



Labour Leadership Contest 2020

Briefing on the candidates in the race to become leader of the Labour Party



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Overview

Nominations have now closed in the 2020 Labour leadership contest and five candidates have secured the necessary 22 backers to enter the race: Keir Starmer; Rebecca Long-Bailey; Lisa Nandy; Jess Phillips; and Emily Thornberry.

Over the next three months, each candidate will attempt to galvanise a dispirited and dejected party (having suffered the worst election defeat since 1935) and reconcile the different wings within it.

The winner will face a mammoth task in rebuilding the party following its election defeat, needing to regain its heartland seats, maintain its support in metropolitan areas and strategize in Scotland.

Deadlines

14-16 January: Application period for registered supporters

You do not have to become a full Labour member to have a vote in their leadership contest. The NEC have agreed that individuals who make a one-off payment of £25 will be able to have a vote. This is a significant increase from the £3 fee that was offered in 2015, which was used by around 106,000 people.

15 January - 14 February: Second stage of nominations from Constituency Labour Parties (CLP) and affiliates, including unions

Once the candidate has secured enough backing from their colleagues to join the ballot, they then get the backing of either: 5 percent of Constituency Labour Parties (CLP) (33); or three affiliates which include trade unions and socialist societies formally associated with the party.

NB: Two out of three of the affiliate organisations must be trade unions, giving them a significant role in the contest.

20 January: Freeze date for voting eligibility for new members and affiliated supporters

Anyone wishing to become a member of the Labour Party has until this date to join if they are to have a vote on the next leader. The party operate on a 'one member, one vote' system, but affiliated supporters and registered supporters can also vote. This means that individuals who are members of an affiliated group (trade union or society) can vote, providing they joined the group by 20 January.

21 February: Ballot opens

Individuals with a vote will have the opportunity to vote online or via post. Voters rank candidates in order of preference and the candidate with 50 percent of first preferences is the winner. If no candidate secures 50 percent of first preference votes in the first round, then the candidate with the least support is eliminated and their second preferences allocated to the remaining candidates. This process continues until one candidate secures 50 percent of the vote.

2 April: Ballot closes

4 April: Special conference to announce results

Key dates

13-14 January: Momentum ballots its members

Influential campaign group Momentum will ballot its members on who to formally back for Labour leader. Their steering group have formally recommended Rebecca Long-Bailey for leader. Although they are not an affiliated group, they are influential and were prominent backers of Jeremy Corbyn.

18 January: Official Labour leadership hustings in Liverpool

24 January: Unite executive meeting

Unite the Union executive council will meet to decide which candidate to endorse in the Labour Party contest. It is widely expected that Unite's General Secretary, Len McCluskey will recommend Rebecca Long-Bailey, but this is not confirmed.

25 January: Official Labour leadership hustings in Durham

1 February: Official Labour leadership hustings in Bristol

2 February: Official Labour leadership hustings in Cardiff

9 February: Official Labour leadership hustings in Birmingham

15 February: Official Labour leadership hustings in Glasgow

16 February: Official Labour leadership hustings in London

Candidates

Rebecca Long-Bailey



Profile

Born in Old Trafford, Rebecca Long-Bailey's father worked on the Salford docks and was a trade union representative. She studied politics and sociology at Manchester Metropolitan University, before training as a lawyer and working as a solicitor for the NHS in Manchester.

Long-Bailey is a relative latecomer to both politics and the wider Labour movement - only joining the party in 2010. After an unusually fraught selection process, she won the selection to replace Hazel Blears as MP for Salford and Eccles from an all-female shortlist in 2015. She commanded the backing of the elected Mayor, Ian Stewart, as well as three different trade unions.

In the 2015 Labour leadership election, she backed the more left-wing candidate Jeremy Corbyn, who credited her with being one of the masterminds who got him onto the ballot paper. She was duly rewarded with a role as Shadow Minister for Treasury and replaced Hilary Benn at Labour's National Executive Committee. She was promoted again to Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury after backing Corbyn again through the mass Shadow Cabinet resignations in June 2016.

Following Clive Lewis's resignation from the Shadow Cabinet over Corbyn's whipping of the Article 50 vote, Long-Bailey became Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in 2017. During this period, she was increasingly seen as shadow chancellor John McDonnell's protégé. It was seen as a blow to her leadership campaign when he refused to endorse a candidate.

She lives with fellow shadow-cabinet member Angela Rayner, who she is backing for deputy leadership.

Key interest areas

When she entered Parliament, Long-Bailey's top priority was the NHS, but she said that she would also focus on inequality, unemployment and education in the constituency.

