

# NETWORK

THE BIMONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR USDAW ACTIVISTS | JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2022

## HOW SAFE DO YOU FEEL WORKING LATE?

GOVERNMENT AGREES TO  
PROTECT SHOPWORKERS



# Usdaw Speaking Up For Parents & Carers

**save the date**  
**Wednesday 18 May**

This year **Spotlight Day** is celebrating the amazing work Usdaw reps and officers are doing, day in day out, to win a better deal for working parents and carers as well as raising awareness of their rights at work.

**Look out for your Spotlight Day campaign pack arriving early March and get your orders in by Friday 1 April.**



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# NEW YEAR STARTS ON OPTIMISTIC NOTE

**W**e start the new year in a slightly better place than was predicted a few weeks ago. Although the Omicron variant presents significant challenges for us all, there are encouraging signs that infections are falling across the country and hospital admissions are plateauing. But we cannot get complacent as Covid-19 is still a very serious disease with unknown outcomes for those who catch it.

At the time of writing, the Prime Minister announced the removal of Plan B restrictions. I hope that the decision to remove restrictions is led by science rather than the Prime Minister trying to detract attention away from Partygate, another scandal engulfing the Conservatives.

For Usdaw, the safety of our members is of the utmost importance and we will continue to work with employers to ensure our members health and safety continues to be prioritised in all workplaces.

After a decade of lobbying, the Government has finally accepted the need for legislation to protect shopworkers, in England and Wales, from violence at work. This is fantastic news for our reps and members who worked tirelessly to raise awareness, tell their stories and helped us keep it on the political agenda year after year.

Our recent Cost of Living

**When you have finished with this magazine, give it to a workmate.**



survey found that Usdaw members were skipping meals to make ends meet or they were struggling to heat their homes. Despite coming under pressure from trade unions to address the cost of living crisis we are still waiting for the Government to announce measures that might help working people struggling at this very moment.

In the meantime, Usdaw will continue calling for the National Minimum Wage to be immediately increased to at least £10 per hour for all workers, for workers to be given a right to a normal hours contract, job security, an end to zero-hour contracts and better sick pay.

If 'build back better' means anything, it will be centred on fairness at work.

*Usdaw General Secretary*

*Paddy Lillis*

You may be a rep or branch official and have been in your role for many years or have just started.

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 **USDAW**

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Don't forget to email the editor your view [network@usdaw.org.uk](mailto:network@usdaw.org.uk)

## TORIES DITCH MASKS FOR ENGLAND

**T**he Government has ended mandatory wearing of face coverings in shops in England.

General secretary Paddy Lillis said: "We are deeply concerned that the decision to again end mandatory face coverings in shops is more to do with saving the Prime Minister's job than covid safety. They have been throwing 'red meat' to Tory backbenchers all week, trying to shore up support for the PM, and this is their latest attempt.

"It beggars belief that the Government chose to dismiss the concerns of our members and many workers who are desperately worried about restrictions being lifted while case numbers remain high. We understand that the Government has to scale back 'Plan B', but surely this should be done in a more measured and gradual manner.

"The Government could have eased existing restrictions while maintaining safety measures in businesses that have been open throughout the pandemic, like supermarkets. Face coverings, hand hygiene



and social distancing had pretty much become the norm in retail, but constantly changing the rules is unhelpful.

"The Government has again decided that important safety measures to protect staff and customers are now a matter of personal choice. They have subcontracted responsibility for safety out to the public, which is a recipe for confusion and covid. Protection for

retail workers through wearing face coverings and maintaining social distancing in busy public areas like shops should be backed up by the law.

"We urge the shopping public to show their support and respect for shopworkers by continuing to wear a face covering, observe hand hygiene and maintain social distancing when in store. Many retail workers are at a greater risk of

catching the virus and bringing it home to their families. They have worked throughout the pandemic to keep the country fed and deserve to be valued, respected and protected."



## NEW DEAL FOR WORKERS

# USDAW RENEWS CALL TO REFORM SICK PAY



Usdaw is once again calling on the Government to reform Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) to support workers who need to take time off work, particularly during a pandemic.

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: "Usdaw has long called for significant improvements to SSP and even though the Government acknowledged the need in 2019 nothing has changed. With some companies changing contractual sick pay policies, it is even more important that the Government ensures there is a proper safety net for those workers who are required to take time off work to help prevent the spread of Covid-19.

"Statutory sick pay is simply not enough to survive on and workers earning less than £120 per week aren't entitled to any statutory sick pay at all. People who are ill shouldn't be worrying about their finances, and they shouldn't be forced into work due to worries about paying their bills. Sick pay needs to be paid from day one, at an individual's normal rate of pay, and it should be paid to all workers.

"Millions of low-paid workers have provided essential services to help ensure the country is fed, healthy and safe throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

Usdaw members employed in supermarkets, the food supply chain, pharmaceutical distribution and the funeral industry welcomed their key worker status, but that respect and appreciation must not fade into the background when this national crisis passes.

"There must be lasting and fundamental change to the way society views all workers. We need a New Deal for Workers: a minimum wage of at least £10 per hour immediately, an end to insecure employment, respect for shopworkers and action to ensure that retail jobs are no longer underpaid and undervalued."

## NEW YEAR'S HONOURS

# USDAW REP AWARDED BRITISH EMPIRE MEDAL

Usdaw rep Claire Saunders from Romford in Essex has been awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) in recognition of her services to retail along with her campaigning to prevent violence, threats and abuse against shopworkers. Claire has spoken out about abuse on behalf of Usdaw and the Co-op to promote respect for shopworkers.

Claire Saunders BEM said: "I'm really pleased and honoured to

receive this award, it shows that our campaign is getting the recognition it deserves and most importantly it raises awareness of the appalling abuse key workers across retail have to face often on a daily basis.

"I'd like to thank my union Usdaw and my employer the Co-op for all the advice, support and opportunities to speak out in the media on this important issue, which is so dear to my heart."

General secretary Paddy Lillis said: "We are very proud that Claire has received this prestigious award. Claire has often been a voice from the frontline in the media as part of Usdaw's 'Freedom from Fear' campaign, talking about what life is like working in a convenience store. We congratulate Claire on her achievement and thank her for the service she has given to Usdaw and our members."

**PAY DEAL**

# £10 PER HOUR FOR SAINSBURY'S/ARGOS PAY

Usdaw has achieved at least £10 per hour basic rate for Sainsbury's and Argos shopworkers in a ground-breaking deal. The offer is another step forward for the union's New Deal for Workers campaign.

Usdaw national officer Dave Gill said: "For some time we have been in discussions with Sainsbury's about increasing retail staff pay to at least £10 an hour, as we call for in our New Deal for Workers campaign. So I am pleased that Sainsbury's are able to implement this new hourly rate, a rise that achieves that goal and takes most staff beyond the real

living wage.

"This increase is one of the leading rates of the major supermarkets. It is a big step forward and shows that the company are prepared to invest in the staff to help grow the business.

"It's been a tough time for food retail staff who have worked throughout the pandemic in difficult circumstances. They provide the essential service of keeping the nation fed and



deserve our support, respect and appreciation. Most of all they deserve decent pay and this offer is a welcome boost."

**SPECULATION OF SALE**

# BOOTS CONSIDERING £10BN SALE OF BUSINESS

Usdaw is seeking assurances for members working in Boots, the iconic health and beauty retailer and pharmacy chain, after reports emerged that the parent company is considering putting the business on the market next year.

US retail giant Walgreens Boots Alliance, which has owned a stake in the pharmacy chain since 2012, is said to be lining up advisers from Goldman Sachs to explore a

potential sale of the pharmacy with a valuation of £10 billion.

However, the process is thought to be solely exploratory and may not lead to the sale of the 172 year old firm.

Usdaw national officer Daniel Adams said: "We note that the company declined to comment on speculation, but acknowledged that the group's strategic direction 'includes a more pointed focus on

North America and on healthcare'.

"Boots workers are key workers delivering essential services and worked throughout the pandemic. They have contributed to the strong operation of Boots and the growth of its retail and pharmacy arms.

"This is an unsettling time for our members and we are seeking assurances from the company over the future of the business and job security."

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## IN BRIEF

### ALDI

Aldi opened its first checkout-free supermarket where people can complete their shop and pay without going to a till. The grocer is operating a trial store in Greenwich, London, and follows similar moves by Tesco, Sainsbury's and Amazon.

### NEXT

High Street giant Next has said it will raise prices to offset higher wages and manufacturing costs. Next, which reported strong sales over Christmas, said its prices would increase by up to six per cent in 2022.

### MARKS AND SPENCER

Marks and Spencer was the UK's fastest-growing food retailer in the run-up to Christmas, according to an independent report carried out by NielsenIQ.

## MEMBERSHIP

### FOR WEEK ENDED 15 JANUARY 2022

South Wales & Western	43,076
Eastern	52,765
Midlands	49,155
North Eastern	51,147
Scottish	38,114
Southern	52,762
North West	80,366
<b>Total</b>	<b>367,385</b>

## STRIKE AVERTED

# TESCO DISTRIBUTION PAY DEAL



Usdaw members overwhelmingly accepted a much-improved pay offer in nine Tesco distribution centres.

