



***HOW TO FOUND A YOUNG
LIBERALS BRANCH IN
YOUR LOCAL AREA***

INTRODUCTION

This guide will provide a basic overview of how to found a new Young Liberals branch in your local area from scratch.

It is split into two parts: "Setting Up" and "Growing", each with a clear set of instructions on how to achieve those goals.

Adopting these guidelines will help get your branch ready for the year and flourish.

If you have any further questions, please get in touch with the Membership Development Officer, whose details can be found here:

<https://www.youngliberals.uk/memdev>

PART 1: SETTING UP

STEP 1: CONTACT US

Wherever you are in the country, there will be a relevant Young Liberals organisation to contact and help get you started.

If you live in England, there are regional chairs for each region, whose details can be found here:

<https://www.youngliberals.uk/england>

If you live in either Scotland or Wales, there are state executives, whose details can be found here:

<https://www.youngliberals.uk/scotland>

<https://www.youngliberals.uk/wales>

Regional and State organisations are the best place to start. They will know your area, and will be able to advise you on local contacts and active nearby branches. Failing that, you can get in contact with any member of the federal executive, whose details can be found here:

<https://www.youngliberals.uk/exec>

PART 1: SETTING UP

STEP 2: FIND A GROUP

Fundamentally, any branch or organisation is going to need multiple people to operate and continue. As such, your first steps should be trying to find like-minded Young Liberals in your area to help you out.

If you want, you can organise yourselves into a committee, for which you might need a Chair, Treasurer, Campaigns Officer, and Events Officer. What roles are required obviously differ depending on what you want to do, though!

If you don't know any fellow Young Liberals, try posting in our official Facebook group, Young Liberals Forum, or asking your State/Regional Chair if they know anyone.

You can also always ask your friends to help you out! If you've moaned to them about Brexit a lot or they've said some nice things about us, try asking if they'd help set up a branch with you.

Another thing to try is asking your local party chair to send out an email to all recognised Young Liberals in the area through Lighthouse, the party's membership database. The data isn't always fantastic, but it will likely pick up a dozen or so potential colleagues!

PART 1: SETTING UP

STEP 3: MAKE IT OFFICIAL

Now you have your group together, it's time to make the organisation official.

If you didn't need to in the last step, now approach your local party and let them know you exist - local parties are always happy to have new people on board and, especially in the case of young people, often have no idea you exist until you come forward!

Every local party is mandated to have a "Youth and Students Officer" position on their executive, so if they don't have one yet they might well co-opt you. This is a fantastic opportunity to get involved with local politics.

Unlike with a university branch, there won't be an SU to get involved with, but that doesn't stop you getting in touch with students at the university. There might not be enough Lib Dem students there for a society, but they could well appreciate there being a local branch they can go to.

PART 1: SETTING UP

STEP 4: GET ONLINE

It's really important to make sure your society has an active and professional-looking presence online. Twitter or Facebook feeds are often the first thing potential new members see, so make sure they look good!

We recommend being active on Facebook and Twitter at a minimum, but Instagram is also useful.

You can use the Young Liberals Style Guide (also in the Documents section of our website) to help make sure all your content on social media looks good and fits the Young Liberals theme.

Make sure to take lots of (good quality) photos at your events and post them online - when potential members check out your feed, they'll want to see real, active people rather than just text, graphics and events.

PART 1: SETTING UP

STEP 5: ACCREDITATION

Now you're all set up with social media, make sure you let us know you exist by applying to become accredited!

It's not a scary process at all, it basically just means that Young Liberals officially recognises you as a branch of the organisation - and you even get benefits too!

Accredited branches get discounts on orders from Young Liberals, as well as exclusive access to help and guides, and a network of other likeminded Young Liberals branch leaders.

There's more about accreditation on the website here:

<https://www.youngliberals.uk/accredit>

PART 2: GROWING

STEP 1: PUBLICISE

Okay, now you're all set up properly - but you're probably still quite small at this stage. Now, you need to publicise your branch and attract some attention.

If you haven't already, post about it in Young Liberals Forum (at the very least post your social media there and we'll all give it a like/follow) and talk to our Communications Officer about getting a shoutout in an email.

Ultimately, you can't expect to grow suddenly and get a large amount of members - even with the #LibDemSurge - this will take time and patience, likely over several years!

