

Review Panel Report into Young Fabians

14 March 2024

1. Introduction

In autumn 2023 the Fabian Society received a number of reports about the Young Fabians highlighting a broad range of unacceptable behaviours and troubling practices. In response, recognising that these were the latest in a longer history, the then Fabian Society Chair (Lord Kennedy) and executive committee (EC) officer group took the decision to suspend all Young Fabian activity. They also established a panel to examine the culture and practice of the Young Fabians and make recommendations for lasting change, with a view to enabling the Young Fabians to be a thriving part of the future of the left in the UK. This report is produced by that review panel. Complaints about individuals have been dealt with via the Fabian Society complaints process and are separate from this review. To help with legibility, we use the abbreviations YF for Young Fabians and FS for the Fabian Society wherever possible.

Issues raised about the YF during the review included: inadequately resolved interpersonal conflicts resulting in residual tensions, the creation of particular subgroups and networks simply to platform individuals, questions around quality and quantity of YF outputs, data control queries, the proliferation of lengthy YF policies that failed to impact culture or practice, and a lack of accountability throughout the organisation - from not completing high quality work in a timely fashion, through to unchecked misconduct.

These created a lack of trust, as well as requests for more support and input from the main Fabian Society. Concerns were also raised about the dominance within the YF of white men, most of whom were London based and university educated. Additionally, neuro-diverse members of the YF were poorly served and inadequately enabled by the volunteer leadership, which lacked the knowledge and experience to make appropriate adjustments needed for their full participation and political growth. There were also troubling reports of unchecked misconduct: of bullying, of sexual harassment, of poorly understood safeguarding requirements, of marginalisation and abuses of power, occurring in a climate of clique-ism, sexism and opaqueness.

A review panel of three FS executive committee members and one independent member was convened in November 2023. They were tasked with a review of the culture and practices of the YF to culminate in recommendations to the main FS executive committee about the future of the Young Fabians. The panel consisted of:

Cllr Sara Hyde (panel chair): current Fabian Society Chair (since Dec 2023), prior to this was FS Vice-Chair and Fabian Women's Network Chair (2018-2022). Sara is also Chief Whip on Islington Council.

Catriona Munro (panel member): was a member of the FS Executive from 2016-2023. She was FS Vice Chair from 2017-2021. She has practised as a lawyer for some 30 years.

Paul Richards (panel member): is a current member of the FS executive and a former Chair. He was secretary of the YF and author of several Fabian pamphlets. He is the Labour & Co-operative candidate for police and crime commissioner in Sussex.

Dr Purna Sen (independent panel member): is an international expert on violence against women and girls, human rights and the abuse of power. She formerly worked at UN Women as Policy Director, then as Executive Co-ordinator & Spokesperson on Addressing Sexual Harassment. She is a Visiting Professor at the Child & Women Abuse Studies Unit and Special Advisor to the Prosecutor at the International Criminal Court. She was an FWN mentee 2013-14 and a Labour parliamentary candidate in 2015.

This report summarises the panel’s review of the Young Fabians and makes recommendations arising there from. This report was chiefly authored by Purna Sen and Sara Hyde. As the commissioning act by the Fabian Society suggests, reports about the YF have prompted serious concerns. Whilst many good things were shared with the panel about the YF, the panel members were saddened to hear accounts of poor and, at times, abusive behaviours.

At the outset of this report, the panel notes this shared sadness about the hurt caused and the impacts of reported behaviours and events. We appreciate that the Fabian Society seeks to be a learning organisation and, like the FS, the panel has been committed to listening to and hearing from all those who have reported concerns. The panel sees its work as a crucial contribution towards building a better organisation, one where all members of the YF can thrive.

There is, rightly in the panel’s opinion, a renewed focus on standards in public life at present within the Labour Party and its affiliates, all striving to ensure high levels of integrity, probity and fairness. The Young Fabians are no exception to this. The panel urges that the problems identified are understood as environmentally driven or enabled, not only a matter of policy or procedures and certainly not a matter of a few ‘bad apples’. To this end, our efforts have been concentrated on:

- listening to current and former YF members
- reviewing the context of YF work and the nature of both its membership and leadership
- exploring the policies, procedures and culture of YF
- recommending initiatives that provide a solid foundation for efforts towards elimination of problematic behaviours, the environments that enable or ignore these and building a sustainable, meaningful route to their absence.

This will clearly require policy and procedural change and the work of cultural change. Efforts at culture change frame the policy work that seeks to increase accountability within the organisation and the elimination of abuses of power. These include but are not limited to race and disability discrimination, bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment. Hereinafter, we will use the term abuse(s) of power, unless a particular aspect needs to be specified.

Cultural change, to be of substantive value towards elimination, needs to address inequalities of power that operate both explicitly and implicitly in the organisation. Naming and addressing these can be challenging, both individually and collectively. It needs to be led by recognition of and input from those with little individual or structural power; it requires long term, sustained efforts.

2 Method and findings

2.1 Method of work

The panel conducted a survey and held discussions with current and former YF members that enriched its understanding of individual experiences and organisational dynamics, both of which speak to organisational culture. We received forty-five survey responses, four written submissions and held eleven conversations with current or former YF members.