Two ballots of over 5,000 members took place in December, with nearly 90 per cent accepting the improved offer. The new deal of 5.5 per cent will be backdated to July and staff will receive a further 0.5 per cent at the end of February.

The two ballots involved drivers and warehouse workers at nine Tesco distribution centres in: Daventry Clothing, Goole, Hinckley, Lichfield, Livingston, Magor (both trunk and

main sites), Peterborough and Southampton.

Usdaw national officer Joanne McGuniness said: "Having secured by negotiation this improved offer, following the threat of strike action, we are pleased that our members have overwhelmingly supported it.

"Retail distribution drivers and warehouse staff are key workers who delivered essential services throughout the pandemic. They deserve this pay rise and it is through our members' strength and solidarity that we've been able to achieve it."

## LABOUR LEADER OPENS NEW HEAD OFFICE



Paddy Lillis with Keir Starmer

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis welcomed Keir Starmer to the opening of Usdaw's new head office in Salford Quays and said: "After a hundred years, the union made the extremely difficult decision to move its headquarters from Fallowfield.

"In recent years as the union has

grown and embraced new technology it was clear that Usdaw needed a modern head office environment that would allow it to evolve and grow for decades to come.

"The new office facilities and transport connections are fantastic and I look forward to welcoming reps to our new head office."

# GENERAL SECRETARY PADDY LILLIS SETS HIS PRIORITIES

Paddy Lillis talks about how the pandemic has made people around the world reassess their relationship with work to demand better pay and conditions.

**U**sdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis has overseen one of the most tumultuous periods in Usdaw's history since assuming the role in 2018. Usdaw's priorities have been upturned by the pandemic but the union continued to support reps and members and made some notable gains in their Freedom From Fear campaign.

The interview took place in mid-January against the backdrop of the Omicron variant tearing through the country, shortages in every industry, rising hospitalisations and the looming cost of living crisis.

## What do you think trade unions achieved during the pandemic?

When covid first hit and the country went into lockdown, it was trade unions that lobbied the Government to ensure that the concerns of workers were taken into account when policy decisions were made. Our lobbying resulted in key worker status for the majority of our members, the furlough scheme which provided 80 per cent support for employees who were temporarily laid off and prevented millions of redundancies.

We worked closely with employers to ensure improved safety measures were implemented in workplaces with enhanced social distancing, plastic screens and limiting the number of customers in stores. We also won 10 per cent pay bonuses, sick pay from day one, shielding for vulnerable colleagues and enhanced colleague discounts.

## What is Usdaw doing to address falling membership?

We are a member facing union so not being able to see our reps and members was a huge challenge. Like organisations all around the world, we had to go digital almost overnight. Thankfully, the union had already started this journey and we were able to use technology to stay in touch and communicate with our reps and members. We were able to provide advice and representation to members as well as support and training for our reps.

Saying this, the last two years have been incredibly tough for recruitment because every company we work with was firefighting the pandemic on a daily basis. We were involved in discussion and negotiations with both employers and the Government. Inevitably, recruitment took a hit because covid restrictions made it more difficult to access inductions and our academy and stand down programmes were also cancelled. Reps have been fantastic but were run off their feet supporting members, ensuring workplaces were safe as well as dealing with the impact of covid on themselves and their families.

As things return to some kind of normality the union will once again be prioritising recruitment through our Membership Weeks, the academies and standdown. A large part of our work will include supporting and developing our reps and making sure every rep knows how to recruit and has the

confidence to do it. Recruitment is important for Usdaw delivering improved pay, terms and conditions. The more members we have the stronger we are.

## How has the pandemic affected the trade union and labour movement?

Lockdown provided people with an opportunity to step back, reflect and reassess their priorities. Millions found that they were in jobs where they were underpaid and undervalued, others found that loyalty to a company meant nothing and that they were dispensable, and many realised it was possible to have a better work-life balance.

This led to the Great Resignation, the recent phenomenon where millions of people have quit their jobs post-pandemic. Labour shortages caused by resignations and supply chain issues have for the first time in decades given workers the upper hand and they are using it to demand better pay and conditions all around the world.

Workers across the globe are sick and tired of stagnating pay, long hours, deteriorating terms and conditions and little flexibility. In the UK, we have seen signs of increased industrial action involving rail workers, civil servants, bin workers, lecturers and Usdaw members in Weetabix, BCM and Tesco distribution.

In recent years, it's been easy to forget just how much trade unions have achieved. It was trade unions





*Paddy with Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar and Scottish Labour MSP Daniel Johnson at Co-op Dennistoun, Glasgow in August, highlighting the new offence of abusing shopworkers which came into effect in Scotland in August 2021.*

that fought for and won a minimum wage, maternity and paternity rights, pension provisions, weekends off, holidays, the right not to be sacked for taking time off due to illness, sick pay, flexible working and workplace health and safety. Trade unions didn't just help reshape the modern workplace - they were also at the forefront of social justice movements such as the fight for equal rights.

Following the pandemic, we can once again be at the forefront, demanding change and a fairer more equal society.

## What are your priorities for 2022?

### New Deal for Workers

Workers in retail, distribution and many other low-paid industries have shown just how vital they are to keeping the UK economy going during a time of extreme pressure. As we emerge from the pandemic, these key workers must not be forgotten.

Our recent Cost of Living survey found that spiralling inflation and

rising fuel, energy and food prices were pushing many household budgets to breaking point. Usdaw members were skipping meals to make ends meet or they were struggling to heat their homes. It is only right that they receive a pay rise that is enough to live on.

Recently we negotiated a £10 per hour pay deal for shopworkers in Sainsbury's and Argos. And a deal in IKEA to pay more than the Living Wage.

Ushaw will continue calling for the National Minimum Wage to be immediately increased to at least £10 per hour for all workers, for workers to be given a right to a normal hours contract, job security, an end to zero-hour contracts and better sick pay.

### Freedom From Fear

Our recent survey results showed that over 90 per cent of retail workers have been abused in the last 12 months and one in seven have been physically assaulted. It's completely unacceptable that our members who worked throughout

the pandemic should suffer this level of abuse.

Thanks to Usdaw's campaigning and the amazing work reps and members did in highlighting this problem through the media last year, Scottish MSPs voted through a new ground-breaking law to give shopworkers the protection they deserve, which came into force in August 2021.

Also, the UK Government has finally agreed to stronger legislation in England and Wales, that could lead to stiffer sentences for those who assault shopworkers, which should come into force this year and we will be monitoring closely its effectiveness.

### Mental Health

We conducted a survey last year asking members about the impact working through the pandemic had on their mental health. Unsurprisingly, we found high levels of stress and anxiety amongst members, with younger members the worst affected. This year we will continue to prioritise supporting



Shadow minister for mental health Dr Rosena Allin Khan with Paddy at the Labour Party Conference in September.

reps who want to raise awareness of members' rights at work via workplace-based campaigning and ensure members whose mental health is affected by work receive the right support.

### Looking ahead to the next general election, why is it crucial we have a Labour government?

The pandemic exposed and exacerbated the inequalities that already existed in our society. It showed how people experienced the pandemic was determined by their age, their race, whether they had a disability, how rich they were and where they lived in the world.

Millions of people saw that while their lives got harder, the rich got richer, government contracts went to cronies of the Conservative Party and 'one rule for us and one rule for them' became a mantra when it came to light that those making the lockdown rules were breaking them without consequences.

That's why we need a government that is on the side of workers. One that listens to and understands the

issues facing them in their daily lives. One that will strengthen workers' rights and not erode them, one that will invest in the NHS, in education, childcare and affordable housing. We need a government that will invest in a fairer society and a social security system that supports people rather than punishes them.

And one that will tackle the challenges that are coming such as automation and climate change. Only Labour will deliver the change we need.

### What can we do to campaign for a Labour government?

The first thing we need to do is to take an interest in politics. We need to understand how political decisions affect us, our families and communities. Once we are aware of this, we can try to effect change by getting involved in local politics through Usdaw or the Labour Party.

Ushaw members, especially those who've been shop stewards or branch officials, possess transferable skills that would make them ideal candidates for political

activists, councillors and even MPs. Getting working people involved in politics is the best way to secure change.

### Is there anything you would like to say to the reps?

Talking to reps, I have been amazed at their dedication. I have heard of reps who kept their phones on 24/7 and took calls in the middle of the night to support distressed members. Reps who are clinically vulnerable refusing to shield because they wanted to work alongside their colleagues. Reps have stayed on the frontline despite being worried about their own mental and physical health. And, many of our reps somehow still found the time and energy to volunteer, raise money for charity and check up on friends and neighbours.

They were doing all this at the same time as they were dealing with their own pain and loss. I want to thank them for everything they have done for their colleagues and their communities.

