

YOUNG FINE GAEL

Young Fine Gael Women's Network

TERMS OF REFERENCE





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Foreword

From the Director of Engagement, Inclusion and Diversity and co-Exec liaison to the Women's Network: **Emily Larkin**

Following on from the crucial document of my predecessor "Building an Inclusive Island", it was critical to ensure that there was a long-term strategy in place for the Women's Network within the organisation in order to ensure the longevity of the Network.

The National Executive decided for a member-led approach to the Network for increased member input, work and ideas. This also meant that there were opportunities for leadership roles for women within the organisation, putting into practice our aims and ethos of the network. The Women's Network has been highly successful, hard-working and passionate—ensuring that women's voices are heard throughout the organisation of Young Fine Gael, something which I am proud to be a part of.

I hope this document will be used as a guided structure for many future Women's Networks, and I wish them every success in this endeavour as we need more women involved in politics and YFG for equal representation. The current committee will be putting forth a constitutional amendment to ensure the women's network is a constitutionally required committee of the organisation, solidifying the importance and role women should play in the organisation, meaning the Young Fine Gael Women's Network will no longer be a discretionary courtesy by the executive but a constitutional requirement to the membership.

I hope the Network is a safe space for women to talk about the continuing struggles and challenges that face us, as well as an opportunity for them to grow, learn and network with other female members within the organisation. The Network has truly been one of the highlights of my term as Director of Engagement, Inclusion and Diversity, and I look forward to watching it go from strength to strength.

Emily Larkin



From the North West Regional Organiser and co-exec liaison of the Women's Network: **Susan Bannigan**

When I decided to put my name forward for North West Regional Organiser, I wanted to not only develop branches in my region but also promote female engagement within YFG as a whole. I believe that the YFG Women's Network is an important way in which this aim can be achieved. Myself and Emily Larkin worked together as exec liaisons to select a member led committee for the network. We felt that a member led structure would be the most effective way to allow the voices and opinions of female members to be heard.

In the last number of months, the Women's Network has completed very impressive work, particularly in the context of the COVID 19 pandemic, and there will definitely be more excellent work to come. I believe that this network will play a vital role in encouraging and empowering female members to run for leadership positions on both branch committees and the National Executive of this organisation. The network is also a safe space in which female members can collaborate and share ideas with each other. I sincerely hope that the YFG Women's Network and the excellent work that it does will continue on after my tenure on the National Executive comes to an end. Being involved in this network has undoubtedly been one of the highlights of my term and I am looking forward to seeing its continued growth in the future.

Susan Bannigan





Structure of the Women's Network

Aims and Rationale of the Women's Network

The overarching aims and rationale of the Women's Network is:

- 1.1 For women to have a strong presence in the organisation and for female members to feel included and supported by other women in YFG through the entity of this Network.
- 1.2 To ensure that women's issues are at the forefront of YFG campaigns, policies, strategies and minds of members for better awareness and understanding of the difficulties still facing women in politics.
- 1.3 That women can meet other women through informal social events and be able to network and build friendships and relationships with other like-minded women in the organisation.
- 1.4 To encourage and support women who wish to run for positions in the organisation, in particular to the YFG National Executive for better national representation.
- 1.5 To hold training, informative events and workshops to educate, empower and support the women in the organisation, particularly those who wish to become involved in politics further or run for election.
- 1.6 To ensure the retention of female members in the organisation as well as the recruitment of more women to the organisation with planning and strategies in place from the Network's Committee to achieve this.
- 1.7 For women to gain as much experience as possible in leadership roles on the Committee and beyond and to be able to work as a team in decision making, the organising of events and the communication of the message of the network.
- 1.8 To make YFG a more welcoming, inclusive and better place for women in politics and to ensure it is more attractive for women to stay involved in politics and run for election with a positive, encouraging and empowering atmosphere.



Structure of the Women's Network

Structure

- 2.1 The Women's Network Committee is a member-led Committee of the National Executive with the aim and purpose being to promote women's participation and engagement in the party with events, workshops and social gatherings.
- 2.2 The Women's Network shall comprise of one: Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Public Relations Officer, Policy Officer, Events Officer and National Executive Liaison.
- 2.3 It is at the discretion of the National Executive and President if there will be two co-executive liaisons for the Network.
- 2.4 The Structure of the YFG Women's Network is separate from the senior party Women's Network.

Applications and Appointments

- 3.1 All applications or co-options of the Network shall be made through an open application process, which shall be available for any female registered member of YFG who is interested in applying to the Committee with a minimum of one week to complete and send in the application process.
- 3.2 The YFG President, Vice-President, and National Executive Liaison shall recommend to the National Executive the most suitable candidate for Chairperson, which may be approved or rejected by majority vote. In the event that the National Executive rejects this recommendation, a further recommendation shall be submitted until approval is sought.
- 3.3 The Network Committee shall then be selected by the Chairperson and the National Executive Liaison, after consulting and approving the appointments with the YFG President and Vice-President.
- 3.4 The Chairperson may co-opt up to three additional positions to the Committee. Co-options shall be approved between the Committee by majority vote.
- 3.5 A member may apply for the Committee as many times as they wish for their preferred position.
- 3.6 A member can only serve for a total of three terms, consecutively or cumulatively.

