

 **YOUNG LIBERALS**

BRANCH GUIDE



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WHAT IS THE YOUNG LIBERALS? HOW IS IT STRUCTURED?

The Young Liberals is the youth wing of the Liberal Democrats, comprising every Liberal Democrat under the age of 30 and all students (regardless of age).

It is governed by a federal executive made up of fifteen members, including three state chairs for English Young Liberals, Welsh Young Liberals and Scottish Young Liberals. These state chairs also lead their own state executives, which includes regional chairs in England.

You can find more information about the federal executive [here](#).

The Young Liberals also have an honorary president and honorary vice-presidents, who do not necessarily need to be members of the organisation. They are a key part of maintaining institutional memory and give guidance to the executive.



Key points of contact:

[Federal Membership and Branch Development Officer](#)

[English State Chair](#)

[English Regional Chairs](#)

[Welsh State Chair](#)

[Scottish State Chair](#)

[YL Directory](#)



Elizabeth Barnard
Co-Membership & Branch Development Officer



Thom Campion
Co-Membership & Branch Development Officer

WHAT CAN YL OFFER YOU?

Accreditation

Accreditation is the scheme through which the Young Liberals run branches and societies, and being accredited means that your branch is officially affiliated with the Young Liberals.

You probably know whether your branch is accredited or not, but if you are unsure, feel free to check with the Membership and Branch Development Officer.

There are lots of benefits and no drawbacks to accreditation - it's free! Here are some of the benefits the Young Liberals can offer you if you accredit.

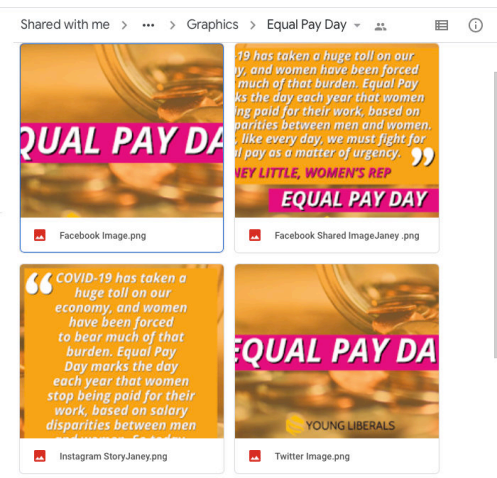


Access to social media graphics, tips and templates for promoting your branch

We have a wealth of social media graphics and resources for you to use. These can be found at: bit.ly/YLCommsResources

Do you want your branch's activities promoted on the Young Liberals social media pages? This might include an upcoming event you want to advertise or some amazing campaigning you've done in your branch.

You can submit a request for this here: bit.ly/YLCommsRequest



Discounts for Freshers' packs including literature and freebies

Every September, the Young Liberals provide packs for freshers' events across the country. They include literature and freebies to give out at your stall. Accredited branches are offered a discount on these packs!

Access to the Branch Development Fund to help fund events

The Branch Development Fund is a pot of money available to accredited YL branches and societies, which you can apply for. You might apply for this for all sorts of reasons: maybe you want to provide food or drink for a social event, or you want to print leaflets for a campaign on campus. You can find more on the Branch Development Fund page [here](#).

Unfortunately, some Students Unions don't allow societies to take money from political organisations, something you will need to consider if you're a university society affiliated with a Students Union. We recommend that you check with them if you're unsure!



Monthly Branch Newsletter

Every month, the Membership and Branch Development Officer will send all branches a newsletter about branch-specific news in the Young Liberals - this might be about specific campaigns that we're running, new resources, or events that you can promote to your members.

If you don't get this already let us know via email and we'll get you added on to our distribution list.

We're always looking for more stories to add into our branch newsletter so do contact the MBDO if you have something you wanted added in.

EVENTS 101

IDEAS FOR EVENTS

Spirited Discussions

One of the most popular events for Young Liberals branches is Spirited Discussions, an evening of debate and drinks (whether they're alcoholic or not!). Pick a few motions to debate and a chair, and after the discussion have a vote on whether you agree or not! Motions can be as serious or silly as you like - maybe you want to discuss housebuilding in your local area or maybe you want to debate whether pineapple belongs on pizza. Lots of societies have different rules for their spirited discussions: [here](#) are the Uni of York's rules which you can use as a template for your event. If you can, we suggest hiring a room on your campus for this event, or asking your local party about a good place to hold it in your local area.