# CAMPAIGNS

Keeping you up-to-date on Usdaw's priorities

## ONE STEP CLOSER TO PROTECTION

In December 2021, general secretary Paddy Lillis met justice secretary Dominic Raab, along with leading retailers, to discuss the Government's plans for legislation to protect workers from violence, threats and abuse at work.

After years of opposition to Usdaw's campaign for a new law to protect shopworkers, the Government decided to amend the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill in the House of Lords.

This is a step in the right direction but Usdaw is seeking for the Government to go further than putting into statute existing sentencing guidance. The matter was raised in the House of Commons during Justice Questions, and Usdaw's call received cross-party support.

Robert Halfon MP (Conservative, Harlow) asked for shopworkers to have the same protections as NHS workers and shadow justice minister Afzal Khan (Labour, Manchester Gorton) called on ministers to extend the new Scottish protection of shopworkers law to the rest of the UK.

### BACKGROUND

This concession from the Government is the culmination of two decades' worth of campaigning by the union.

Usdaw's Freedom From Fear campaign was set up to raise awareness of the violence, threats and abuse experienced by shopworkers and also campaigned for a specific law to

protect shopworkers.

Over the past few years, the union saw an alarming increase in the levels of abuse and violence towards shopworkers. Despite the heroic efforts of retail workers and delivery drivers during the pandemic, the crisis resulted in a significant and disturbing increase in abuse, threats and violence towards retail workers. During the height of the coronavirus pandemic retail workers were spat at, threatened with being infected with coronavirus and physically assaulted by customers while trying to provide an essential service in very difficult circumstances.

### FREEDOM FROM FEAR SURVEY

Usdaw's Freedom From Fear 2021 survey showed why new legislation was imperative. Interim results from nearly 3,500 retail staff showed that in the last 12 months:

- 89 per cent have experienced verbal abuse.
- 64 per cent were threatened by a customer.
- 11 per cent were assaulted.
- 46 per cent said they were not confident that reporting abuse, threats and violence will make a difference.

### PARLIAMENTARY PETITION

In light of the continued increase in violence and abuse towards shopworkers and the appalling situation they faced leading up to and throughout the pandemic, Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis launched a House of Commons petition to lobby the Government

to protect retail staff. The union called on the Government to create a specific offence of abusing, threatening or assaulting a retail worker with a penalty that acts as a deterrent and makes clear that abuse of retail workers is unacceptable.

The petition gained widespread media attention in national and regional news outlets when it was launched in August 2020 with Usdaw officials and reps making over 80 appearances on TV and radio.

The petition was the most successful ever run by the union and showed clear public support for a new law. It was also backed by major retailers and bodies such as the British Retail Consortium. The petition secured over 100,000 signatures, enough to trigger a debate in Parliament.

### PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE

In June 2021, the union's petition was debated in Parliament. Ahead of the debate, thousands of members emailed their MPs, sharing their experiences of violence and abuse at work and ensuring that the campaign to protect shopworkers was top of the agenda.

The debate, and Usdaw's Freedom From Fear campaign was supported by MPs from all major political parties.

On the same day as the debate, Parliament's influential Home Affairs Committee published the findings of their own survey highlighting the scale of the problems faced by retail workers. This survey, which received



Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis with MSP Daniel Johnson and Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar championing the new law protecting shopworkers in Scotland

over 12,000 responses, many from Usdaw members, found that only 12 per cent of incidents reported to the police led to an arrest. Furthermore, only one in five shopworkers who reported incidents of abuse or violence were satisfied with how the police or their employer responded.

Ultimately, the Government's response to the debate was disappointing. Despite overwhelming evidence and support from MPs, the Government's spokesperson declined to offer support for a change in the law to better protect shopworkers.

However, the positive debate helped to build momentum and raise awareness of the issues Usdaw members were facing.

## NEW LAW PROTECTING SHOPWORKERS IN SCOTLAND

In January 2021, the Scottish Parliament unanimously voted for a ground-breaking new law to protect shopworkers. The new law came into effect later that year in August 2021 and made it an offence to abuse threaten or assault a retail worker, sending a clear message that abuse is not part of the job.

In February 2021, 66 senior retail leaders wrote to the Prime Minister urging his government to create a similar offence for the rest of the UK.

## POLICE AND CRIME SENTENCING BILL

As a direct result of the parliamentary debate triggered by Usdaw's petition and the report published by the Home Affairs Select Committee, an amendment was tabled for the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill which was in the committee stage at Parliament.

The amendment to the bill would see new laws passed so that violence and abuse against retail workers would finally become a specific crime in the UK – similar to the new law passed by the Scottish Parliament.

In November 2021, the Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill was debated in the House of Lords and despite cross-party support from Peers the Government, at first, refused to back two protection of shopworkers amendments before doing a late night U-turn and agreeing to amend the bill. This U-turn resulted in a meeting with justice secretary Dominic Raab.

General secretary Paddy Lillis said: "After years of campaigning we are pleased to have secured movement from the Government and that they have finally accepted the need to legislate to protect

shopworkers from violence at work.

"Usdaw members working in retail have for too long been in the firing line of appalling behaviour from a significant minority of customers. Nine in ten shopworkers have faced abuse in the last year, with far too many also suffering threats and violence. A protection of shopworkers law is long overdue, this could be a step in the right direction, but we still think the Government could go further.

"Usdaw has been campaigning on this issue for more than a decade and our Freedom From Fear campaign ensured that the issue of violence and abuse towards retail workers remained at the top of the political agenda. Our extensive research, and the incredible efforts of our reps in delivering this campaign in workplaces and communities across the country, as well as the support from Usdaw members for this campaign, has driven it forwards and shown that the Government needs to take urgent action."

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## LEVELLING UP REPORT

# REVIEW CRUCIAL ON COVID IMPACT ON HIGH ST

The cross-party House of Commons Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee report published in December 2021 includes recommendations which:

- Call for the full 'lessons learned' review on the high streets to be conducted immediately, ahead of the main independent Covid-19 inquiry.
- Support the principle of an online sales tax.
- Call for the Government to move away from competitive bidding processes for town regeneration schemes and shift to greater local devolution of funding.

General secretary Paddy Lillis said: "We very much welcome this significant intervention by MPs from across the House of Commons, which largely backs the retail recovery plan that Usdaw has called for throughout the pandemic.

"Three million people are employed directly in the retail sector, and another 1.5 million jobs rely on the success of shops. In recent years, hundreds of thousands of jobs have been lost in retail, with large and small retailers alike closing their doors. Every shop that closes impacts negatively on local communities and our town centres. You only have to walk down any high street to see how the retail sector has been impacted by the pandemic, which heightened the difficulties retail already faced.

"We urgently need to level the playing field between online and bricks-and-mortar retail, something Usdaw and many major retailers have called on the Government to do, now also backed by the select committee. A one per cent online sales levy could raise around £1.5 billion and fund a 20 per cent

cut in the current outdated and imbalanced commercial property tax.

"Through the Retail Sector Council, we are looking for the Government to take forward this report with unions and businesses and develop an urgent recovery plan for retail, looking at the wider pressures facing the sector such as business rates, rents and lease arrangements.

"This plan should also include continued support for local authorities to help them revitalise their local high street, making them hubs for our communities.

"A retail recovery plan must also recognise the contribution of the people who work in the industry. For too long retail has been a byword for low pay and insecure jobs. If we want retail to prosper, we need to make sure that retail jobs are good jobs."

## SECURING A NEW DEAL

# IKEA PAY DEAL A SUCCESS FOR USDAW'S WORKERS

IKEA's latest pay increase goes over £10 per hour for all staff, which is above the Living Wage rate.

Udaw national officer Dave Gill said: "Udaw has been in discussions with IKEA about increasing hourly rates to at least £10 per hour for all staff. Currently, the Living Wage stands at £9.90 and £11.05 in London. Following our discussions, the company agreed to pay £10.10 and £11.30 in London, which is 20p and 25p, above the Living Wage.

"IKEA has long been a Living Wage employer and we are pleased to see them become one of a few retailers to pay more than the recommended rate. If retail is to recover, thrive and

prosper employers need to invest in staff and that means decent pay, fair contracts and secure jobs. Usdaw's campaign, a New Deal for Workers, continues and we hope many other retailers will follow IKEA's lead."

