A weekend of socialist debate, discussion, and education hosted by Workers' Liberty

2-3 July, Camden School for Girls, NW5 2DB

EVENT GUIDE

If you need this booklet in a different format, please contact us at awl@workersliberty.org
Welcome to Ideas for Freedom 2022, a weekend festival of socialist discussion and debate, taking place at Camden School for Girls in north London. The event takes place in the Sixth Form block, which can be accessed by walking straight on from the main entrance to the school on Sandall Road.

The event is intended to be a space where we can discuss socialist ideas and activity. If you're not yet a socialist, we hope the event will contribute to persuading you to become one. If you're already active, we hope the event will help you re-dedicate yourself to the struggle for socialism. The event is hosted by the revolutionary socialist organisation Workers' Liberty; if you're not already familiar with us and our ideas and activity, we hope you'll consider becoming active with us.

There are a range of sessions across the weekend, in a variety of different formats, including presentations/lectures, debates, discussions around particular books, introductory sessions, and more. This guide includes brief blurbs for each session, including, wherever possible, some information on the format.

We aim to make our events as accessible, enjoyable, and educational as possible for all participants, whether they're experienced activists or newcomers to socialist politics. This means being respectful of each other at all times.

In all sessions, we attempt to encourage and atmosphere of discussion and debate. Disagreement is fine and healthy, but please express your disagreements respectfully. If you want to contribute to a session, please indicate to speak via the chairperson.

A free creche staffed by professional childcare workers is available at the event for anyone with childcare needs. Food and drink is also available on site. There is also a stall space, and space to relax and discuss informally, outside of the session classrooms.

Parking is available at the event, immediately outside the Sixth Form Block where the sessions take place, accessible from Bartholomew Road. The Sixth Form Block has accessible toilets, and all the sessions on the ground floor are step free. Unfortunately the creche, and one session in each slot, will take place in classrooms on the first floor, which is only accessible via stairs. We acknowledge this is a failing that we will endeavour to rectify in future years.

If you have any questions about the event while it's taking place, including around accessibility, please contact Jill Mountford, the designated welfare officer for the event, on 07904 944771.
# Saturday

For more information on speakers, see session blurbs further on in this booklet. Speakers whose names are in *italics* will be speaking remotely. (PC) indicates a speaker is speaking in a personal capacity.