2.1.1 Consultation with Young Fabians

A draft of this report was shared for consultation in February 2024 with those who had engaged in the process prior to its drafting. The panel sought throughout its work to uphold and apply the principle “nothing about us without us” and as such, the panel is grateful for, and has reflected on, feedback

received which has been important in shaping this final text. The panel has crafted its recommendations to be pertinent, pragmatic and implementable. Hearing from YFs has been crucial to their evolution.

2.2 Findings

2.2.1 Key messages from Young Fabians

The panel heard a range of reflections, experiences, concerns and suggestions. We have listened, read and deliberated on these. In the consultation phase with the YFs, many affirmative messages were received on the scope of the report and content of recommendations. Commonly these included: relief at the absence of recommendation of closure of the YF, welcoming of recommendations on training, mentoring, moving the safeguarding function to the senior society and welcoming a new reporting (complaints) process. Also confirmed was a desire for the main FS to play a greater role in the forward direction of the YF.

The panel's aim is to represent our findings fairly and as they were told to us, without singling out specific individuals or role holders for criticism. We are grateful to the many volunteers who have given time and expertise to the YF in recent years. The panel acknowledges the immense range of experiences and suggestions shared with us. Their range is indicated by the following thematic groupings, accompanied by direct quotes:

a) Positive responses about and affection for the Young Fabians

Many members wanted to share their good experiences with us and were keen to point them out:

- The YFs was really helpful in my learning and my political journey
- The YF was very welcoming to me
- I need to defend the YF
- *'I met some incredible friends for life. I fervently believe the Young Fabians can be a force for good and promote active free thinking to develop the future of the left.'*
- *'My experience has been largely positive. People are thoughtful and engaged, talking about interesting ideas.'*

Consultation on the draft report drew feedback expressing relief that the positives of YF membership and activity were noted by the panel. Mindful of this sense of possibility, learning and networking, the panel has affirmed its signposting towards a more organisationally healthy and productive culture.

b) Lack of accountability, mutuality and humility

The panel heard about a lack of accountability across a range of behaviours, from toleration of bad behaviour, e.g gossiping, through to confusion about how the complaints processes worked, with an associated lack of trust in those procedures. The panel also heard of many examples of YFs self-aggrandising, e.g. taking credit for another's work, seeking platforms but without delivering contributions that were promised.

- There was a lack of accountability in YF spaces for bullying and abuse
- There was a lack of mutuality and a heightened culture of self-promotion
- There was a lack of humility, a lack of desire to learn from others
- *'In my view the way that some people spoke to and about each other was unacceptable and went mostly unchallenged. People are volunteers, but this does not mean that they shouldn't be held to account for their behaviour with others.'*
- *'When I joined YF, I was passionate about policy making, and looked forward to organising events and writing output to recommend solid policy. Sadly, events ended up being centred around promoting the event organiser and their own profile/interests rather than creating solid policy outputs to take to the next Labour Government.'*

c) Abuses of power: marginalisation, misogyny and sexual harassment

These issues were raised repeatedly with the panel and have emerged as a core focus of our attention. Power is regularly misused. There is a culture of misogyny and marginalisation. Misogyny existed on a spectrum from being overlooked to salaciousness through to sexual harassment, including by women. Participants noted that misogyny was part of wider society and politics and that that is reflected in the YF. Members noted the dominance of white, male, university graduates and experienced or observed marginalisation on the grounds of one or more of the following: sex, gender, race, class, disability and neurodiversity.

- *'The composition of the membership of YF has to be understood as a major contributing factor in the long-running issues with YF's culture. Most prominent among these are gender, race, and social class... Where progress is made in diversifying the membership on paper, this generally does not translate to a more diverse active membership, with many women, people of colour and working-class people being put off getting actively involved...'*

Misogyny

- *'People have been generally welcoming but it can be quite male-dominated'*
- *'There is clearly an issue with women in YF, one which I have tried to fix myself but to little avail. I don't ...know why this is on an organisation-level but I do know that many male members exhibit toxic and misogynistic behaviours.'*

Sexual Harassment

The panel heard accounts of incidents and behaviours that constituted recognised forms of sexual harassment – from looks, to words, to physical contact to sexual assault. We heard of a lack of or poor knowledge of complaints procedures (which are operated by the main FS), of unexpected consequences of raising complaints and of fear of so doing.

- There were critiques about how complaints were handled – and varying views on whether the YF or FS were most responsible for past shortcomings
- There was a lack of trust in and clarity about the current complaints procedure, e.g. *'I didn't know that the person who abused me would know I made a complaint against them.'*

Class and Race

The panel heard of YF members observing and experiencing class and race inequality. One example shared with the panel was of a laughing dismissal of the idea of creating a BAME group within YF.