LiberTEA

LiberTEA is a chilled way to get to know the members of your branch without the pressure of a debate or a drinks evening, and it has the benefit of being easy to put on! You can vary when

and where you hold them, maybe at a coffee shop in your Students Union or a brunch place in town.

Board Games Night

A board game night is another great way to meet people without the pressure of political debate. Encourage your members to bring a game along to a room you've booked in your Students Union, or visit a board game cafe if you're lucky enough to have one in your local area. Try to have a wide variety of games so there's something for everyone!

Cross-party events (socials or politics)

One of the best things you can do on your campus or in your local area is meet up with young political societies from other parties. This might take the form of a social - maybe a bowling night or a pub crawl - or a more structured political debate. Maybe you want to hire a room at your university and film a 'Question Time' discussion with a

panel of the chairs of the societies (you could even get this recorded by your uni radio station), or maybe you want to hold a cross-party spirited discussions.

Prominent speaker/panel discussion

Get in contact with a Lib Dem parliamentarian or ex-parliamentarian, or a Lib Dem on your local council, and ask them if they'll come to your society to give a speech or participate in a panel or Q&A session. You could also ask a lecturer at your university, a campaigner in your local area and a member of your branch to be on a panel, chaired by the chair of your branch.

Campaigning in your branch

Get in contact with your local party about campaigning in your local area. They might want to offer your branch members Focus leaflet rounds, and they will have campaigning organised in your local area that you can attend as a branch. It's always a good idea to have socials organised after campaigning to give people something to look forward to if it gets tiring.

Picnics

This is an easy one for the summer - grab a few picnic blankets and some picnic snacks, and just set up your social in the sun, maybe after some campaigning. All you need to do is make sure you check the weather forecast and make sure there's a cafe around in case the heavens open!

Online events

2020 has shown us that branches can thrive online, and online events have the benefit of being super accessible and easy to plan. Everyone has attended a zoom quiz this year, but there are also plenty of other options if you're a bit quizzed-out. Invite a speaker for a Q&A session or have a debate among your branch members. Other good virtual options include a games night - you could play jackbox games, Among Us or bingo - or a powerpoint party where your members put on a presentation for five minutes about a topic they're interested in.



SOCIAL MEDIA & PROMOTING YOUR BRANCH

WITH THANKS TO ALEISHA STANSFIELD & HARRY SAMUELS

Most branches will have some form of social media and this will be one of the key ways to promote the activities of your branch.

For further detail about how to make great graphics on social media, please see the **templates and communications resources** here: bit.ly/YLCommsResources as these provide you with all the bits and pieces you need to make great graphics!

Don't feel like you're restricted to using just these resources. You are, of course, encouraged to make your own, but not all members and branches have the capacity to make everything from scratch so this is just to help you out! If you're making your own stuff, you can check out the YL style guide in the documents section of the YL website.

The resources in the shared folder are mostly templates - once downloaded, feel free to make any changes you want!

You may want to add your branch's name to the YL logo. This is easy enough to do. In your chosen design software,



create some text that says your society name. Make sure this text is in the font Open Sans, which is available to download for free online if you don't already have it. Then simply resize and move this text so it fits over the 'Young Liberals' text on our logo.

Tips and tricks for social media strategy:

- Less is more, especially for words
- Facebook is more important than Twitter because sharing has more impact than a retweet
- Encourage people to do something with your post e.g. sign a petition, join the party

MAKING YOUR EVENTS ACCESSIBLE

WITH THANKS TO KATHARINE MACY, ELEANOR KELLY & DIVERSITY COMMITTEE



Accessibility is core to our organisation - this is only a starting guide. For more information consult the Young Liberals Accessibility Guide - bit.ly/YLAccessibilityGuide.