As shadow business secretary Long-Bailey was instrumental in developing Labour's 'Green New Deal'. She argued that the policy did not get the airtime it deserved in the 2019 election and implied that this contributed

to Labour's defeat.

In her Tribune article launching her leadership campaign, she pitched herself as the contender who could be trusted to take forward the party's socialist agenda. However, the article failed to mention either Brexit or Labour's struggle with anti-Semitism. She has since said that Corbyn failed to tackle antisemitism in Labour party and backed a series of pledges set out by the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

Chances of winning

Seen as one of the ones to beat, Long-Bailey offers the most serious challenge to current favourite to win Kier Starmer. Her Corbynist credentials make her popular with the Left of the party keen to take forward the policies of the most recent election. Likely Unite and Momentum backing will also work in her favour, as will strong performances at as a stand-in for Jeremy Corbyn in leadership debates and PMQs.

Having said this, Long-Bailey campaign got off to a slow start. She was dealt an early blow when John McDonnell refused to endorse her and has struggled to shed the image of a 'continuity Corbyn' candidate.

Her odds at Betfair Exchange are currently at 7/2.

Key backers

Andy McDonald, Angela Rayner, Claudia Webbe, Diane Abbott, Ian Lavery, John McDonnell, Kate Osborne, Kim Johnson,

Jess Phillips



Profile

Equal rights campaigner and charity worker Jess Phillips won the Birmingham Yardley seat on behalf of the Labour Party at the 2015 general election, and has gone on to enjoy a unusually high profile for a backbencher.

An independent thinker, she defied the party whip after just two months in Parliament, sponsoring a motion opposing the government's limiting of child benefits to just two children. She gained further notoriety when she shouted "you are a disgrace" at Nicky Morgan when Morgan laughed during a Labour proposal on equal pay in the Commons.

In June 2016, in the wake of the EU referendum, she resigned from her role as PPS to the shadow education secretary, citing concerns that Jeremy Corbyn wasn't offering sufficiently strong opposition. In her resignation letter she said she lived her life as a socialist and apologised to Corbyn if she had taken honest politics too literally.

Key interest areas:

Prior to entering politics, Phillips spent her career working with charities and community organisations. For many years, Phillips worked as a carer for elderly people suffering from Alzheimer's disease and helping families dealing with cancer treatment, and she has also been a Project and Event Manager for Healthlinks.

Phillps was also the Business Development Manager for Sandwell Women's Aid a charity working with victims of domestic and sexual violence and human trafficking.

Chances of winning

Although she should not be ruled out altogether, Phillips is still something of an outsider at 20/1. Her high public profile is both a blessing and a curse in the leadership election, giving both a large platform to project her message, as well as ample opportunity for her detractors to criticise her record.

Conventional logic dictates that the membership's left-leaning membership will be less favourable towards the more centrist Phillips, and she faces an uphill task.

Key backers

Ian Murray MP, Seb Dance MEP, Chris Bryant MP, Rosie Duffield MP,

Emily Thornberry



Profile

Raised on a council estate following the divorce of her parents, Thornberry went to the local secondary modern school followed by a comprehensive in London. Following school, she went on to study Law and was called to the Bar in 1983.

She eventually went on to specialise in criminal defence, human rights, inquests, actions against the police, courts martial and extradition, and appeared in a number of high-profile cases.

Thornberry has previously claimed she joined the Labour Party when she was 17, "to change the world." She was elected to Parliament in 2005 and served in the last year of the Labour Government as Parliamentary Private Secretary to then Minister for Energy and Climate Change.

In November 2014 Thornberry resigned from the opposition frontbench after tweeting a picture of a house in Rochester with three England flags and a white van parked outside, on the eve of the Rochester and Strood by-election. She returned to the shadow front bench in January 2016 as Shadow Secretary of State for Defence, before being promoted to Shadow Foreign Secretary following mass shadow cabinet resignations in June 2016.

Key interest areas:

Since her appointment to Corbyn's cabinet, Thornberry's primary interest has been in security and international affairs. She has made this a core pitch in this leadership race, highlighting how important it is that the next Labour leader has experience in diplomacy given the global challenges the UK faces.

Since joining Parliament she has also been a key advocate for equality, women's rights and climate change.

Chances of winning

Thornberry, whilst a high profile member of the Labour Party, is not expected to win the leadership contest. She has support amongst some members, but this is not obviously widespread. She will have to fight against being another Islington/North London figure but may be hoping to appeal to strong pro EU members.

Key backers

Dawn Butler, Afzal Khan, Chi Onwurah, Meg Hillier, Naz Shah, Nia Griffith

Lisa Nandy



Profile

Nandy was born and raised in Manchester, and politics hails from a political family – her father, Dipak Nandy, is an Indian Marxist and equal rights campaigner, and her maternal grandfather, Frank Byers, was a Liberal Party MP.