Disability and neurodiversity

Concerns were raised with the panel that there is little accommodation or respect within YF for neurodiversity or disability.

d) Poor culture

Lack of accountability, lack of mutuality and abuses of power have led to a poor culture within the Young Fabians, which some described as 'toxic'. In addition to previous findings above, the panel heard from members that:

- The YF is cliquey and London focused
- Older YFs are patronising to younger YFs
- The YFs may have diversified its membership but this is not reflected in its leadership
- Perception of YF as a place where poor behaviour happened, which deters new people from getting involved

- *'...there are far too many incompetent individuals at the top who do not hold views that are reflective of Fabian values, nor have much common sense or experience.'*
- *'I have noticed that there are attitudes and general habits that are invariably toxic, complacent and dismissive. I have seen members debate in our Network WhatsApps and the debates have been less than pleasant to say the least.'*

e) Organisational: YF structure and purpose, relationship to main FS

The panel heard that:

- The many subgroups make the YF unwieldy and unaccountable
- The YF chair and executive committee need more support and involvement from the FS
- Some suggested that YF needed to be wound down or that the possibility of closure should remain on the table during the review
- The YF needs to (re) consider its purpose and clearly articulate it; this clarity could then aid unity and better working practices.
- *'For a voluntary organisation, YF is very, very hierarchical. From the EC to the individual networks, people are encouraged to have titles, explicit responsibilities (which they are often elected to), and positions in an organisation chart. This leads to a manufactured hierarchy that is not necessarily helpful. People feel and take ownership over the work and contributions of others all the time (because they are above them in the hierarchy), and I can also see how this lends power to people who might want to abuse it.'*
- *'There needs to be greater structural support from the senior section to guide the Young Fabians, as most of its leading members are by definition lacking in any leadership experience.'*
- *'My main observation is that, over the last few years, the Young Fabians has pulled away from its original purpose: policy making... most people were focused on political posturing and promoting their own profile, rather than recommending good policy to Labour.'*

2.2.2 Power: the core problematic

The YF is a voluntary membership network open to those from school age to their 31st birthday. This takes in members in schools, colleges, universities, at work, unemployed and more. The age range means there is a vast mix of experiences, confidence and relationship capital brought by individuals into their YF life. Older members with more life experience will likely have more confidence and a deeper knowledge of how to operate politically, including how to gain access to positions of power and decision-making in the organisation. There are also profound safeguarding concerns arising from having older members socialising and working (albeit in a voluntary capacity) with children under 18.

Abuses of power, including sexual harassment, are often intersectional: for example, targets are frequently selected based on the combination of their gender with race, ethnicity, neurodiversity and/or religion. Intersectional concerns also shape how targeted people respond. Members of the YF (and of the FS) are subject to these dynamics and may be replicating rather than disrupting them. Both organisations and their leaderships bear responsibility for being alert to such patterns, learning from those who see them through the benefit of personal experience, and must step forward to play their part in building different ways of doing (political) business.

The panel anticipates that the Fabians, a network invested in achieving just distributions of power, is open and willing to undertake that task internally as well as externally.

The recommended Actions in the remainder of this report are aimed at unmasking and changing how power operates within the YF, to the particular benefit of those groups historically excluded from it, to achieve culture change. Only by undertaking this necessary and sometimes no doubt difficult work, will

the YFs move towards greater accountability and the elimination of power's abuse and the harms it brings - whether that be bullying, clique-ism, racial discrimination or sexual harassment.

3 Actions

For its onward journey, the FS will need to act as supporter and guide to the YF in its work to address abuses of authority. The panel is aware of grievances within the YF concerning the role of the FS in the historical problems the panel is addressing. The panel considers it essential that the FS considers its own dynamics and culture, such that it too ensures adequate and impactful work is done to address flawed policies or procedures and to drive cultural change. The YF and the FS can and should make this journey together; the FS cannot lag behind and retain credibility.

The panel recommends two broad areas of work that together will make significant contributions to preventive work and to meaningful efforts towards cultural change. The first focuses on policies and procedures and the second on a broader canvas of activities shaped to drive and embed cultural change.

3.1 Policies and Procedures

3.1.1 Existing Policies and Procedures

The Fabian Society has a range of organisation-wide policies and procedures. A privacy and data protection policy was agreed in 2018. A code of conduct, safeguarding policy, and complaints procedure were approved in 2022. These all cover the Young Fabians, who had previously created some of their own policies to address gaps in the main FS's policies. These YF policies were written in good faith in order to ensure members' appropriate conduct, e.g. a YF [Safe Space Policy](#) which notes in point 2 that - 'YF has a zero tolerance policy with regard to sexual, physical or verbal harassment.' Across YF and FS policies, guidance for the implementation is lacking, as are clear pathways and sanctions for breaches. Both plans for implementation and ongoing accountability are needed.

The panel recommend a new suite of policies that use Fabian Society policies as default, prefaced on the creation of a new reporting policy that covers the FS and all sections, that adhere to the guidance in Appendix 1 and 2. Any proposed YF policies – those that seek to go beyond FS policies – must have the explicit agreement of the FS executive, prior to their adoption.

3.1.2 Complaints/reports

One of the priority policy/practice areas arising from the review is what is commonly called complaints. The panel offers specific advice on this, as it is often seen as the proper response action.

Recommendations are:

1. To rename 'complaints' as 'reporting'
2. To recognise reporting as an *asset* to the organisation, as it helps to monitor unacceptable behaviour and to address it
3. To recognise the barriers to reporting and why people don't make reports
4. To build systems that are worthy of the trust that survivors are expected to place in them.