Golden rules

Advertise the access: Advertise that your event is accessible and in what way. Many individuals with accessibility needs might not go to events for fear that they are not accessible for their needs. If you're missing an accessibility requirement, make sure this is highlighted in the event bio.

Allow people a place to disclose their access needs

This will help you plan your event. Make sure you keep these details confidential and don't discuss them with anyone else.

Listen to your members first

Try to follow these guidelines but ultimately listen to your the individual about their access needs first. Similarly, listen to your members about what things about an event attract them!

Accessibility issues to consider

this is a very small list but are some of the most common that you may encounter. It is important to understand every person has different needs and they, and their carer if they have one, will know their needs best. Someone with a disability is still a someone - talk to them and ask what you can do for them!

- Anxiety
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Colour blindness
- Depression
- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia
- Hearing impairments
- Physical disabilities
- Visual impairments

Other things to consider

Geography

When choosing a place to host your event, be aware that geographical features, such as steep hills, can make it tricky for people with mobility issues to get around. Try to pick somewhere serviced by regular public transport.

Distances as well as times

When putting distance on your event - e.g. distance from the nearest bus stop - make sure you put distance as well as time - e.g. 400m or 5 minutes away from the nearest bus stop. This will allow individuals with access needs to properly estimate the time they'll need to get to the venue.

Ramps and Lifts

Check that the venue for your event can be serviced by ramps: check the front door, entrances to toilets and the room for your event. Also ensure that your venue has a working lift or that it is all on the entrance floor. As well as this, consider the distance between the entrance to your venue and the room where you're holding the event: make sure this is accessible.

Hearing Loops and Microphones

Many places will be equipped with a hearing loop facility but be sure to check that they're

available and working.

You might not know that someone needs a hearing loop until five minutes before the event, so make sure that you familiarise yourself with the equipment. Also have microphones at your events, and ensure that they are being used.

Toilets

Most venues will have a disabled toilet but be sure to check that they're available, easily accessible and not out of order.

Wide doors

Make sure that your venue has doors wide enough for wheelchairs to get through.

Suitable chairs

Try to host your events at a venue with chairs that can be moved easily for wheelchair access.

Emergencies

Ask the venue about its protocols for emergencies including the evacuation of individuals with access needs. This is especially important if the venue has lifts and is not on the ground floor.

Nearby accessible parking

Your venue should be near parking that's easily accessible to the venue for individuals that rely on cars to get to events

More things to consider

Drinking

Organise events around all manner of activities: make sure all your events do not centre around drinking, and avoid holding all your events in pubs. Make it clear that there is no pressure to drink at any of your events.

When and how you hold your events

Try to vary the times you hold your events - don't assume everyone will be free at the weekend, for example. This is especially important for carers who might have an unpredictable schedule, or for people who have to work at untypical times. If you can, have a hybrid element to your events, so that people can attend online (e.g. by calling in) if it's a in-person event.

Fundraising events

If you're holding a fundraising event, introduce a 'pay what you can' model for flexibility, and try to encourage your local party to do the same. It means you won't be shutting out people from events if they can't afford them. At the very minimum, make sure you offer a concessionary rate.

Access funds

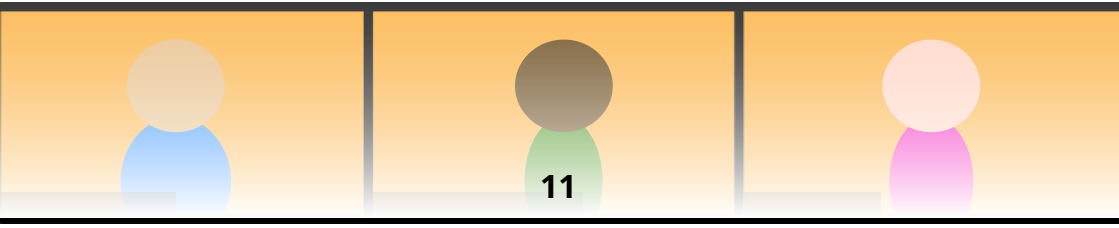
This might not be possible for every branch, but if it's possible, provide a financial access fund for members who might need money to attend the event (whether this be for travel expenses or, if they're a carer, to pay for external care). Try to reduce the stigma around this with the language you use - advertise access funds for new people and emphasise how you want people to get involved and how valuable they are.