What you can do is advertise yourself to local youth groups, or even post in local Facebook groups. Make sure you have some events planned to give people a reason to get involved, too.

PART 2: GROWING

STEP 2: FUNDING

Sadly, running a branch can come with some costs, but we're here to help make sure those overheads don't fall on you personally!

Young Liberals runs the Branch Development Fund, which is a pot of money set aside every year that accredited societies can apply to for up to £50 of funding at a time. That way, you can get us to pay for your leaflets or refreshments at your first few events. More information can be found here:

https://www.youngliberals.uk/branch_development_fund

You could also charge small fees on some events that cost money to put on - say, £3 on the door to help cover costs for food/drink. Don't set entry too high though, otherwise it will turn people away!

Your local party might also be able to provide some money to you put on events, so make sure to check with them too.

PART 2: GROWING

STEP 3: EVENTS

This is possibly the most time-consuming bit of the whole process: putting on events. The effort can be shared between committee members though, and we have some basic ideas to help get you going on what events you can put on:

- **Board Game Socials**
- **"Liber-Tea" Coffee House Socials**
- **Drinking Liberally Pub Socials**
- **Speaker Events**

It's important to put on a variety of different events too so there's something for everyone. Someone who doesn't drink alcohol might not be enticed by Drinking Liberally for example, but may be more likely to go to a Speaker Event or Board Game Night.

Check out what other branches are doing and see what works - most of these ideas began with one branch but now are done by nearly all!

Be careful when putting on events to make them as accessible as possible. Local Young Liberals members will often be school students, or young professionals, so try not to exclude any of these groups by scheduling during the working week, for example.

PART 2: GROWING

STEP 4: CAMPAIGNING

Campaigning is a crucial aspect of every Young Liberals branch, and will help build your profile locally. It will also prove to your local party that you're worth investing in!

You can campaign in many ways, such as helping out your local party with leafleting and doorknocking, or even travelling to a nearby by-election to lend a hand. Building a good relationship with the local party like this is good and will pay dividends later.

You can also run your own specific local campaigns, in areas where you think your council are failing young people. Some common examples of this sort of campaign would be: better funding for youth services, keeping clubs open, *etc.*

If you do decide to run a campaign, make sure people know about it! Get in contact with your local newspapers to get some press, and tell us so we can signal-boost it on social media.

PART 2: GROWING

STEP 5: FRESHERS FAIRS

Although you're not associated with a university, you can still capitalise on Freshers Fairs to grow your branch. Some universities offer spaces at fairs to external organisations, so you should try and get your local party to help fund a stall (though they can be quite expensive!).

Every year, Young Liberals puts on a Freshers Campaign, where branches can purchase packs of leaflets, badges and stickers from us that are designed for maximum effect on a stall.

As well as these, you might want to design a small leaflet about your plans for the next term or year to put on your stall, as well as a "Brexitometer" or some other interactive element to get people to come over.

It's not just universities that run Freshers Fairs, either - many FE colleges do, too! This can be a great opportunity to engage younger members who will definitely be around year-round rather than just term-time.

Make sure you're approachable and friendly at the stall and are proactive in talking to people who look interested but are too nervous to start the conversation - we've all been there!

PART 2: GROWING

STEP 6: HANDOVER

Now that you've hopefully secured another generation of your branch, you should think about handing over the reins.

This is where many branches fail - there will be a burst of activity for a year or two, but then the person in charge goes to university and the branch falls apart without them.

To this end, make sure you plan handover long in advance. Encourage your new members to get involved with the committee by giving them jobs to do, or at least get them in a chat/group with everyone else to keep them involved.

Try to make a document over the year where you write down everything you had to do and every hoop you jumped through. Booking rooms? Emailing speakers? Attending local executive meetings? Don't assume your successors will know these things; make it as easy for them as possible!

If you do succeed, there's no better feeling. Looking back at the branch you founded years after you've left and seeing it still going strong is like nothing else - and it's absolutely doable if you follow this guide!

CONCLUSION

Hopefully this should be enough to get you started with your local branch.

This guide can't cover everything, so if you still have any pressing questions, please feel free to get in touch with any member of the Executive and we'll get back to you as soon as possible.

Most of us will have done this before ourselves, or will at least be able to put you in touch with someone else who has.

Good luck!

WRITTEN BY FINN CONWAY
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