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<tr>
<td>11:30-1:00</td>
<td>The legacy of George Orwell, with Dorian Lynskey, author of <em>The Ministry of Truth: The Biography of George Orwell’s 1984</em></td>
<td>The struggle for reproductive freedom worldwide, with Martyna Jakośyriska (Razem), Lieta Vivaldi (Chile), and Molly Beech, Workers’ Liberty</td>
<td>Renewing our trade unions, with John Moloney, PCS (pc) Jocelyn Cruywagen, Lambeth Unison (pc) and John Leach, RMT (pc)</td>
<td>The punk rock politics of Joe Strummer, with Gregor Gall</td>
<td>A socialist history of race and racism, with Camila Bassi, Workers’ Liberty</td>
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<td><strong>LUNCH</strong></td>
<td><strong>Special session from 1:15 in the Main Hall during lunch break: an introduction to the Western Sahara struggle, with a Saharawi activist</strong></td>
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<td>2:10-3:40</td>
<td>Plenary Session: Workers’ Solidarity with Ukraine</td>
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<td>3:40-3:50</td>
<td>Workers’ Liberty fundraising appeal</td>
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<td>3:55-5:20</td>
<td>Defending the right to protest and strike, with Rhian Keyse, UCU (pc), Sarah Woolley, BFAWU, (pc), and Janine Booth, RMT (pc)</td>
<td>What’s going on in Sri Lanka?, with Niyanthini Kadirgamar, Feminist Collective for Economic Justice</td>
<td>The Covid-19 pandemic: what can we learn from countries’ different outcomes?, with Professor George Davey-Smith</td>
<td>The history of Ukraine, with Chris Ford, Ukraine Solidarity Campaign</td>
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<td>Disability, capitalism, and socialism, with Janine Booth, Ellen Clifford, and Richard Reiser</td>
<td>A socialist history of Israel/Palestine, with Ahmad Roy, Workers’ Liberty</td>
<td>Introduction to revolutionary socialism: what is a revolutionary party, and why do we need one?, with Jill Mountford, Workers’ Liberty</td>
<td>The left in disarray on Ukraine, with Dale Street</td>
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An evening social will take place from 7:15 at the Abbey Tavern, 124 Kentish Town Road, NW1 9QB. This is less than 10 minutes from the venue on foot.
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<td>The JustEat/Stuart couriers' strike: how to spread the lessons</td>
<td>Introduction to revolutionary socialism: the importance of the Russian Revolution, with Paul Verndasky, Workers' Liberty</td>
<td>Is a united Ireland in prospect?, with Paul Richards, Workers' Liberty</td>
<td>Monarchy, Republicanism, and Socialism, with Ron Dornsley, Workers' Liberty</td>
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<td>Should socialists support a “Progressive Alliance”? Joan Trevor, Workers' Liberty, debates Michael Chessum</td>
<td>Climate change as class war: building socialism on a warming planet, with Matt Huber</td>
<td>The history of Hong Kong, with Hong Konger socialist Chen Ying</td>
<td>Sheffield's Early Socialists, 1880-1926, with E. M. Johns</td>
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<td>Should socialists be active in the Labour Party? Ruth Cashman, Workers' Liberty debates Paul Davies</td>
<td>The class struggle in China, with veteran Chinese socialist Chris</td>
<td>Revival in the US labour movement?, with Lisa Xu, Unite All Workers for Democracy (pc) and Mel Bienenfeld, DSA Labor NYC and Tempest Collective</td>
<td>The Australian climate movement, with Janet Burstall, Workers' Liberty Australia</td>
<td>Dimitri Shostakovich and Stalin: art against dictatorship, with John Cunningham</td>
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<td>Closing Plenary: Ruth Cashman, Workers' Liberty, and Bernard Anthony, railworker and RMT activist (pc)</td>
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Ideas for Freedom will conclude with the singing of the Internationale. For more information, and lyrics, see further on in this booklet.
Guide to sessions

Saturday, 11:30-1:10

Main Hall: The legacy of George Orwell, with Dorian Lynskey
Writer and journalist Dorian Lynskey discusses the themes of his latest book, *The Ministry of Truth: The Biography of George Orwell's 1984*. What can the contemporary left learn from Orwell's critique of totalitarianism and authoritarianism?

*Format: Presentation from author, followed by questions and discussion.*

Room 2: The punk rock politics of Joe Strummer: radicalism, resistance, and rebellion, with Gregor Gall
Socialist academic, writer, and activist Gregor Gall leads a discussion on the themes of his latest book, on Clash frontman Joe Strummer. According to its publisher, the book “examines Strummer's beliefs on a range of issues - alienation, exploitation, multiculturalism and humanism - analysing their credibility, influence and impact, and asking where they came from and how they developed over his lifetime.”

*Format: Presentation from author, followed by questions and discussion.*

Room 3: Renewing the unions in Britain, with John Moloney, Assistant General Secretary, PCS union (pc), Jocelyn Cruywagen, Branch Secretary, Lambeth Unison (pc), and John Leach, Assistant General Secretary, RMT union (pc)
After years of historic lows, some figures now show the levels of strikes in the UK at a five-year high. What is behind that uptick, and how can it be sustained and deepened? A panel of speakers will discuss the prospects for renewing workplace organisation and rebuilding workers' power.

*Format: Presentations from panellists, followed by questions and discussion.*

Room 4: The fight for reproductive freedom worldwide, with Martyna Jałoszyńska (Razem, Poland), Lieta Vivaldi (Chile), and Molly Beech, Workers’ Liberty
With the right to legal abortion under attack in the USA, as well as other countries such as Poland, how can socialist-feminists fight back for reproductive freedom, taking inspiration from recent steps forward in countries like Argentina and Ireland?

*Format: Presentations from panellists, followed by questions and discussion.*

Room 5: A socialist history of race and racism, with Camila Bassi
The idea of different “races” within humanity has no basis within biological reality, but has become a social reality because of racism. How and why was the idea of “race” created, how has it been reproduced, and how can socialists develop an anti-racist politics which resists the oppression it impels whilst seeking to dismantle the concept?