The panel provides detailed recommendations in Appendix 2 on creating a reporting system that is fit for purpose for all parts of the Fabian Society.

3.2 Cultural Change: Six Areas for Action

We propose here six broad areas of action that drive organisational cultural change, following from international work where such standards have been shared¹. Using the template these provide we indicate specific initiatives, considerations, suggested timelines where relevant and responsible parties for these efforts. Our reflections and commendations here take into account the voluntary nature of the organisation, also that the Young Fabians is a subsidiary of the parent organisation, the Fabian Society.

The next section addresses recommended areas of action² that provide a template for work to address cultural change: 1) review membership, leadership and messaging 2) understand and practise zero tolerance 3) understand and embed victim-centred approaches 4) update training and deliver with transformative intent 5) practise and promote collective ownership 6) build organisational transparency.

3.2.1 Membership, leadership and messaging

In keeping with many political organisations in the UK (including the FS), the profile of YF membership and leadership reflect traditional distributions of political power. Membership and officer roles are dominated by white, male, able-bodied folk with university education, despite a gender parity rule for the main YF executive committee. Across the political world belated but increasing recognition of the limitations of such patterns has not been matched with meaningful changes in practice. This is true in the YF and serves to reinforce social messages about the rightful holders of power and who remains excluded. Also, again common to the political world, YF reportedly concentrates power among those who live in London. This has resulted in some being seen to work as cliques and appears to have led to poor, undemocratic decision making by an EC, viewed by some as unrepresentative and unimpressive.

The YF, along with other political organisations, has to make deliberate efforts to disrupt politics/power as usual; efforts that are consistent, transparent, accountable and informed by those least used to exercising power. The FS and the YF will need to explore how best to provide guidance and support in the medium term on the dismantling of structural power's dynamics in the YF. This will need considered reflection, respect and perhaps external facilitation/advice. The panel suggests that an initial period of six months is given to this, then reviewed and possibly extended for another six months. The YF will be considered to be in special measures for this time. It should adhere to the following components:

- Input, guidance, or support from the FS to YF to be disruptive not replicative of patterns of inequality: control, paternalism to find no place, but mutual learning and growth to be enabled
- Brief monthly reports from the YF chairs to the FS chair and FS general secretary
- Possibility of mentorship of YF officers by FS members (from exec comm, staff or other FS members with appropriate skills); this would be undertaken with robust protective measures and external oversight
- FS to be alert, and open, to the need for their own procedures, practices, culture etc to undergo transformation in sync with the YF journey. The YF cannot be supported or in any way overseen in these efforts by an organisation which lags behind on this work.

Messaging

Unequivocal and repeated messaging on creating an organisation where there are no abuses of power, including sexual harassment, is essential. This must come from the top and it needs to resonate with how YFs, whether on the executive or ordinary members or potential members, experience the organisation.

¹ [What will it take?: Promoting Cultural Change to end Sexual Harassment](#), 2019, Sen, P for UN Women

² Sen UN Women (Op Cit), pages 27-44

Messaging cannot be about bad apples, the existence of policies or built around words that, without implementable substance, are mere slogans, e.g. 'zero tolerance' or 'victim-centred' approaches. Messages from the organisation should be humble and should include: acknowledgement that there is harm done, that there is work to be done and that situates a specific response in a larger programme of work.

Leadership profile: a key problem identified is that leadership positions are dominated by white, predominantly university educated, middle class men. Although there is a gender parity quota on the main YF executive committee, in practice across the wider networks, geographical and advocacy groups there is a lack of parity.

Ways forward: Change the leadership profile.

Means for doing so: the YF will be co-chaired by two people, at least one who is a woman. Of the seven officer roles³ on the executive committee, at least two must be racially minoritised people. The YF executive committee, with support from the FS, should determine actions and checking mechanisms towards ensuring "that leadership is populated in significant part by those less rooted in experiences of power."⁴

Term Limits: a key problem identified was the consolidation of power with potential for its abuse.

Ways forward: introduction of a consecutive three year term limit for the YF executive members, e.g. someone could serve aged 18-21 and then again aged 23-26. The panel's consultation on this report received favourable feedback on term limits. Another additional suggestion was that former executive members be debarred from standing for the executive in the immediate future. To this end, a maximum of half the elected spaces on the new YF exec can be held by members of 2022-3 or 2023-4 execs.

Accountability and recall: the YF constitution makes it difficult to remove exec members,⁵ especially for those who may not be well connected or confident in challenging those in power and/or in authority. There needs to be a balance between those positions being able to do their job and those to whom they are accountable being able to hold power to account.

Ways forward: more usable mechanisms for accountability and recall need to be developed by YF exec.

3.2.2 Understand and practise zero tolerance

This action requires the YF, all its members and in all its spaces to know zero tolerance as ambition **and as practice**. Obviously, this also applies to all sections of the Fabians. Consistent intolerance of abuses of power, bullying and sexual harassment requires that no reporting of any of these is ever met by inaction or by acquiescence to potential proscribed behaviour.