### Udaw's New Deal for Workers calls for:

- A minimum wage of at least £10 per hour for all workers, ending rip-off youth rates and providing a living wage.
- Minimum contract of 16 hours per week, for everyone who wants it, that reflects normal hours worked and a ban on zero-hour contracts.
- Better sick pay for all workers,

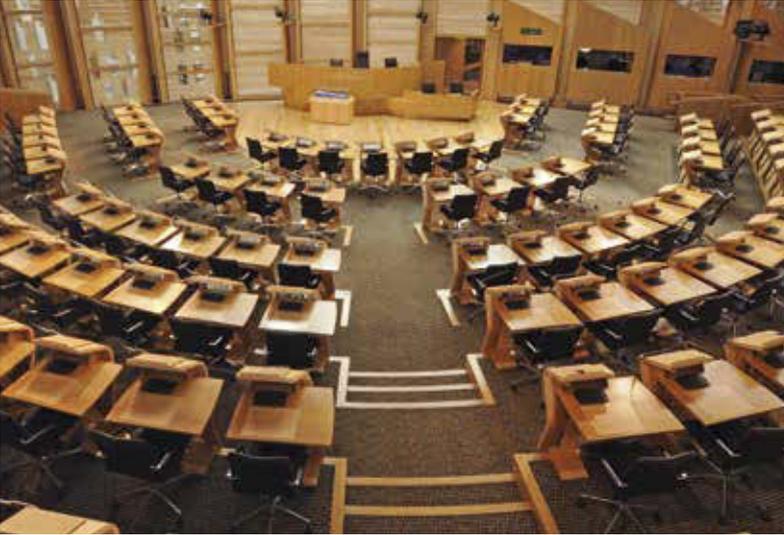
from day one, at average earnings.

- Protection at work – respect for shopworkers, abuse is not a part of the job.
- A proper social security system, Universal Credit does not provide a safety net.
- Job security, with day one employment rights for unfair dismissal and redundancy.
- Fair treatment and equality for all workers, including equal pay.
- A voice at work, stop rogue employers refusing to engage with trade unions and end 'fire and rehire'.

[www.usdaw.org.uk/news](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/news)

## SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

## NO BREAK FOR SCOTTISH SHOPS



In the run up to New Year's Day, Usdaw called on the Scottish Government to reverse their opposition and give retail workers a proper festive break.

The Christmas Day and New Year's Day Trading (Scotland) Act 2007 prohibits trading in most large shops on Christmas Day and gave powers to the Scottish Government to stop the opening of those shops on New Year's Day. When quizzed on the issue in First Minister's Questions, Nicola Sturgeon offered little more than warm words and sympathy.

General secretary Paddy Lillis said: "Our members are deeply disappointed with the attitude of the Scottish Government. Retail staff have worked throughout the pandemic, faced unprecedented levels of abuse and have dealt with a very busy festive period. The very least that these key workers can expect is that the Scottish Government shows their appreciation for the essential work they've done through this appalling pandemic by giving them a proper festive break.

"Nicola Sturgeon's warm words

and sympathy mean little when the Scottish Government refuses to enact powers given to them to stop the opening of large stores on New Year's Day. They are clearly not listening to the 98 per cent of Scottish shopworkers who want stores to close. In fact all the SNP in Government has done is stand back while New Year's Day trading has grown, forcing more staff into work and away from their families on 1 January.

### MESSAGE TO PUBLIC

"Retail staff work incredibly hard all year round, but it is particularly busy and stressful throughout December. So they deserve to be able to spend time with family and friends. Hogmanay and New Year is a special holiday in Scotland, but this is not reflected in the experience of many retail workers.

"Our message to the public is, if you really feel the need to shop on New Year's Day, please respect shopworkers and understand they would most likely prefer to be spending time with their loved ones."

### STRUGGLING SCOTTISH RETAILERS NEED BUSINESS RATES CUT

**Usdaw calls for a business rates discount for retailers from the Scottish Government**

In November, Usdaw along with 12 other leading industry bodies, jointly wrote to the Scottish finance secretary asking her to introduce a business rates discount for all retail premises for the coming financial year.

Regional secretary for Scotland Tracy Gilbert said: "The retail sector has been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic on an unprecedented scale. For an industry already facing significant challenges, the long-term impact will be severe. Aside from the direct impact on jobs, the crisis is leaving gaping holes in high streets that sit at the heart of our town centres and communities.

"So there needs to be further government action to help struggling retailers and retail workers. Usdaw has joined with leading retail industry bodies to call for support for retailers with a discounted business rate. The Scottish Government has the opportunity to make a difference and we hope they're listening."



**MEMBERSHIP WEEK 17-23 JANUARY**

# BUILDING A STRONGER UNION TOGETHER

The first Membership Week of 2022 took place in January with reps across the country making a collective effort to promote Usdaw and build on the union's membership within their own workplaces and beyond.

Reps and activists spent the week running events, supported by their fellow Usdaw members and officials, to try and encourage their non-member colleagues to join.

Lots of events were centred around the union's Freedom From Fear campaign and promoting its recent successes including new legislation to protect shopworkers in Scotland and the Government finally agreeing that shopworkers in the rest of the UK also need legal protection.

Usdaw's New Deal for Workers campaign particularly resonated with workers as spiralling inflation and eye-watering rises to energy

prices dominated the headlines. Reps raised awareness of the campaign's aims including at least £10 per hour for all workers, better sick pay and job security.

Reps also used the union's other important campaigns, including Legal Plus, pensions and Supporting Parents and Carers to show their colleagues the many great benefits of membership.

## THANK YOU

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis thanked the reps for their dedication and their hard work all year round in organising their workplaces.

"During the pandemic trade unions showed their real worth," said Paddy. "Usdaw worked together with other unions to lobby Government to ensure that the concerns of workers were taken into account when policy decisions were made.

"That jobs were protected with a furlough scheme and safety measures were implemented in workplaces. And they listened, simply because we had strength in numbers.

"A union is only as strong as its members and the bigger the membership, the stronger and more powerful the voice.

"In every workplace there are lots of non-members and the main reason why people say they aren't in a union is because they've never been asked.

"That's why Membership Week is a great opportunity to reach out to colleagues, showcase the union's work and encourage non-members to join and be protected.

"I want to say a massive thank you to all the reps who took part. With your support we will make a real difference to the lives of our members."



**Successful campaigning day?**

**Rep or colleague you want to thank?**

**Someone with an interesting  
hobby or life story?**

**Get in touch and share  
your photos and stories**

# NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE: WAGING WAR ON LOW PAY

Since its introduction, the National Minimum Wage has benefitted millions of people but two decades on it fails to keep pace with the spiralling cost of living.

It's been 22 years since the National Minimum Wage came into force. Before the National Minimum Wage, employers could determine pay (and they did), unless workers were represented by collective bargaining or the now abolished Wage Councils.

## What is the National Minimum Wage?

The National Minimum Wage sets minimum hourly rates that employers must pay their workers in the UK.

## When was the National Minimum Wage introduced?

The minimum wage became a reality in 1999 when the Labour Government introduced a National Minimum Wage of £3.60 per hour for workers aged 22 and over, and £3.00 for 18-21s.

Usdaw along with other trade unions, lobbied Labour to adopt a minimum wage. Labour agreed that there should be a statutory level for pay. They also believed that the minimum wage rate would be decided in accordance with economic circumstances and with the advice of an independent Low Pay Commission, whose membership would include both employer and employee representatives.

## Usdaw and the Low Pay Commission

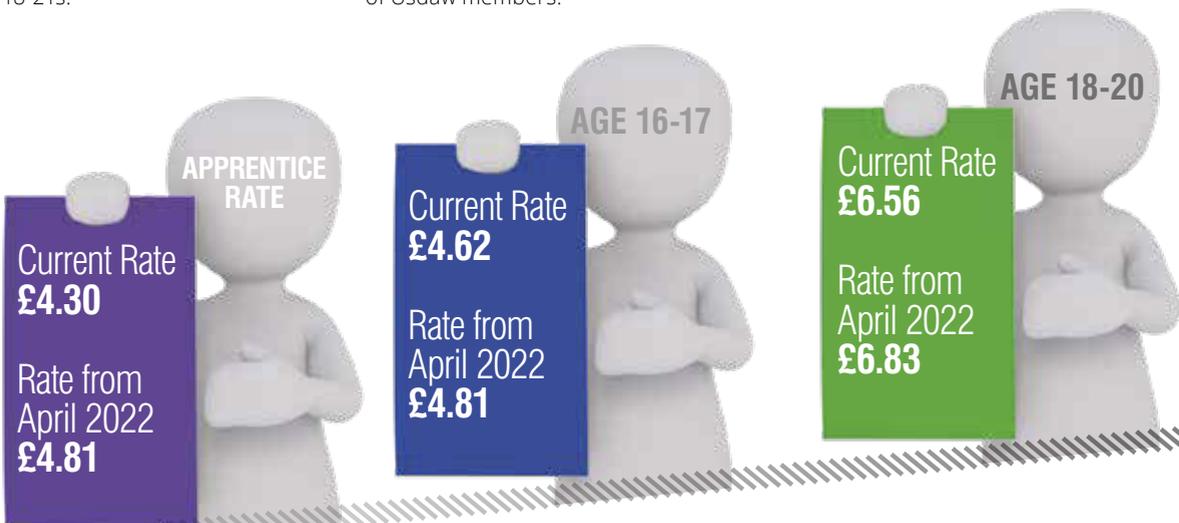
Every year, Usdaw provides detailed evidence to the Low Pay Commission including retail sector performance and prospects, the cost of living for low paid workers, recent pay settlements, arguments calling for young workers to be paid the same as adult workers and the testimony of Usdaw members.