Video Uploads

If you're uploading a recorded session or showing a video, be sure to add closed captions. This can be done yourself or outsourced, if there's room in your budget. Importantly, there is a legal requirement if under 18s are present on the call to ensure that either their camera is off or that you have written parental permission to record them.

Zoom Events

Make sure that closed captions are enabled in the initial settings of a zoom call and that appropriate third party software is integrated.



TIPS & TRICKS FOR FRESHERS WEEK

Choose issues that are going to attract new students

You might be really enthusiastic about devolution or tax reform, but don't assume everyone is. Shout about the Liberal Democrats'/ Young Liberals' exciting policies, such as legalising cannabis, taking action on the climate crisis and building more houses.

Draw people in with an interesting question

Get people over to your stand with an interesting question, and maybe even have a sticker poll, where people can visually mark what policy ideas they believe with coloured dots. Once they've voted, be sure to tell them about the Lib Dems' ideas that they agree with and encourage them to sign up!

Sweets!

Having a box of sweets on your stall can be a really great pull for new students who are after a sugar rush. And once they've taken one, they'll hopefully want to stay there and chat about your branch!



Your first event and term cards

By freshers' fair, make sure that your first event is planned so you can tell people who come over to your stall about what you're running and when. If you can, give them a card with the date/time, location and activity of your first event. And if you're able to plan the whole term in advance, have term cards of events that you can hand out!

Take breaks

Draw up a rota of your committee of who's going to sit on your freshers' stall. It can be exhausting to run the stall all day, so make sure your committee members are taking breaks when they need them!

UNDER 18s IN YOUR BRANCH

Your first step should always be to get a specific parental permission letter, your local party should help with this.

The local party should have a nominated safeguarding officer and the YL branch chair should be in touch with them.

The chair of the branch should ask for parental permission for under 18s to attend events.

Get one form signed by parents that covers all events - if you want to change the terms of this (e.g. if car-sharing is something you want to introduce) make sure you get a new form signed.

What sort of events are good to run?

- It's okay to mix over 18s and under 18s in socials but make sure it's not 1 on 1
- Policy discussion works really well, but keep it appropriate
- Film night or games night
- Try and make all your events under 18 friendly e.g. make sure you don't watch a film of 18 age certificate, don't play drinking games

Give your events a closing time to avoid safeguarding liabilities.

Don't hold all your meetings in pubs or universities.

Don't hold the numbers of U18s - don't rely on WhatsApp. Use instagram/facebook/twitter rather than holding private phone numbers of under 18s.

Discourage getting in the car of someone you don't know - make meetings accessible via public transport; try to keep them in well-lit, busy areas.

Ensure somebody knows where you are and when you expected to arrive or leave when lone working or visiting a venue.

If you are meeting with a group of under 18's, best practice would be to ensure you have another over 18 present.

When using personal social media for YL business, ensure you keep the contact formal and respectful.

If you're not sure - always ask!

WORKING WITH YOUR LOCAL PARTY



Youth and student officer

Your local party should have a Youth and Student Officer on their executive - if they don't, ask why that's the case and whether that can be changed. This will allow your branch to work more smoothly and regularly with your local party, and will allow your branch the representation it deserves in your local party

Asking for support for your branch

Ask your local party for support for your branch! This can be for a range of things, for example:

- Money for the access fund for an event
- The use of their venue for an event

- Promotion of your branch on their social media accounts
- An email to members telling them about your branch and encouraging them to get involved!

Remember - the worst thing they can say is no, and if you don't ask, you won't get!

Talking to your local party about accessibility

When your local party is holding events and campaigning, talk to them about what makes an event or campaigning session accessible, for example:

- Lots of young people don't drive - try to hold events in areas with good public transport
- Under 18 members will not be able to attend events in pubs - make sure the venues chosen don't exclude them
- Try to avoid meeting in a members' homes and stop expecting young members to be willing to get into cars of people they don't really know - choose a meeting-place that is public



YOUNG LIBERALS

Young Liberals Branch Guide - 2021

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