Ways forward: the behaviours that constitute reporting can be formal (through a process) or informal through the raising of concerns. Informal accounts are to be treated with seriousness and thoughtfulness. Support to the person raising concerns and others affected by these, to be prioritised.

³ The proposed officer roles on the YF exec would be: two Co-Chairs, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Women's Officer, Anticipations Editor.

⁴ Sen UN Women, (Op Cit) Page 50

⁵ Current YF constitution states: "Elected members may only be removed: (1) if they are no longer members of the Fabian Society; (2) if they are deemed to have resigned under clause 3.8; or (3) by consent of an Extraordinary General Meeting, called in accordance with clause 4.3 of this constitution."

Means for doing so: that new YF exec, supported by FS EC members, determines what zero tolerance looks like in practice in the Young Fabians. Then consideration of how zero tolerance as a practice, and regular messaging about it, is implemented across YF spaces, including introduction of new reporting procedure.

3.2.3 Understand and embed victim-centred approaches

The people who know most about abuses of power, bullying and sexual harassment, how they operate, how they hide and how they thrive, are those who have been subject to such abuses and their advocates. YF must ensure that the knowledge of those abused or their advocates are central in work to end abuses of power, bullying and sexual harassment, including communications, policies, procedures and other interventions.

Ways forward: the YF with FS EC members (potentially with specialist expert guidance), will need to flesh out what this principle will mean in practice for them so that it moves beyond a slogan. What will make it an experienced reality rather than a slogan?

3.2.4 Update training and deliver with intent

Abuses of power, bullying and sexual harassment centre on both the quest for and assertion of power. Training has often been seen as a panacea for many organisational problems but training on sexual harassment, for example, has historically had little or no meaningful impact on behaviours. There is a place and necessity for training if effective and bespoke. Training should not be about the 3Ps (prohibition, policy and procedures) but instead about the means to move from a shared understanding of the existing norms and expectations in an organisation, to a shared vision of values and behaviours that will undermine and end abuses of power.

Ways forward: running an initial 12-month programme where the committee is trained in a way that impacts practice. Feedback from consultation with YFs suggested the following as prioritisation for training of YF exec: mediation/conflict resolution, the use of power, chairing meetings, managing volunteers. The panel also encourage the YF exec to consider - what are the opportunities and limitations on potential outputs and achievements in an entirely volunteer run organisation like YF? Any new training offered should have its scope and impact reviewed after six months and one year. The FS should also commit to reviewing and making impactful its own training.

3.2.5 Practice and promote collective ownership

Organisational culture may not be shaped by all involved in an organisation at any given time. Yet its reach is wide and deep - known and experienced by all. Cultural transformation, as is proposed for the YF, cannot be the work of one person or a small group of people; it is a fully collective project to be owned by all. Collective ownership of cultural change relies on enabling and supporting all those who are aware of or witness to inappropriate behaviour, including bullying, racial discrimination, sexual harassment, to participate in the promotion of intolerance and to be part of changing the norms that prevent it. Collective ownership includes 'bystander interventions', more appropriately called upstanding, and would include *the training and support of witnesses of abuse, or confidants of those harmed, to intervene*. Upstander interventions can range from making a report, approaching a target of abuse to offer support or, in some circumstances, a direct challenge of the person abusing.

Ways forward: the YF should ensure its work on issues raised herein be a collective project in which:

- Any member is enabled and supported to play a part
- Anyone who names the abuse of power is seen not as a problem but an asset

- Anyone subject to an abuse of power knows where to go for support or to make a report
- There is accountability for those who are responsible for driving change.

The collective nature of this project includes the FS as a key actor in this work.

3.2.6 Organisational transparency

There is often a poor assessment of the seriousness with which organisations approach issues of abuse of authority, bullying, sexual harassment or racial discrimination as well as other forms of inequality. It is common that those harmed assess their context to conclude that they won't be heard, their voices will have little weight against more known or senior people (in this case, other members) and that those behaving abusively will neither be held accountable nor will others be protected from such behaviour. Such concerns limit the will to report wrongdoing as well as other forms of engagement in the collective project of cultural transformation.

Ways forward: the YF, and by association the FS, must commit to the greatest degree of transparency to build a climate where members know what is being done, including with respect to case management and disposal. The YF/FS must develop ways in which to communicate the outcomes of case, e.g. high level aggregation of data or broad-brush narratives enable communication that can build trust and confidence without compromising confidentiality. Transparency in disclosure of procedures, application of policies and / or complaints brought is part of feedback to the organisation. Over time, the degree of transparency should only increase. Names need not be publicised and those who have suffered abuse should be consulted in establishing transparency and trust in work to end abuses of power. The reporting procedure must become accessible and meaningful, following guidance in Appendix 2.

4 Concluding thoughts

The panel thanks the FS for entrusting us with the important work of reviewing YF culture and practice, and considering how best to improve these. This report outlines our considered ways forward for the YF, deeply connected as it is with the FS more broadly.

As the 'parent' organisation, the FS has the pivotal role in

- nurturing, guiding and enabling younger members to develop
- providing a conducive environment for political learning and growth
- informing and steering an environment that nourishes rather than depletes or harms
- ensuring its own policies, procedures and practices are fit for purpose.