## Arguments against the National Minimum Wage

The Conservatives at the time opposed the introduction of a minimum wage because they believed that it would lead to mass unemployment. However, the last two decades have demonstrated that these fears were unfounded.

## How many people benefit from the National Minimum Wage?

- When the National Minimum Wage was introduced in April 1999, 830,000 jobs held by workers of all ages were paid the minimum wage. In April 2018 this figure had reached around two million.
- Around half of this increase is due to the National Living Wage, which was introduced in 2016 and covers workers aged 25 and over.
- In April 1999, 680,000 jobs held



by workers aged over 25 were covered by the minimum wage. By April 2018 this had grown to 1.6 million jobs.

### What is the National Living Wage?

The National Living Wage was a surprise announcement made in 2015, by the then Conservative chancellor George Osborne. It came into effect the following year and only applied to workers over 25. The rate was set at £7.20. In 2021, the National Living wage was legally extended to 23 and 24-year-olds.

### What is the Living Wage?

Despite containing the words 'Living Wage', the National Living Wage is not a living wage.

The Living Wage is voluntary and based on the premise that employers should pay their workers enough money so that they can afford to pay their rent/mortgage and pay for essentials like food, water, electricity and other bills.

There are two rates, one for London and one for the rest of the UK. It is calculated by the Living Wage Foundation and based directly on the cost of living.

There are about 9,000 Living Wage employers in the UK covering over 300,000 people.

### The Case for a Higher Minimum Wage

Covid exposed the inequalities in our society with the poor, the disabled people, women and BAME communities having worse health and economic outcomes. It was predominately these people who were in jobs where they couldn't work from home such as retail and in the health service. It quickly became apparent that without the labour of key workers, the economy would have come to a standstill.

Yet many of these key workers struggle to get by on the wages they are paid. Inflation is the highest it's been in a decade, driven by global supply chain issues, staff shortages, the end of covid support schemes and Brexit. High demand for oil and gas is pushing up worldwide energy prices and petrol prices reached their highest ever in November 2021. Rising costs of council tax, childcare and rail fares are also putting a squeeze on workers' pay packets.

In a recent cost of living survey of Usdaw members, 42 per cent of respondents have had to rely on unsecured borrowing to pay everyday bills in the past 12 months. Although the cost of living does not

currently feature within the remit of the Low Pay Commission for setting the National Living Wage or National Minimum Wage rates, Usdaw is of the firm view that it should be a key consideration.

### The Global Fight for a Higher Minimum Wage

Post-Covid the fight for a higher minimum wage has gone global.

#### United States

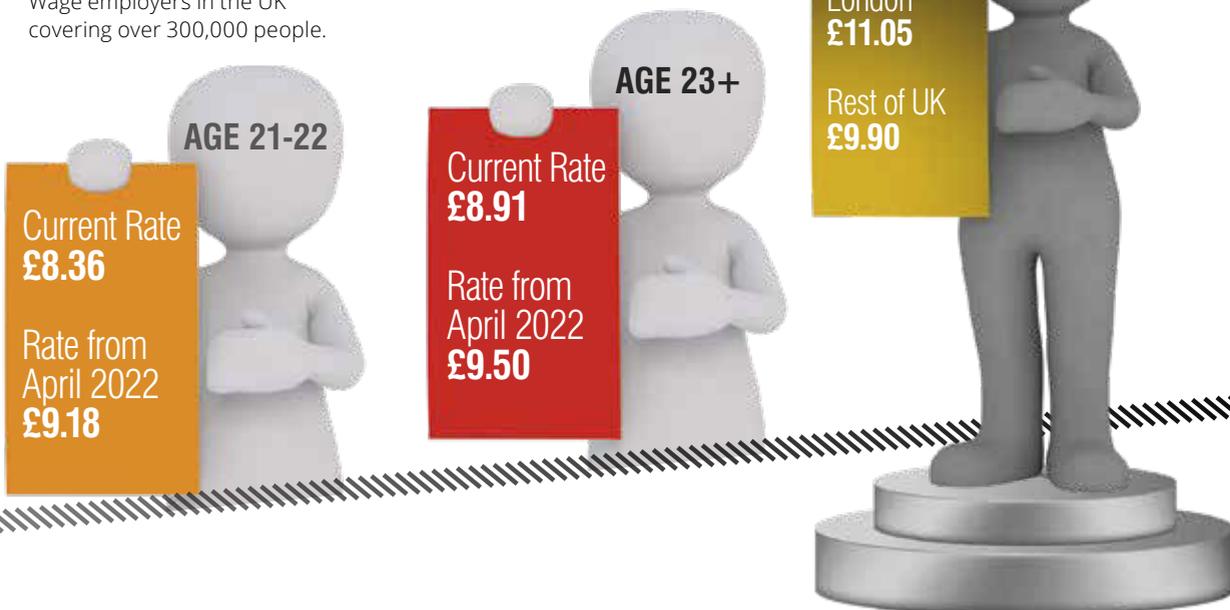
In a bid to stem worker shortages 21 states and 35 cities and counties raised their minimum wage on 1 Jan to 15 dollars.

#### Germany

10 million workers will receive a pay rise of 25 per cent taking the wage from 9.60 euros to 12 euros.

#### Turkey

Turkey is raising its minimum wage by 50 per cent as households throughout the country struggle with soaring inflation and a crashing lira.



# PROTESTS MATTER

The Government is making it more difficult to protest as well as making it easier to strip British citizenship.

**E**very week government sleaze and corruption keeps us outraged and distracted.

Paid lobbying, second jobs, cash for peerages, covid contracts given to Tory cronies and whether or not Downing Street parties took place have been dominating the headlines.

What's been getting little attention is how the Government has been quietly pushing through legislation to take away our civil liberties. Recently, as Omicron raged through the population, 100 MPs rejected covid passes because they said they were too authoritarian, and even akin to Nazi Germany. Yet they had no qualms about voting through legislation that severely hampers our right to protest (Crime and Sentencing Bill) and makes it easier for the Government to strip away a person's citizenship (Nationality and Borders Bill).

It's no surprise that the crackdown has come after a period of increased global protests and social unrest. In the last few years, we have seen protests all over the world including the anti-government protests in France, pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, Farmers protesting deregulation in India, Black Lives Matter in America, anti-lockdown protests and climate strikes.

The anger and strength of feeling has left governments around the world rattled and led to crackdowns.

## THE CRIME AND SENTENCING BILL

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Bill gives the police and the home secretary sweeping

new powers to restrict protest rights and establishes new stop and search powers. Liberty, an advocacy group that protect civil liberties and promotes human rights, said it was 'one of the most serious threats to human rights and civil liberties in recent history.'

To avoid parliamentary scrutiny the home secretary Priti Patel added 18 extra pages into the Bill after it passed through the House of Commons and after the second reading in the House of Lords. The amendments included:

### Serious Disruption Prevention Orders

Can be imposed on people if they have previously been convicted of a 'protest-related offence, or even if they have been to two protests in the past five years in which they carried out activities that could have caused serious disruption. Serious disruption could mean almost anything including being noisy or posting something on social media encouraging people to turn up.

### Stop and Search with Suspicion

The police would have powers to stop and search people they suspect are carrying anything that could be used in protests such as placards, flyers and banners.

### Stop and Search without Suspicion

The new powers would grant the police the right to stop and search people without suspicion, if they believe that a protest will occur 'in that area'. Anyone who resists being searched could be imprisoned for 51 weeks.



### Locking On

Locking on is a technique used by protestors all over the world. The technique involves protestors attaching themselves to another person, object or land so that it is difficult to remove them from their place of protest. This now carries 51 weeks of imprisonment.

### Widespread Opposition

The Bill has met with widespread criticism from charities and hundreds of academics and



activists. Parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights condemned the crackdown as 'oppressive and wrong' and two UN special rapporteurs wrote to the Government calling on it to shelve its plans to restrict the right to protest.

In a poll conducted on behalf of Liberty, nearly two-thirds of respondents agreed that people should be able to attend a protest to stand up for what they believe in and that they were concerned about

plans to criminalise protest.

### Why it Should Matter to Everyone

- The right to protest is a cornerstone of democracy and allows people the right to demand social, political and economic change.
- Under these new powers the Suffragettes, the protests against nuclear arms at Greenham Common and Extinction Rebellion would all fall foul of these regulations.
- We might not agree with these causes but there will be some causes that matter so deeply to us that we will want to protest.

### NATIONALITY AND BORDERS BILL

The Nationality and Borders Bill is primarily an anti-refugee bill and aims to prevent illegal entry to the UK but also has implications for British citizens.

