentum supporters. Always keep it comradely and don't engage in bad tempered exchanges with the sectarian Momentum ringleaders. If possible try to join other members in the pub after the meeting and get chatting to them about politics and how they feel about the current trajectory of the Labour Party.

Campaign for Labour

Not only does this help the party and keep you in touch with the views of the public, but it's a great way to meet other activists, candidates and elected representatives.

Ask for help from your local Labour MP or Councillor

Ask your MP or a moderate local Councillor what is being done to organise against Momentum locally and if there are any other members they can put you in touch with to help grow your Labour First group.

Staging a Labour First Event

- 1) Decide on a name for the group – We would of course prefer if you felt able to call your group 'Labour First', but understand this is not always appropriate.
- 2) Ask Matt Pound to put you in touch with other Labour First contacts in the area.
- 3) With those initial contacts, plus any you've already obtained from being active in your CLP, agree a date and venue for a Labour First event that everyone can attend.
- 4) The venue will vary depending on how many people you expect will attend – could be in someone's house, or see if a Labour Club, pub or restaurant will let you have a room in return for bringing customers in. If the local CLP, MP, or a trade union is sympathetic they may have a room you can use. If there are room hire costs Labour First may be able to help.
- 5) Invite a local MP if you have one and they are supportive to be the key note speaker. We can provide you with a list of approved speakers
- 6) With your other initial contacts, draw up a list of all the moderate Labour contacts you have in the area who you would like to invite.
- 7) Send out invites to the meeting and ask Matt if he will promote it too.

Format of a Labour First Event

- 1) The focus of the initial Labour First Meeting should be:
 - a. A political overview from an MP or external speaker
 - b. Assessment of the state of play in each CLP locally, intelligence sharing
 - c. Agreement on immediate organisational priorities – what key votes, selections and elections are coming up within the local party? – and actions needed to organise for these
 - d. Agreement on other activities you want to hold e.g. political discussions, social events, election campaigning for Labour that you want to intervene in as a group e.g. travelling to a marginal seat or by-election
 - e. Agreement on who will carry out each task

- 2) Don't get hung up on formal structures and job titles. You basically need a convenor who will look after the mailing list and call meetings, and a chair for the meetings, and then allocate tasks on an ad hoc basis. You only need a Treasurer and formal constitution and officers if you expect to be spending and raising money, in which case you will also need to be compliant with the relevant Electoral Commission rules in the same way that a local party branch would be.
- 3) Don't hold meetings more frequently than necessary (we would advise every 3 months) – this is not about setting up an additional set of structures that will absorb even more spare time, the Labour Party already has enough meetings! This is about bringing together moderates as and when necessary to organise and mobilise effectively in your area and ensure the politics of the local Labour Party stays sensible, and being a space where people with similar politics can network, support each other and enjoy each other's company.

FAQs

Q: Do I need to be a member of the Labour Party to set up a Labour First group?

A: Yes, absolutely. Not only should you be a member of the Labour Party but you should be active within your CLP. If you are reading this and not currently a member of the Labour Party – join! www.labour.org.uk/join

Q: My CLP meetings have become an unpleasant place to spend my spare time, do I have to keep attending?

A: No – However, it is very important you continue to attend and vote in your CLP/Branch AGMs, selection meetings, and at meetings that nominate for national and regional positions and elect conference delegates. We would advise that if your CLP has already been taken over by Momentum and you are finding meetings unpleasant that you don't continue to attend every meeting simply for the sake of it. However, we would suggest you continue to campaign for Labour whenever possible, because it's what all Labour members should be doing, and a good opportunity to meet fellow moderate members. You can perhaps meet separately and regularly as a Labour First group to prepare for the next CLP and branch AGMs.

Q: Our group is very small, is it really appropriate to invite a Member of Parliament to speak to a small group of activists?

A: No – Inviting a guest speaker to an event can be a good way of quickly building up a contact list, but it is not essential. The True focus of any Labour First Group should be to organise against Momentum to win internal elections. However, we do advise that if you know you'll have less than 15 people attending a Labour First meeting you continue to build your contact list before requesting an external speaker. Or can you do a joint event with a neighbouring group? If you are having trouble building your network, a representative from Labour First may be able to attend a meeting to offer training or run a workshop. We are also always available to offer advice over the phone.

Q: I'm thinking of resigning my CLP Executive position in order to focus on setting up a Labour First group, is this necessary?

A: Definitely not. If you are currently elected to your CLP Executive please do not resign or stand down at the next AGM unless you are certain the position will be filled by another moderate. It is important that you stand against Momentum at every internal election. Not only will this prevent an easy Momentum takeover, it will be a good test of how many members they can turn out in an election and give you a target to aim for.

Q: There are lots of moderates in my CLP but they will not sign up for fear of appearing 'factional'. How can I persuade them to sign up?

A: Unfortunately, factions are a political reality in today's Labour Party. Of course, we would all rather this was not the case, but this is the situation we find ourselves in. Momentum are not interested in working with any other wing of the party, no matter how much so-called 'non-factional' members reach out to them. They have their own ideas about the way Labour should be constructed and what Labour's priorities should be. It might be worth reminding members who claim to hate factionalism, that unless they are active in preventing Momentum from taking over their CLP, very soon the shots will be called by the largest, best-funded, most influential faction in the Labour Party.

Contact

If you have any further questions about setting up a Labour First group please don't hesitate to contact our National Organiser Matt Pound at matt@labourfirst.org.