She studied politics at Newcastle University and went on to take a master's degree in public policy at the University of London. She was previously a caseworker for Walthamstow MP Neil Gerrard and worked with him on his successful Private Member's Bill to force minicabs to accept booking from customers with guide dogs.

Having sensed that change may be more possible from the outside, Nandy moved to the voluntary sector working as a researcher for Centrepoint, and a senior policy advisor at The Children's Society. Nandy was a Labour councillor in Hammersmith and Fulham between 2006 – 2010. First elected in 2010 to represent Wigan, she has undertaken a number of shadow cabinet positions, and was most recently appointed shadow energy secretary, but resigned in June 2016. Nandy also co-founded the think tank Centre for Towns in 2018, which defines itself as an independent non-partisan organisation that is dedicated to providing research and analysis of towns.

Key interest areas:

Nandy is well-known as an outspoken advocate of towns, arguing that there is overwhelming economic focus on cities. She is so well-known that she has become a twitter meme sensation, with an entire twitter page dedicated to showcasing her love of towns. Further to this, Nandy asserted that hustings should be held in the communities within which the Party needs to reconnect and win back.

She has previously presented a Ten-Minute Rule Bill to ensure that the Government only support ethical business practices in developing countries, and also opposes free schools. Nandy has previously asserted that she would like to see education returned to a local authority umbrella, and campaigns for universal free childcare. Nandy emphasises the need for community empowerment.

She also has interest in refugees, having previously chaired the Refugee Children's Consortium and being active in Parliament on the matter, and poverty, having published several reports in this area.

Chances of winning

The Week has reported that this week's bookmaker odds have Nandy at 8/1 whilst last week The Times reported that her odds of winning were 6/1. A recent YouGov poll, the first poll for the Labour leadership election suggested that she was the first preference of just 6 per cent of members.

Nandy has approached unions such as Unite, GMB and CWU for support, however The Times has reported that she may struggle to garner union support. A grassroots campaign of Young Labour members has set up a twitter account Young Labour for Lisa to garner support for her.

Key backers

Nandy has managed to win the support of some high figures such as Jon Ashworth MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Health; Louise Haigh MP, Shadow Minister for Policing; Lord Kinnock; Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester; Jon Cruddas MP.

Keir Starmer



Profile

Former Director of Public Prosecution, Keir Starmer held the safe seat of Holborn and St Pancras for Labour in 2015. He took up a role on the Labour frontbench within four months, covering the home affairs portfolio. He resigned nine months later following the result of the EU referendum, arguing that the 'catastrophic result' made the challenges for the leadership different than they were before. He returned to the frontbench four months after as Shadow Secretary for Brexit. Passionate Remainer, he has fought hard to change the party's position on Brexit, advocating for a second referendum.

He is running for leadership on a platform of social justice and workers' rights. The film of his campaign covers his track record of standing for print workers at Wapping, mineworkers, dockers in Dover and his legal work in the cases of poll tax protesters, Stephen Lawrence's murder, the hacking scandal, asylum seekers' benefits and Shell's plans to sink the Brent Spar oil platform.

In his bid for leadership, he argued that the party should not "trash" the Corbyn years, claiming that the free-market model was indeed a failure and the trickle down did not happen; he also backed higher taxes on the wealthiest. He said he supports the nationalisation of rail but refused to commit to energy, water and the post services, in a break with Corbyn's policy.

Key interest areas

His legal career shows his dedication for workers' right, against the death penalty, supporting environmentalism and asylum seekers. As an MP, he called for journalists to have a 'public interest' defence in legal terms so that they would be protected chasing a story if it was publicly relevant. Conservative MPs said this was a u-turn as in his previous job he has prosecuted journalists, mostly to no conviction.

In advance of the free vote on the Assisted Dying Bill, he wrote a piece in The Huffington Post calling for MPs to support the bill, saying that as Director of Public Prosecutions he was involved in writing the guidelines on assisted suicide by loved ones, and that he felt it needed updating to include professional medical assistance.

Chances of winning

According to a poll by Yougov on 2 January, Keir Starmer is most likely contender to become the new Labour leader. 36 percent of the membership said their top preference was Keir Starmer, 13 points ahead of Rebecca Long Bailey on 23 percent.

Key backers

Ed Miliband, Hilary Benn, David Lammy, Margaret Beckett, Helen Hayes, John Healey, Jonathan Reynolds, Angela Eagle, Ben Bradshaw, Seema Malhotra.



Essential information and connections

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