#### The Bill:

- Makes it a criminal offence to arrive in the UK without permission with a maximum sentence of four years.
  - Makes asylum claims from anyone arriving in the UK by an illegal route inadmissible.
  - Allows the UK to send asylum seekers to a 'safe third country'.
  - Allows for offshore processing centres overseas.
  - Criminalises anyone who seeks to save lives.
  - Gives Border Force immunity from prosecution if people die in the Channel during pushback operations.
- As cruel as these measures are the home secretary Priti Patel has also included Clause 9 which gives the Government the right to remove citizenship without notice if it is not 'reasonably practicable' to do so, or in the interests of national security, diplomatic relations or in the public interest.

The Immigration Act 2014 allowed ministers to revoke a person's

citizenship if they have acted in a manner which is seriously prejudicial to the vital interests of the United Kingdom, even if it made them stateless, as long as they could apply for another nationality.

The requirement to give notice was weakened in 2018 allowing the home office to serve notice by putting a copy of it on a person's file, if their whereabouts was unknown. The new clause would remove the need for notification altogether in a range of circumstances. It can also be applied retrospectively to cases where an individual was stripped of their citizenship without notice before the clause became law.

The Office of National Statistics data suggests that nearly six million people in England and Wales could be affected by the change, including two in every five people from non-white ethnic minorities compared to one in 20 white people.

### Widespread Opposition

More than 300,000 people have signed a petition to remove clause 9 from the Nationality and Borders Bill. You can sign the petition here: [petition.parliament.uk/petitions/601583](https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/601583)

The UK's Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) says the bill breaches human rights law and the Refugee Convention has called on the Government to address those measures that are incompatible with human rights.

### Why it Should Matter to Everyone

- It gives the home secretary unprecedented powers to remove citizenship at discretion and in secret.
- The Windrush scandal showed us what happens when a government has powers like this.
- It will disproportionately affect people from ethnic minority and migrant communities by creating a two-tier citizenship because anyone with foreign heritage can have their citizenship stripped without notice.

# NIGHT TERRORS

Late and night shifts in retail carry the highest risk of being targeted with abuse, threats and violence.

**A**lmost all Usdaw members working in retail will have a story of encountering violent, threatening or abusive customers while working the late shift. Extended trading hours and 24-hour alcohol sales have increased the exposure to risk, and cuts to staffing mean that members can feel isolated when on the shop floor at night. It is, all too often, an environment in which unacceptable behaviour can thrive.

The percentage of members suffering abuse at work has sadly increased in recent years. In 2010, 70 per cent of respondents to Usdaw's Freedom From Fear survey reported being verbally abused at work – this increased to 89 per cent in 2021. It is no coincidence that this increase in abusive behaviour tracks the cuts to policing imposed by successive Conservative governments. These cuts not only discourage retail workers from reporting incidents as they believe no action will be taken, they give criminals the confidence to act as they wish knowing they are unlikely to face any consequences.

## When is the risk greater?

Opening and closing times are particularly risky - closing a store late at night is much worse than closing in the early evening. Late closures also mean that night workers often have to travel to or from work during hours when access to public transport – or even their own cars – may be more hazardous. Shortly after pub closing time is a particular hotspot. In 2020 Government restrictions on pub opening hours caused a spike in

abuse of shopworkers, driven by an influx of drunken customers wanting to buy more alcohol after 10pm.

## Young workers and women feel more at risk

Young workers are given a disproportionate share of late and weekend shifts meaning that they are at an increased risk - an Usdaw survey in 2021 found this was a major cause of mental health issues among workers aged under 27. Women are more likely to feel vulnerable than men, not only at work but on their commute. Research carried out as part of our Safe Journey to Work campaign shows that women are twice as likely as men to feel unsafe on their way to and from work. Even if an actual attack does not take place, the stress of feeling at risk puts severe strain on members' mental health. Keyholders who need to attend an alarm call late at night also feel at risk, especially if they are expected to enter the premises on their own.

## Freedom From Fear

The Freedom From Fear campaign has had some real successes over the last 12 months. In Scotland the Protection of Workers Bill, introduced by Labour MSP Daniel Johnson and backed by Usdaw, came into force in August 2021 creating a specific offence of assaulting a retail worker while they are engaged in their work. In the rest of the UK, the Government took a step in the right direction by agreeing to amend the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill to include protection for shopworkers. This is a welcome move, but there is still



a long way to go before key retail workers throughout the UK have the strong legal protection they need.

## Managing the risks

- Employers should ensure that they have a system for reporting all incidents including threats or intimidation and incidents which are work related but happen outside of work, for example while travelling to or from work.
- Risk assessments should cover the issue of violence and abuse. Where late working causes particular problems, the risk assessment should recognise this.
- Employers should provide well-lit access to stores for staff who have to enter or leave the store during the night.
- Car parks should be well lit at all times. Where possible night staff should be allowed to park where there is easy access to the



store and where their cars can be monitored by security. Any obstructions which may provide a hiding place should be removed.

- If there are problems with public transport for staff who finish late, the employer should lay on transport.
- In high-risk areas, individual workers should not be expected to open or close stores on their own. Staff who have to leave the store during the night should be escorted to their transport home.
- Where possible, staff should not be expected to work on their own at high-risk times. If it cannot be avoided then extra precautions will be needed to make sure they are protected and can call for assistance in an emergency.
- Staff who are keyholders should be trained in what to do in a call-out and should not be expected to enter the store on their own.

## VOICE FROM THE FRONTLINE

### Pat Gibbons K033 NW Tesco Retail No.1

Network spoke to Tesco rep Pat Gibbons about her experiences of working nights, for 14 years, at her store near Liverpool.

"I've worked nights for most of my working life. I've worked in pubs – rough pubs - and as a taxi driver, but nothing prepared me for what it can be like in retail. I've had ID thrown at me, I've had trolleys pushed into my legs, I've been physically assaulted and I've been spat at. Spitting was such a problem that I added a kit to our first aid bag so we could keep samples of the spit to pass to the police. I don't understand how anyone can look at themselves in the mirror after doing something like that.

"Age-restricted sales are definitely the main trigger. Now that we have to follow Think 25, and check the ID of everyone in a group even if they aren't all making a purchase, there's more potential flashpoints. Our store is the only place around here that sells alcohol late at night so when the pubs close, you know to be on your guard.

"The security staff are told by their agency not to put themselves in harm's way, and I can't blame them, but when you're the person that's got to tell a group of

drunken lads they can't have any more drink, it can be intimidating. It's worse now with the self-service tills as there's no barrier between the staff and the customers. It makes you feel more exposed.

"The saving grace of night shifts is the camaraderie among the staff. It really helps you get through the tough times. Management are supportive as well. They'll always do what they can to help, they make sure everyone gets home safe – no-one has to take public transport late at night – and if you refuse a sale, they'll back you up all the way.

"We get told to report everything but sometimes you wonder what the point is in doing so, because you know the police don't have the resources to attend an incident. There used to be a police station close to our store and we knew all the officers there, but thanks to the Conservative Government's budget cuts, it's been closed. With all the cuts, people know they probably won't face any consequences for their actions. That's why the Freedom From Fear campaign is so important – proper legal protections would act as a deterrent and make these people think twice."



# ACTIVIST IN-DEPTH CHARLOTTE HOPKINSON

**C**harlotte Hopkinson, 45, talks about the privilege of giving voice to her colleagues and the importance of regularly talking to members.

## **Where do you work?**

I work at the Tesco Beeston store in Nottinghamshire as a wage clerk. I've been there since it opened its doors in 2010.

## **Why did you become active?**

I became a rep in 2011 simply because I was approached by a manager. I always remember the advice my mum, who's a very smart

woman, gave me. She always told me to take every opportunity that is given because you never know where it will take you. With this in mind, I said yes. And I've never looked back, it was one of the best decisions I ever made.

## **There's only two reps in your store, how do you cope?**

Although there's over 200 people at our store and only one other (union learning) rep, it doesn't feel overwhelming. Over the years, I've spent a lot of time trying to build a good working relationship with both my colleagues and the managers.

My approach is to talk to everyone and ask them: How are you? How is your shift? Do you need anything? Do you have any issues or concerns? I find if I regularly talk to my colleagues, I can usually pick up on any issues or concerns before they snowball.

## **How do you conduct inductions?**

I've recently done quite a lot of inductions for the Christmas temps we're taking on. I'm responsible for doing both the Tesco and Usdaw inductions which means I get to see every new starter. It's a great opportunity to welcome new

starters to Tesco as well as letting them know what the union can do for them. I tell them that Tesco is supportive of the union and we have a partnership agreement which means we work together to resolve any issues that arise.

I also explain how being a union member gives them important rights such as the right to representation, legal help and advice, and a whole host of benefits and discounts. The campaigns are also a great recruitment tool especially the Freedom From Fear campaign. Most shopworkers have experienced abuse at some point in their careers so this campaign really resonates with them. The recent wins we've had also help because I can tell them that our campaign helped change the law in Scotland and that we're trying to do the same in the rest of the UK.

### Is it difficult to recruit new starters?

I find that most new starters genuinely believe in trade unions. The only issue is that temps don't want to join the union until they become permanent because every penny counts. Once they get taken on permanently, I approach them again and they usually sign up.