*Format: Presentation from speaker with visual aids, followed by questions and discussion.*

1:15-2:10 (during lunch break)

Main Hall: An introduction to the Western Sahara struggle, with a Saharawi activist
Learn about the Saharawi people's fight for freedom and self-determination against Moroccan occupation, and how we can support it. *Format: Presentation from speaker followed by questions/discussion.*
2-3:30

Main Hall: Workers’ solidarity with Ukraine, with speakers from Ukrainian socialist organisation Sotsialnyi Rukh (Social Movement)
Comrades from Workers’ Liberty recently visited Ukraine as part of an international labour movement and left solidarity delegation. This session reports back on their experiences there, and discusses how we can support our comrades in Ukraine. Speakers from the Ukrainian left and labour movement will also speak via Zoom.
Format: Presentations from panellists, followed by questions and discussion. Some panellist/s will be speaking remotely.

3:55-5:20

Main Hall: Defending the right to protest and strike: Creeping authoritarianism and the labour movement’s response, with Sarah Woolley, BFAWU general secretary (pc), Rhian Keyse, UCU NEC (pc), and Janine Booth, RMT Disabled Members’ Advisory Committee (pc)
Britain maintains what Tony Blair once called “the most restrictive union laws in western Europe.” These are set to become even more restrictive, with the Tories planning new restrictions on transport workers’ strikes. Meanwhile, the Police Bill threatens major restrictions on the right to protest, and further criminalises Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities. How can the labour movement resist Tory authoritarianism?
Format: Presentations from speakers, followed by questions and discussion.

Since mid-March, Sri Lanka has been swept by huge protests and strikes against the authoritarian nationalist regime of Gotabaya Rajapaksa and its economic policies. Can the protests, reaching across ethnic and religious divides, overcome the poisonous legacy of ethno-nationalist politics in Sri Lanka? As living standards collapse, can Sri Lanka’s workers push back to fend off an even more neoliberal outcome?
Format: Presentation from speaker/s, followed by questions and discussion.

Room 3: The Covid-19 pandemic: what can we learn from countries' different outcomes?, with Professor George Davey-Smith
Different countries implemented a wide range of different measures to tackle the pandemic. Which worked best, and why? At what point will the Covid pandemic be definitively “over” - if ever? What are the possible future developments, and what social measures can the labour movement and left fight for to minimise the harmful impacts of future Covid waves? This session is an opportunity to hear from one of Britain’s leading epidemiologists.
Format: Presentations from speaker with visual aids showing statistics, data, etc., followed by questions and discussion.

Room 4: The history of Ukraine, with Chris Ford, Ukraine Solidarity Campaign
Understanding the war on Ukraine is impossible without understanding its history, both recent and longer-range. This session will introduce participants to key events in Ukrainian history, and discuss the long-running threads of its struggle for independence and self-determination, free from Russian imperialist domination.
Format: Presentations from speakers, followed by questions and discussion.
Room 5: Introduction to revolutionary socialism – why the working class?, with Kelly Rogers, Workers’ Liberty
What is “the working class”, and why does Workers’ Liberty focus on it, rather than ideas like “the people”, “the masses”, or “the 99%”, as the key agency for socialist change?
*Format: Introductory discussion from speaker, intended to be accessible for newcomers to socialist politics as well as more experienced activists.*

5:35-7:00

Main Hall: The legacy of James Connolly, with Paul Richards, Workers’ Liberty
What can the writing, theorising, and organising of James Connolly, revolutionary trade unionist, socialist, and fighter for Irish liberation, teach us today? This session extends the examinations in our “The Unexpurgated Connolly” series, published in the Workers’ Liberty newspaper, *Solidarity*.
*Format: Presentation from speaker, followed by questions and discussion.*

Room 2: Disability, capitalism, and socialism, with Janine Booth, TUC
*Disabled Workers’ Committee (pc), Ellen Clifford, author of* The War on Disabled People: Capitalism, Welfare, and the Making of a Human Catastrophe, and Richard Reiser, managing director, World of Inclusion (pc)
A discussion of how class society disables people, and how a classless society might do things differently.
*Format: Presentations from panellists, some using visual aids, followed by questions and discussion. One panellist will be speaking remotely.*