Term

- 4.1 Upon the election of a National Executive, the Executive shall appoint a National Executive Liaison to the Committee, who shall be a female member of the Executive.
- 4.2 The term of the Committee shall coincide with the term of the National Executive.
- 4.3 The appointment of the National Executive Liaison shall, as far as practicable, be made within the first 30 days of the Executive's term to ensure that there is a swift transition to allow the Committee to start their work and planning for the term.
- 4.4 The Chairperson of the outgoing Network shall, as far as practicable, provide a handover document to the incoming Chairperson.
- 4.5 The Committee shall produce and present a Term Plan to the National Executive of Young Fine Gael to be included in the Executive's constitutionally required term plan document.



Activity of the Network and Committee

- 5.1 All planning shall be through the official group chat or preferred system of communication created by the National Executive Liaison and or chairperson in order to ensure that all Committee members have a medium of communication.
- 5.2 The Chairperson shall, as far as practicable, provide one week's notice of a Committee meeting.
- 5.3 The Committee shall meet once a month in order to ensure that the Committee is active in planning, policy, events and decision making on behalf of the members of YFG. In the reasonable absence of the Chairperson, the Vice-Chair shall take their place. It is advised that there should be a prearranged timeframe for the monthly meetings (e.g. The First Monday of every month)
- 5.4 The Committee shall endeavour, as far as practicable, to hold a minimum of six events throughout the term with a mix of social gatherings, workshops and informative events where appropriate. The geography and timing of events shall be taken into reasonable consideration when planning events so as to make it fair for members all over the country to attend events and make them more accessible.
- 5.5 The Committee shall endeavour, as far as practicable, to provide a wide variety of events such as social gatherings, networking events, teambuilding or bonding days, training which could be provided by internal members of the wider party and or external organisations and peoples. As well as this, other appropriate events include guest speakers, panel discussions, open floor discussions, celebratory or historical events of women in Ireland or around the world.
- 5.6 In the event of the resignation or removal of the Chairperson, the selection procedure laid out in 2.2 shall be followed to select a new Chairperson after open applications, which current members of the Committee may apply for.
- 5.7 In the event of the resignation or removal of any Committee member, except for the Chairperson or the National Executive Liaison Officer, the selection procedure laid out in 2.3 shall be followed. This procedure will only apply where the resignation results in the current composition of the Committee being unable to satisfy the positions required under 1.2.

Authorisation of Work

- 6.1 All decisions of the Committee shall be made by majority vote and adhere to general principles of fair procedure and democracy. Each member of the Committee shall have one vote. In the event of a tie, the National Executive Liaison shall have the casting vote. Any decision shall be collectively agreed and confirmed by the Committee before action is taken.
- 6.2 Any form of policy document, press release, budget, event or interview, where appropriate, should give the Executive notice. Social media posts shall, as far as practicable, be confirmed through the agreed system of communication as referenced in section 4.1.
- 6.3 Any external emails outside the party on behalf of the Network should cc the National Youth Officer, National Executive Liaison and Chairperson of the Network for clear communication and to keep the necessary people informed of the networks moves as they are representing the entire women's network.

Executive Updates

- 7.1 The Chairperson of the Network shall compile a brief and coherent update for the Liaison to present on behalf of the Committee at all National Executive meetings.
- 7.2 Where an update or scenario is time sensitive, the Chairperson should contact the National Executive Liaison if the matter requires the National Executive to be updated as soon as possible.
- 7.3 Any information that is relevant to the Network from the executive should be passed to the Committee by the National Executive Liaison



Note

From the Chairperson of the Women's Network: **Lucy Roche**

In my six years of being a member of YFG, this is the first time that real action has taken place to encourage more women to become active in YFG. This is crucial for a variety of reasons, but most importantly because these young women are the future of our party.

The Women's Network was set-up by Emily and Susan to ensure that the lack of female participation and roles in leadership would be addressed. We have only been established since May 2020, but in that time we have achieved a lot given the current circumstances.

The Women's Network has held four events to date, including key speakers such as former Tánaiste and current MEP, Frances Fitzgerald and current Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee. Two webinars were organised on giving career advice to members on working as a local councillor and political roles in Brussels. We organised a coffee morning fundraiser that saw over 1000 euro raised for Women's Aid in collaboration with the Fine Gael Women's Network. We have established a mentoring programme to encourage and provide guidance to female members who intend on running for the National Executive.

The foundation has been put in place to ensure that the Women's Network will be given every opportunity to be successful in engaging young women in politics going forward. It has been an absolute honour to chair and lead the very first Women's Network committee.

Lucy Roche

Chairperson

Composition of the Women's Network 2020-2021

Chairperson: Lucy Roche

Vice Chairperson: Sinéad Bolger

Secretary: Rosemary Cushion

Treasurer: Laura Forkin

PRO: Niamh Bakker

Policy Officer: Sarah Canavan

Events Officer: Emily MicTigue

Membership Officer: Chloe Kennedy

Election Officer: Vivienne Phelan

National Executive Liaisons: Emily Larkin and Susan Bannigan

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