The panel considers that the FS must step up to this role if the YF is to survive and to be of value to a variety of members.

The panel wishes to reassure that it was not minded to recommend the termination of the YF as suggested or feared by some. However, there clearly needs to be a conversation about the purpose of the YF. The panel heard that it was many things to different members - e.g. a place for policy, for networking, to build experience; we also heard concerns about this multiplicity of organisational uses and several calls for a sharper focus on policy work. A re-definition of purpose may be timely and could link to a new, simplified YF constitution.

The panel hope to have contributed towards the Young Fabians' longevity as a dynamic, nourishing and supportive organisation, serving a wide range of members with different identities and geographical locations. This can only be built on the meaningful participation of those who wish to be involved; it means that structures of power need to be open, limited by temporary occupation and accountable.

Ideals of justice, equality and fairness must be brought inside the organisation with as much fervour as they are espoused beyond it. We consider the foundation set out here to be a major and necessary contribution towards that end.

5 Summary of recommendations

5.1 Immediate, long-term recommendations:

For the Young Fabians

1. Rather than a single chair the YF have co-chairs, at least one of whom is not a man.
2. Of the 12 executive members, at least six shall be women and it should be populated in significant part by those less rooted in experiences of power, e.g. women, racially minoritised people, LGBTQI+ communities, those with disabilities, those without university education or from working class backgrounds. New YF exec to decide if additional quotas required, consultation showed most support for non-London resident quotas.
3. Of the seven officer roles on the executive committee (two Co-Chairs, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Women's Officer, Anticipations Editor), at least two must be racially minoritised people. And, as above, and it should be populated in significant part by those less rooted in experiences of power. [Points 1-3 refer to 3.2.1 of this report.] The new YF exec to develop an outreach and engagement strategy so this work moves beyond quotas.
4. There will be a maximum of term limit of 3 consecutive years that a person can serve on the YF exec.
5. Adopt a new age range for membership: 18-29. e.g. age out on 30th birthday. From Nov 2024 AGM the age limit will be reduced to 28, from Nov 2025 AGM the age limit will be 27, e.g. age out on 28th birthday, so the eventual age range will be 18-27. FS GS to contact 14-17 yo members, and 30+ members to explicitly include and invite them into the FS activities. [Pls note: The current YF definition of 'young' is too wide, and mixes people at markedly different life stages into a single age band. A narrower age band, starting from legal adulthood (18) and finishing on the member's 30th birthday is more conducive to an open, inclusionary culture and less open to abuse.] The panel's consultation found the vast majority were in favour of the lower age limit becoming 18. Members aged 14-18 understandably feel aggrieved by the suggestion that the future YF would not be open to them. Given the YF is a volunteer run organisation with minimal resources to ensure child members are safe, the panel have retained the new lower age limit of 18 and in response to more mixed feedback on the upper age limit, have reduced it by one year now and then have staggered a reduction. The FS must take significant steps to ensure a warm welcome and induction into the larger society for those who would formerly qualify for YF membership.
6. YF policies are replaced with FS policies. That any proposed new YF policy has to be proposed to the FS exec prior to its adoption by YF.
7. That one person on the main FS exec committee/staff member is appointed 'safeguarding' lead, and another person is appointed as 'conduct' lead for the society: these roles are Fabian Society wide and include the Young Fabians, replacing the role of the YF safeguarding officer. That the YF co-chairs have a role as signposts and sources of information on conduct or safeguarding issues and, in any revised reporting system, will play a role re: raising informal concerns with the main FS. That these people are included in the YF EC whatsapp group whilst it is under special measures.
8. There will be training for all exec members annually on mediation/conflict resolution, the use of power, chairing meetings, managing volunteers. Training should enable a shared understanding of the existing norms and expectations in an organisation to a shared vision of values and behaviours that will undermine and end abuses of power [as per 3.2.4 of this report.]
9. There will be mentoring for YF officer holders from Fabian members in the senior section.
10. All members of the executive committee receive upstander training – a more active take on the idea of bystander interventions - as part of their induction (see connected action in YF list).

For the main Fabian Society

1. The complaints procedure is reworked and updated to become a reporting procedure to be adopted by the September 2024 Fabian EC meeting, following the guidance in Appendix 2 to ensure it is accessible and trustworthy.

5.2 time -specific recommendations

We also recommend some time-limited actions that would not be expected to last permanently.