Room 3: A socialist history of Israel/Palestine, with Ahmad Roy
This session will guide participants through the history of Israel/Palestine, and explain why Workers’ Liberty sees the establishment of an independent Palestinian state alongside, and with the same rights as, Israel as the key next step in achieving democracy and equal rights.
*Format: Presentation from speaker, with visual aids, followed by questions and discussion.*

Room 4: Introduction to revolutionary socialism – what is a revolutionary party, and why do we need one?, with Jill Mountford, Workers’ Liberty
The question of how workers can best organise to confront and overthrow capitalism has been continually debated in the socialist movement throughout its existence. This session introduces participants to Workers’ Liberty’s ideas about a democratic revolutionary socialist party.
*Format: Introductory discussion from speaker, intended to be accessible for newcomers to socialist politics as well as more experienced activists.*

Room 5: The left in disarray on Ukraine, with Dale Street
Explicit support for Putin is relatively rare on the left; more common is equivocation between Russia and Ukraine, or focus on Nato and western imperialism as the key factors. Where do these perspectives originate, and how can they be confronted in the name of a consistently democratic, working-class internationalism?
*Format: Presentation from speaker, followed by questions and discussion.*
From 7:15: Evening social in the Abbey Tavern, Kentish Town Road, NW1 9QB

Sunday, 10:30-12:00

Main Hall: The Cammell Laird shipyard occupation of 1984, and the ongoing fight for justice, with occupier Eddie Marnell, Alice James, Workers’ Liberty, and John Cunningham, author of a recent pamphlet on the occupation

In 1984, workers at the Cammell Laird shipyard in Birkenhead occupied their workplace as part of a fight against job cuts. The employers worked with the state, including the police and the army, to break the occupation. 37 workers were jailed. The surviving occupiers are still fighting for justice. This session is an opportunity to hear directly from a participant in this inspiring struggle, discuss what it can teach us, and build the ongoing fight for justice today.

Format: Presentation from speakers, followed by questions and discussion. One speaker will be speaking remotely.

Room 2: The JustEat/Stuart couriers’ strike: spreading the lessons, with speakers tbc

Food couriers working for Stuart, sub-contracted from JustEat, organised the longest strike in “gig economy” history, resisting a 24% pay cut. At the time of writing they had taken over 150 days of strike action. How was the strike organised, and what lessons can the wider labour movement learn?

Format: Presentations from panellists, followed by questions and discussion.

Room 3: Introduction to revolutionary socialism – the significance of the Russian Revolution, with Paul Verndasky, Workers’ Liberty

Workers’ Liberty believes the events of the 1917 October Revolution in Russia, and the theorising and organising of the Bolsheviks, the party which led it, still have much to teach contemporary socialists, over 100 years later. This session explains why.

Format: Introductory discussion from speaker, intended to be accessible for newcomers to socialist politics as well as more experienced activists.
Room 4: Is a united Ireland in prospect?, with Paul Richards, Workers’ Liberty
Demographic shifts, changes in political consciousness, and the impacts of Brexit have all made a united Ireland seemingly more likely than for many decades. What are the implications, and how can socialists intervene to advocate a consistently democratic programme?
Format: Presentation from speaker, followed by questions and discussion.

Room 5: Monarchy, Republicanism, and Socialism, with Ron Dornsley, Workers’ Liberty
In the Platinum Jubilee year, Ron Dornsley presents a socialist history of the British monarchy, and argues for the labour movement to take up a democratic programme that includes republicanism.
Format: Presentation from speaker, followed by questions and discussion.

1-2:30

Main Hall: The way forward for the left: should socialists support a “progressive alliance”? Joan Trevor, Workers’ Liberty debates Michael Chessum, author of forthcoming book, This is Only the Beginning: The Making of a New Left from Anti-Austerity to the Fall of Corbyn
The collapse of Corbynism and the election of a hard-right Tory government have set back the left in the UK. How can we rebuild? Does getting rid of the Tories require supporting a “progressive alliance” between Labour and other anti-Tory parties?
Format: A debate between opposing positions, with speakers presenting their views, followed by questions/discussion from the audience.