### What have the last 18 months been like for you?

The last 18 months have been tough for everyone. We were all taken out of our comfort zones and thrown into a terrifying situation. I'm asthmatic and I was scared and anxious like everyone else. But despite this, I wanted to be in store with all my colleagues so that I could support them if they needed me. I was tasked with collating up-to-date contact details of our members so that Usdaw could keep them informed of what the union was doing and where they could access help and support. To do this, I

designed a pro forma for members to complete, ensuring GDPR was adhered to. It was a time-consuming piece of work but I managed to get everyone's details.

### Did Covid safety measures become a flashpoint for violence or abuse?

Face coverings, social distancing and one-way systems were all implemented in the store. It took a bit of time for staff and customers to get used to it but there was a general feeling that we were all in it together. I think that's because the store I work in is in an area where we know a lot of the customers and they know us, so luckily, we didn't experience the levels of abuse that people got in other places.

### What was the biggest issue for your members?

Our biggest issue was anxiety because like everyone in the country we were all glued to the news. We were getting mixed messages from the media which didn't help to allay our fears or anxieties. I spent a lot of time proactively approaching colleagues in the canteen to see how they were feeling and told them to knock on my door anytime. A lot of the time people just wanted to talk about what was going on and be reassured.

### What do you like about being a rep?

Being a rep is such a privilege as it gives me an incredible opportunity to give voice to working class people who may otherwise feel they're invisible and not represented by anyone else. It also gives me the opportunity to make a real difference to the working lives of my colleagues.

### What has being a rep taught you?

Since I became a rep, I have learnt so much. I have learnt about trade

## Become a Rep

If one of your members is interested in becoming a rep please go to:

[www.usdaw.org.uk/Bearep](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/Bearep)

unionism, how to recruit and represent members and I have also learnt a lot about the business side of things such as Tesco's policies and procedures.

Dealing with people from different backgrounds and different life experiences has helped me further broaden my viewpoint.

### How was the rep training you received?

The training Usdaw provides has been absolutely invaluable especially the shop stewards course, which also gave me the opportunity to network with other reps. Fellow reps are a great source of knowledge and it is helpful to talk to them about good practice.

Being a rep has given me these amazing life skills that I can use both at work and in other spheres of my life. For example, I have learnt how to stay calm in heated situations, how to problem solve and how to deal with conflict.

Until I became a rep, I never thought I had it in me. And I couldn't have done it without the support of my area organiser, Sharon Langham. Sharon is always there for me and when I talk to her, I feel like a valued member of the Usdaw team.

### What's next

Currently, me and my husband are raising our 9-year-old daughter and I feel like I have a really good work life balance. Once she's a bit older, I would consider putting myself forward for other opportunities such as stand down or the Academy but for the time being I'm very happy with what I've got.

Have you got an experience or advice that would inspire other reps? Email us at: [network@usdaw.org.uk](mailto:network@usdaw.org.uk)



# MAPPING THE WORKPLACE

The pandemic has shown the true value of being in a trade union

**D**uring the pandemic, trade unions around the world successfully protected workers' jobs and safety. In the UK, trade unions were involved in discussions with the chancellor which culminated in a package of support to help workers through the crisis. To avoid mass redundancies a Job Retention Scheme (furlough) was created which provided 80 per cent support for employees who were temporarily laid off.

Behind the scenes, Usdaw too lobbied the Government and employers to ensure that the needs of Usdaw members were taken into consideration when policy decisions to deal with the pandemic were made, including winning 10 per cent pay bonuses, getting sick pay from day one, enhanced colleague discounts, and improved health and safety measures with enhanced social distancing, plastic screens and limiting the number of customers in stores.

The pandemic has shown the true value of being in a trade union. That's why it's more important than ever that reps continue to recruit new members so that they have access to the benefits of Usdaw membership. Also, it's vital that we increase our membership levels

so that we can continue to be a strong and influential voice for our members.

## What can I do to increase membership in my workplace?

For a systematic approach to recruiting and organising you could look at mapping your workplace.

## What is Mapping?

Mapping will provide you with an accurate picture of your workplace to help you plan your organising and recruitment activity. Mapping will help you identify the members and non-members in your workplace as well as the issues they have. Once you have this information you can target your recruitment and organising activity on the areas that need the most attention.

## How do I map my workplace?

To map your workplace:

- Involve the other reps in your workplace and share out the work.
- Draw up a floor plan with the different departments or sections where people work.
- Identify the members and non-members.
- To identify the issues your colleagues have you will need to speak to them and ask them to

share their concerns.

- Record the information on your map.

## How do I identify the members and non-members?

Where Usdaw has a recognition agreement with the employer, we would expect the business to supply you with a list of everyone who works at your workplace. You will also need a list of members so you can cross-reference. You can get a membership list from your local Usdaw office. These lists will contain personal information and therefore you should treat the information with the utmost care.

## GDPR

Mapping your workplace will give you access to personal information on both members and non-members, therefore it is important that this information is handled in line with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). The union has produced a booklet and an online short course that provides guidance for you to follow.

[www.usdaw.org.uk/gdprguide](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/gdprguide)



### What information should I gather?

You should try to include the following information:

- The names of the people who work there.
- What is their job?
- What is their working pattern? Are they full or part-time, permanent/contract/agency?
- Are they a member? Would they be interested in being more active?
- Are they a non-member? Do they want to join? If not, why not?
- What issues do they have? For example, change in hours, holidays, sickness, health and safety, bullying and harassment etc.

### What should I do with the information I have gathered?

Once you have collected the information on your workplace and identified your members and non-members, there are a number of things you may want to do:

- You may want to focus on identifying the areas where you have low membership, no reps, or where there are particular issues.
- You can also use the information you gathered in your mapping exercise to run a campaign on

the issues you identified in the workplace.

### Recruiting new starters at inductions

Make sure you attend the inductions to let new starters know about what the union can do for them. Tell people that Usdaw members tend to get better pay and safer workplaces. They also get representation in a disciplinary/grievance meeting, legal cover and a host of other benefits. If you're unsure of what the benefits are, download Usdaw's leaflet, 10 Good Reasons to Join Usdaw [www.usdaw.org.uk/261](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/261)

### Approach new starters again a couple of weeks after the induction

After a couple of weeks new starters may be more amenable to joining as they might have experienced abuse from a customer, found it difficult to take their breaks or been told off by a manager.

### Success stories

Talk about your success stories. Have you secured flexible working for a colleague? Did a member win an accident injury claim using Usdaw's legal service? Have you won a grievance? Did you save money

using the cinema discount? Give real life examples so that new starters and non-members get a clear idea of what the union can do for them.

### Run a Campaign

The campaigns are a great recruitment tool especially the Freedom From Fear campaign. Most shopworkers have unfortunately experienced abuse at some point in their careers so this campaign really resonates with them. Thanks to Usdaw's campaigning, Scotland recently passed legislation to protect shopworkers from abuse and the union continues to campaign for a similar law in the rest of the UK.

If you have a lot of parents at your workplace, you could talk about the Supporting Parents and Carers campaign. If people are struggling for money pick the New Deal for Workers campaign.

### Make it topical

Following Euro 2020 the issue of racism in football dominated headlines. During the last membership week lots of reps ran Show Racism the Red Card campaign and had a lot of success in raising awareness and engaging both members and non-members.

# BUILDING A STRONG UNION AT B&M DISTRIBUTION

Years of committed organising has paid off and resulted in B&M Distribution having one of the highest membership densities in the north west region.

Usdaw reps at B&M distribution have worked extremely hard to organise their workplaces since gaining recognition in 2015. From a standing start, the membership has grown and grown and is now among the most highly organised companies in the region. Network talked to three of the reps at the Speke site in Liverpool to find out how they achieved this, how they maintain it, and what they plan to do next.

## JIMMY QUIRK

Forklift truck driver and night shift rep Jimmy joined B&M in 2013 and was one of the key figures behind the growth in union membership.

"I'd been an Usdaw member for a long time in my previous job, so I knew how important it is to have a strong union onsite," said Jimmy, 57. "We needed to build up membership before we could talk about formal recognition, so I arranged for Usdaw reps and officials to come and stand outside the depot gates as they started and finished their shifts. Their dedication was amazing – they were out there for hours at a time, in the freezing cold, to make sure they spoke to as many people as possible. It was tough going sometimes but we recruited more and more staff, and eventually we signed the recognition agreement.

"It's taken us a few years to get this far, but we're now at around 70 per cent membership density in the warehouse. Us reps make sure we're

always visible on the floor, everyone on site knows who we are and where to find us. We've just got two new reps so we're almost at the point where there's a rep on every shift. We're also involved in organising other B&M sites, some of us have been out on stand down and we're looking to grow the rep teams in the other sites too.

"We're all involved in health and safety here which has really helped us with our recruitment. We have regular meetings with the company to work on resolving any problems, and we've made real progress on health and safety standards in the warehouse.

The pandemic did unfortunately have an impact on some of our union activity, but we worked with management to provide personal protective equipment for the members and we began holding our meetings and inductions in smaller groups to help everyone stay safer.