Timeline	YF	FS	YF and FS
Immediate	<p>All policy groups, advocacy groups and geographical networks of the YF are disbanded until at least March 2025. The main YF exec will be the decision-making body. After March 2025, reintroduction of a limited number of groups may be desirable [the multiplicity of groups and networks had created some unintended consequences. The structure had become top-heavy and encouraged the collection of titles: which is counter to the spirit of the Young Fabians. A more transparent, flatter structure will encourage an active and inclusive membership. Informal networks may emerge in coming years, and may be incorporated into the constitution. For now, a simple, democratic structure, with clear lines of accountability, is the way forward.] Task and Finish or project specific groups run through the YF EC are an option from Sept 2024.</p>	<p>Issue a statement of support and intent re the YF</p>	
March/ April 2024 YF Re-launch process	<p>1. YF are considered to be in special measures for initially 6 months. This may be extended to 12. This means that at least one member of the FS EC must be present at all meetings and activities during this time. 2. New Executive Committee of 12: At relaunch YF members to elect 6, (See FS column - 6 appointed by paper-based application). Of the 6 elected members a maximum of 3 can be from the 2022-3 or 2023-4 executive committee.</p>	<p>FS to appoint 6 YF EC members. The appointed places will have a paper-based application system and the FS exec will review and appoint six applicants. There will be a simultaneous election for the other six spaces on the exec. All 12 positions run until the next round of elections in autumn 2024.</p>	<p>The new exec will work with the three members of the FS exec to operationalise 'dismantling of structural power's dynamics in the YF' (see 3.2.1 on page 8). This will set the foundations by Oct 2024, then build in these principles for future YF execs.</p>

	Ask for YF member contributions on a YF statement of purpose at the relaunch event. YF exec then write one sentence and one paragraph versions of purpose.	A member of the main FS exec will be present at all YF committee meetings and activities. Three members of the FS Exec will commit to supporting the new YF exec and sharing this responsibility. This will be reviewed in Sept 2024 and in March 2025.	
April/May 2024	New YF exec charged with the following responsibilities: 1. New EC to craft a statement of purpose, no longer than a paragraph outlining the primary aims and objectives of the YF 2. Redrafting of a simplified constitution by April/May 2024. Submit to FS EC June 2024. 3. Propose mechanisms to use to embed and make accessible accountability and recall, including what is meant by 'calling it out' and operationalising 'zero tolerance' and 'victim-centredness' 4. Write a one paragraph explainer and short list of operational bullet points of what upstanding might look like within the YF shall be created and put on the website 5. To make an outreach and engagement plan to reduce barriers to participation to a wider cohort of potential members and not just to rely on diversity quotas.		Complaints /reporting procedures reviewed, led by staff and FS exec members. To include annual conduct reporting to Fabian EC (high level so as not to compromise confidentiality) on complaints and their outcomes.
June 2024		FS EC to consider revised YF constitution for adoption. FS exec decision on running full FS election or not in autumn 2024	
September 2024	From September 2024 task-and-finish project groups can be used, providing they are proposed to the main executive committee before being convened and that proposal clearly states project aims and outcomes before commencing.	FS to have revised complaints procedure to develop new reporting procedure, ahead of Sept FS executive committee meeting.	There will be a review of progress against these recommendations in Sept 2024 and March 2025, by either the original panel (at least two of the four) & may include the FS Gen Sec.

September/ October 2024	Possible full YF exec election (also General Election dependent)		Jointly develop and agree programme of induction, training and mentoring of incoming YF exec
March 2025	From March 2025, the YF exec can consider if they wish to appoint any subgroups (ie policy areas, identity, geographic).		Second review against recommendations.

Appendix 1 - Drafting new policies & procedures⁶

A] Write policies that:

1. Name the core problematics: be they abuses of power, human rights violations, whether these relate to gender-based or racially motivated discrimination, regardless of sex - in a context of unequal power relations.
2. Define abuses of authority, including sexual harassment, to include their intersection of gender with other structural social inequalities, prominently race, ethnicity, age, disability, nationality, religion and any other social vulnerabilities such as poverty that intensively target certain groups for sexual aggression, use, and privilege their perpetrators for impunity on being reported.
3. Recognise that harassment can involve an exchange of a perceived benefit or absence of detriment for sexual compliance or a general experience in the organisation. Each type is equally grave.
4. Recognise that unwelcome sexual conduct, of any kind, is harassment. Unwelcomeness is the standard used, not “consent”.

B] Write procedures that:

5. Are simple, accessible, have multiple entry points that make sense to targeted groups, and create a victim-friendly and welcoming, not intimidating and complex, process. To achieve an effective procedure, consider what would encourage, rather than discourage, reporting. Crafting such a process begins by asking victims and frequently targeted populations: “what do *you* need?”. Listen with the understanding that nonreporting is rife, is usually rational and justifiable (see Appendix 2).
6. Are equitable. Equality between the parties must be built in and procedurally observed. For example, if one party is allowed an advocate, the other party/ies can have an advocate.
7. Review / remove reporting periods for survivors of abuse of power. Trauma can last a considerable period of time; short time limits on reporting are unjust and do not offer support to those affected.
8. Investigations should be independent of institutional structures of power. Investigations must both appear to be, and be, separate from the operations of power.
9. Interim measures should be available, effective, and implemented at any time that a report is being investigated.
10. Process should be prompt. Time limits should be set and followed. A year from report to final outcome is not prompt.
11. Data to be collected on the entire cycle of reports, disaggregated by intersectional identities for survivors and perpetrators, with official steps taken or not taken, must be built into the normal functioning of the process and transparently made available publicly at regular intervals.
12. Retaliation protections to be built in for initiating party, as well as whistleblowing protections for upstander and witnesses reporting.
13. Confidentiality should not become secrecy, that is, as a barrier to effective redress or a cover for institutional reputation. Confidentiality guarantees must, however, be sufficiently robust to protect survivors, witnesses, and alleged abusers from rumours and reputational damage emanating from the process, to the extent possible consistent with diligent investigation. This can be difficult and require time for adequate discussion.
14. Criminal concepts are not to be employed.
15. Sanctions should be available that range proportionally according to the severity of behaviour sanctioned. Suspension or termination of membership and communication of such to sister organisations, e.g. the Labour Party, may be appropriate.