Room 2: Sheffield's Early Socialists 1880-1926, with E. M. Johns
E. M. Johns introduces a new research project looking at the early development of the Socialist movement in one city, and looks at how local approaches to labour history can challenge our movement's assumptions about our own past.
Format: Presentation from speaker, with visual aids, followed by questions and discussion.

Room 3: The history of Hong Kong, with Hong Konger socialist Chen Ying
How has Hong Kong’s history, from British colonialism to its relationship with the mainland Chinese state, shaped the terrain of current struggles? This session will provide a historical survey, and will be accessible for those without significant prior knowledge.
Format: Presentation from speaker, with visual aids, followed by questions and discussion.

Room 4: Introduction to revolutionary socialism – what is imperialism?, with Cathy Nugent, Workers’ Liberty
Workers’ Liberty argues that a consistent anti-imperialism means supporting democratic and national rights of all peoples, including against oppression by those powers, such as China, Iran, and Russia, opposed to the dominant imperialism of the west. Format: Introductory discussion from speaker, intended to be accessible for newcomers to socialist politics as well as more experienced activists.

Room 5: Climate Change as Class War: Building Socialism on a Warming Planet, with Matt Huber
We are pleased to (remotely) welcome Matt Huber, professor in the Department of Geography and the Environment at Syracuse University and author of Climate Change As Class War: Building Socialism on a Warming Planet (Verso, 2022) to Ideas for Freedom, for a discussion of the themes of his book. Matt is a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and a regular contributor to Jacobin magazine.
Format: Presentation from speaker, who will be speaking remotely, with visual aids, followed by questions and discussion.
Main Hall: Should socialists be active in the Labour Party? Ruth Cashman, Workers' Liberty, debates Paul Davies, socialist activist based in Merseyside
With Keir Starmer's leadership lurching to the right and attacking the left, including by banning socialist groups such as Workers' Liberty, is there any room for socialists to organise in Labour? Ruth Cashman will argue the case for socialists continuing to organise in the party; Paul Davies, a socialist activist who has recently left Labour, will present the opposite case. Format: A debate between opposing positions, with speakers presenting their views, followed by questions/discussion from the audience.

Room 2: The class struggle in China, with Chinese socialist Chris
A veteran Chinese socialist discusses the nature of the contemporary Chinese state, and how we can support democratic and working-class struggles against it. Format: Presentation from speaker, who will be speaking remotely, with visual aids, followed by questions and discussion.

Room 3: Revival in the US labour movement?, with Lisa Xu, Unite All Workers for Democracy (pc), and Mel Bienenfeld, retired teacher trade unionist and member of DSA and Tempest Collective (pc)
With a unionisation drive sweeping across Starbucks stores in the US, and the grassroots Amazon Labor Union winning the first union recognition agreement in any Amazon workplace in the US, there are signs of a revival in the US labour movement. At the same time, movements for democratic reform continue to organise inside major unions. Lisa Xu, an activist with Unite All Workers for Democracy, shares perspectives and experiences. Format: Presentation from speaker, who will be speaking remotely, followed by questions and discussion.

Room 4: The climate movement in Australia, with Janet Burstall
Australian socialist, trade union, and environmental activist Janet Burstall presents a guide to recent climate struggles in Australia, including school workers' strikes, and discusses how they connect to Australia's traditions of radical working-class environmentalism, including construction workers' “Green Bans”.
Format: Presentation from speaker, with visual aids, followed by questions and discussion.

Room 5: Dimitri Shostakovich and Stalin: art against dictatorship, with John Cunningham
On the surface, the brilliant Soviet composer Dimitri Shostakovich was a supporter of the Soviet system. An examination of his life and work will however demonstrate that he cherished the founding values of the October Revolution, loathed Stalinism but was never a Cold War anti-Marxist, despite numerous attempts to hitch him to that particular bandwagon. Format: Presentation from speaker, with visual and musical aids, followed by questions and discussion.

4:15-4:45
Main Hall: Ideas for Freedom 2022 closing plenary, with speakers including Ruth Cashman, Workers' Liberty, and Bernard Anthony, railway worker and RMT activist (pc)
Format: Short speeches, followed by the singing of the Internationale.
The Internationale

The Internationale is the traditional anthem of revolutionary socialist politics. It was written in French in 1871 by Eugène Pottier, a participant in the Paris Commune, the first sustained attempt by an organised working-class movement to hold political and social power. The "Internationale" refers both to the idea of international solidarity, and the organisation of the working class beyond national boundaries.