⁶ These draw on or quote the work of Professor Catharine A MacKinnon in Sen P, UN Women, [Towards an End to Sexual Harassment: The Urgency and Nature of Change in the Era of #MeToo](#), 2018, pp 8-9

Appendix 2 - Reporting systems: responding to wrong doing

Reporting systems are responsive, not directly preventive. However, if there is transparency on incidents or cases and their outcomes, there may be consequences that have value towards prevention. Within organisations, if it is seen that reports can lead to accountability, that organisations are supportive of those making reports, that this work is prioritised by the organisation and that these factors are made known: then, they can influence behaviour.

Many organisations declare a compulsion or a strong encouragement for any incidents of wrong doing to be the subject of a report through a complaints process. They often see these as the starting point for their work – without reports there is little or nothing that can be done, it is claimed. Such messaging places a heavy burden on those who may already be carrying the harm of abuse and fails to recognise what they may be grappling with. It can also abrogate responsibility for action *from* the organisation *to* the victim-survivor of abuse. Consequently, blame for organisational inaction falls on those already harmed by bullying, discrimination or harassment.

There are many reasons why people do not make complaints. These include:

- fear of not being believed (often based on the experiences of others)
- fear of the response of the alleged wrongdoer
- fear of being blamed for what happened to them
- fear of being labelled and having that stay with you **and** your name
- anticipation of organisational allegiance to the alleged wrongdoer
- lack of clarity of process
- lack of clarity on timelines
- lack of clarity on potential outcomes
- concern about continuing engagement or the possibility of seeing the alleged wrongdoer.

Given these disincentives, making a complaint is objectively an irrational act for many people. The term complaint, or being named a complainant itself can have negative connotations – a problematic person who moans (unnecessarily?) and complains. Instead, reporting is a more positive term that has the potential to give credit for highlighting what is unacceptable and unwanted in the organisation.

As in most organisations, our survey responses and confidential conversations with YF current executive members suggest this is true here. **It** indicates that the reasons not to report are numerous, weighty and understandable.

Thus, the question to be addressed is: why would someone report?

The task for any organisation is to shift to a place where reporting is a rational act and to see reporting is one part of a wider approach that is committed to elimination, a project that is owned by and the responsibility of the organisation.

People will report if they i) trust and understand the system, ii) feel supported rather than judged or blamed and iii) anticipate timely, just outcomes. An organisation has to build reporting systems that are worthy of survivor engagement. Essential elements include:

- Independence: the FS to identify/appoint a panel with more external than internal members from which 2 or 3 people (at least one FS person) can be drawn to handle a specific report; membership in such a panel to be for a period of two years (to build institutional memory) and to be rolling such that ends of terms do not all coincide.
- Ensure diversity on the panel, so at no point the majority is white, heterosexual, able-bodied, university educated men.
- Multiple reporting routes to maximise comfort of access for the range of membership: in this case this should at least be someone in YF, someone in FS, someone external/independent; all to have induction and support; clear guidelines will be needed for receipt of reports and processing/referral to panel.
- Non-judgemental hearing/reception from first line respondents: prepare guidelines and offer training.
- Signalling support systems – both internal and external: those who have been harmed may need specialist support, to use such or not is their decision. FS to have available and share with anyone who reports, information on where to find support; if this involves a cost then the FS must cover these. If referrals are made to NGOs, then prior discussions to be held with them.
- The FS must recognise that any need for support, such as counselling, for a member as a result of abuse of power in its ranks is something for which the Society must carry the load, which includes costs. NGOs or others have no obligation to take this load off the organisation. Any external/independent services, advice etc to be presumed to involve financial recompense. Many/most service providing NGOs are poorly resourced and their inclusion in organisational systems needs to be agreed in advance and compensated.
- Clear communication about report making: consequences, handling, timelines, correspondence with those who make reports and those against whom complaints are made.
- Interim actions considered and a (non exhaustive) menu available: FS to have available a list of actions it can take pending the final outcome of any report.
- Understanding that internal reporting systems are not a substitute or equivalent of criminal justice systems. Importing judicial standards and language can be intimidating or inappropriate – investigating procedures, investigation thresholds, standards of proof and so forth need to reflect the aspirations, values and culture of the organisation rather than formal justice systems.
- Input to the design of a fit-for-purpose reporting system must include those who have suffered abuses of power.
- Reporting systems to ensure fair treatment of those making reports and those against whom reports are received, without fear or favour and without deference to those in or potentially in positions of power.
- Any new systems to be reviewed periodically, for example after 5, 10, 20 reports are concluded and after 6, 12 months and annually.