It has been sung since in a multitude of language at every great moment of working-class upsurge including the Russian Revolution of 1917 and by the revolutionary workers and students resisting Stalinist tyranny in Tiananmen Square in 1989.

We sing it to close our events as a way of honouring these struggles, affirming our connection to the history of our movement, and rededicating ourselves to the ongoing struggle for a better world.

If you know the Internationale in a language other than English, please feel free to sing in that language!

Arise, ye workers from your slumbers, arise, ye prisoners of want
For reason in revolt now thunders, and at last ends the age of cant.
Away with all your superstitions, servile masses arise, arise!
We'll change henceforth the old traditions, spurn the dust to win the prize.

So comrades, come rally, and the last fight let us face
The Internationale unites the human race.
So comrades, come rally, and the last fight let us face
The Internationale unites the human race.
Join the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty

Who we are

The Alliance for Workers’ Liberty aims to build a movement which can replace capitalism, the current economic and social system based on class division and exploitation, with a new society based on consistent democracy, collective ownership and solidarity – socialism.

We are involved in many movements, struggles and campaigns. Our central focus is the organised labour movement – including trade unions and the Labour Party. Our organisation exists to educate and organise socialists so we can transform the labour movement into a force capable of liberating the working class, and humanity, by overthrowing capitalism.

The legacy of Stalinism continues to cast a long shadow over left-wing politics around the world, both in terms of the belief that those states represent some kind of model to aspire to, and in terms of Stalinist methodology: unquestioning deference to bureaucratic party or union apparatuses, and the cynical alliances advocated by some on the left with anti-working-class forces such as jihadist Islamism in the name of “anti-imperialism”.

Workers’ Liberty wants to clean off the muck that Stalinism has heaped on the name and ideas of socialism, and rediscover the radically democratic core of revolutionary socialist politics.

Educate, agitate, organise

Many times in the last century, the absence or inadequacy of socialist organisation has meant revolutionary openings missed, and capitalism surviving when it didn’t have to – with terrible consequences for humanity.

Many times big, broad left-wing movements have come to be disastrously misled, or rapidly dispersed in a crisis for lack of a coherent, organised and politically clear core which could gain influence and help bring the movement to greater clarity. The ongoing left-wing movement in the Labour Party faces just that risk.

The radical socialist left in Britain is divided. We pride ourselves on encouraging cooperation and debate between different socialists organisation. At the same time, we believe we are doing work do develop socialist ideas and work in the broad labour movement which no one else is doing.

We educate, agitate, organise for socialism by:

- Working in the trade unions to develop working-class struggle and transform the trade union movement. Build rank-and-file workers’ networks. Publish workplace bulletins to promote socialist ideas at the grassroots.
- Working in the Labour Party to develop a working-class political voice and a movement for a workers’ government. Work in Momentum to make that possible.
- Working in the student movement to build strong, left-wing campus Labour Clubs, push forward student struggles, transform student unions and NUS and develop student-worker solidarity.
- Working in many different movements, including women’s liberation and ecological struggles, and build links between them and the labour movement.
- Publishing a weekly socialist newspaper, Solidarity, pamphlets and books; organise regular meetings, debates and study groups.

Want to help? Work with us, discuss ideas with us and consider joining!

If you want to find out what the AWL is doing in your area, union, Labour Party, or campaign, email our office at awl@workersliberty.org.

We have branches in Brighton, West & North Yorkshire (Leeds, Wakefield, York), North West (Manchester and Liverpool), North East (Newcastle, Darlington, Durham), East Midlands (Nottingham, Newark and Leicester), Sheffield, Scotland (Glasgow and Edinburgh). We have an online-only branch which brings together activists elsewhere in the UK and internationally. Our London branches are North London, Lewisham, and South West London.

Our activists also meet regularly in industrial networks covering railworkers, health workers, local government workers, Higher Education workers, school workers and civil service workers. We also have union networks covering Unite, Unison, and GMB. Workers’ Liberty student activists meet online every two weeks. We have networks for women/non-binary comrades and LGBT+ comrades.

workersliberty.org
@workersliberty on Facebook and Twitter