"Long serving staff who didn't join the union when we first signed the agreement can see the work we're doing with the company and the differences it makes, and it convinces them to sign up. The members know that whatever issues they have, they can come to us and we'll sort it out.

"Going forward we want to carry on growing our rep team and make sure every member can get a full service from the union.

"We also want to keep up the health and safety work – we're on the right track but there's still things

we want to achieve."

## COLIN JONES

Warehouse rep Colin, 55, joined Usdaw when he started at B&M in 2015. His passion to help his colleagues led him to become a rep when the previous incumbent stood down.

"I'd never been active in a union before but I wanted to make a difference on the shop floor so when I got the chance, I put my name forward," said Colin, who works as a forklift driver. "I settled in quite quickly thanks to the help of the other reps and my area organiser, who made sure I went through all the training I needed. I've been doing it for nearly five years now but I still learn new things every day. We've got a WhatsApp group for the reps across all the B&M sites in our area which is a great way to swap tips and important information, it helps the newer reps pick things up as well.

"We have a good relationship with the management team who have an open door policy which makes it easier to discuss issues and concerns with them. We've set up joint working parties around shop floor issues and health and safety. It means that anything that needs addressing gets looked at quickly before it can develop into something more serious.

"We work hard to keep the membership density high. It can be challenging sometimes but we keep at it, we attend all the inductions



Jimmy Quirk



Colin Jones



Mike Kewin

and we make sure to celebrate our successes so everyone knows about the work we're doing. It's not just the reps that do that either - if we help a member who's having difficulties, they tend to talk to their colleagues about it on the warehouse floor afterwards. We've gained quite a few new members that way.

"I'm proud of my work as a rep and I want to promote the union further. This year, Covid permitting, I'd like to get out on stand down and showcase the union to would-be members in other companies."

### MIKE KEWIN

HGV driver Mike is one of two transport reps based at the Speke site. Mike stepped up in 2018 when a gap opened in the rep team.

"I used to work in a scrapyard before I had a change of career and came to B&M," said Mike, 45. "I didn't really know what unions did beforehand but I saw some colleagues going through a tough time and thought I could help. Once some of the more experienced reps had helped me get familiar with the

details of how the union operates, I never looked back. It feels good to help people and make their working lives easier.

"Drivers have concerns that don't affect the warehouse staff, so we worked with the company to set up dedicated teams for the transport operation. Having that specific focus on transport helped us keep health and safety standards high and make some improvements to things like the layout of the yard. The office is important too - social distancing wasn't possible in there so when the pandemic began, I took the initiative and re-arranged it so the staff could stay safe. All this helps us keep membership levels high. We've built the membership up from around 30 per cent of the drivers when I started to 80-90 per cent now.

"The driver shortage has been all over the news recently and we did lose some staff initially, but we worked with the company on ways to fix this and we've actually got more drivers now than we did this time last year. B&M always let us know when we're getting new starters

so we can attend and do their induction, we make sure every new starter has the benefits of union membership explained to them. If they don't join straightaway, they tend to join a few weeks later when they've realised how important it is to have the union on their side.

"All the reps speak to each other as often as we can to swap important information. To make ourselves as available as possible we've put our personal numbers out there so we can always be reached by members who might need our help. There's also a postbox on site so that members can write down any issues they want us to look into and remain anonymous, if they choose to. The best way to increase membership is to build up trust between the union and the workforce. We do that by being open and transparent and doing what's right by our members.

"Looking ahead into 2022, the next steps are to carry on our good work around health and safety and find new ways of making our members' voices heard."



# SHEDDING LIGHT ON SAD

**W**hen the clocks change and the days get shorter and gloomier, some people will notice they have less energy and feel a bit blue. For many, feeling down will be temporary but for others this will last for the duration of the winter months.

## What is Seasonal Affective Disorder?

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that starts during the winter months.

## Symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder

People who experience SAD may have the following symptoms:

- A persistent low mood.
- Less energy and feeling sluggish.
- A loss of pleasure or interest in

normal everyday activities.

- Difficulty in concentrating.
- Change in appetite and sleep patterns.
- The urge to withdraw from society and go into hibernation mode.

## What causes SAD?

The exact cause of SAD is not fully understood, but it's often linked to reduced exposure to sunlight during winter. The main theory is that a lack of sunlight might stop a part of the brain called the hypothalamus working properly, which may affect the:

- *Production of melatonin*  
Melatonin is a hormone that makes you feel sleepy. In people with SAD, the body produces it in higher than normal levels.
- *Production of serotonin*

Serotonin is a hormone that affects mood, appetite and sleep; a lack of sunlight may lead to lower serotonin levels, which is linked to feelings of depression.

- *Body's internal clock (circadian rhythm)*

Our bodies use sunlight to time various important functions such as when to wake up, so lower light levels during winter may disrupt the body's clock and lead to symptoms of SAD.

## Treatment for SAD

Effective treatments are available if a person is diagnosed with the condition. To be diagnosed it is best to see your GP who will carry out an assessment and will recommend the most suitable treatment programme for the individual.

## SELF-CARE

Mind, the mental health charity that provides advice and support, gives the following tips on how to manage SAD.

- Maintain a routine.
- Make the most of natural light by going for a walk.
- Rearrange stressful activities for another time.
- Keeping a note of your symptoms can help spot patterns and triggers.
- Plan ahead, such as stocking up on things you might need when you feel low.
- Do things you like, such as watching your favourite films.
- Try relaxation techniques such as meditation.
- Try to get a good amount of sleep.
- Think about your diet by eating regularly and healthily.
- Do some form of physical activity such as walking or swimming.
- Talk to professionals such as the Samaritans or Mind.

### The main treatments are:

- *Lifestyle measures*: including getting as much natural sunlight as possible, exercising regularly and managing stress levels.
- *Light therapy*: a special lamp called a light box is used to simulate exposure to sunlight.
- *Talking therapies*: such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).
- *Antidepressants*: such as SSRIs.

### Supporting members with SAD

Some of the symptoms of SAD could affect a member's performance at work. Struggling to get up in the morning could affect attendance, lack of concentration could lead to making mistakes and tiredness could impact productivity. This could lead to the individual being disciplined under capability procedures or

absence management policies.

A person with SAD may be entitled to the protection of the Equality Act (Disability Discrimination Act in Northern Ireland).

To support a member with SAD, a rep would need to show that the member fits under the definition of a disabled person under the Act. If the rep can show that the member meets this definition, then they will have a much stronger case in arguing that the employer should support the member.

### Conditions automatically covered under the Act

The only conditions automatically covered are MS, cancer, HIV/AIDS or being registered blind/partially sighted.

### What you need to do to cover a member under the Act

For all other conditions it needs to be demonstrated that a member meets the definition of a disabled person as set out in the Act.

To do this you need to look at the following five points:

- *Does the member have a physical or mental impairment?*  
SAD would be classed as a mental impairment.
- *Is it more than a trivial condition?*  
You would have to show that the impact on the member's life is more than trivial. Keeping a diary can help to document the effects.
- *What would happen if they stopped taking medication?*  
In deciding whether someone is disabled, the effect of any medication or treatment is ignored.
- *Does it affect my everyday life?*  
It is important to ask the member to outline how the condition affects them at work and in their daily life. You can go through a typical day with them and ask how their symptoms affect their day-to-day activities such as

getting out of bed, bathing, getting dressed, eating, getting into work on time, being able to concentrate on tasks etc.

### ■ *Has it/will it last a year or more?*

Although SAD is a seasonal disorder this would not necessarily prevent it from being classed as long term as long as it occurs every year.

If you can show that the member meets each of the five criteria listed, then they will be entitled to the protection of the Equality Act (DDA in Northern Ireland).

### Reasonable Adjustments

Once a member is classed as disabled under the Act, then their employer has a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments.

There isn't 'a one size fits all' approach - it's best to speak to the member about their condition. Changes could include:

- Taking breaks during the day and going outside.
- Seating an employee near a window where there is natural light.
- Allowing them a light box where they work.
- A later start time if they struggle to get up in the morning.
- A temporary change to shift patterns so sufferers can maximise their time in natural daylight.
- Allowing them to take holidays over the winter period.

### What can reps do?

Reps can play an important role in creating a supportive culture in their workplace. They can do this by running mental health awareness days. Resources can be found here: [www.usdaw.org.uk/mentalhealth](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/mentalhealth)

### USEFUL CONTACTS

Mind [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)  
The Samaritans  
[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)



# NEW RIGHT FOR CARERS

**T**he majority of Usdaw members are balancing paid work with looking after children or caring for someone. We know that balancing work and care can be a real struggle – one in two members find it difficult or very difficult to get time off work when someone in the family needs caring for. Is it any wonder that members who are carers tell us they are struggling?

For a long time Usdaw has joined forces with the TUC and organisations like Carers UK to campaign for the introduction of a legal right to paid carers' leave for working carers.

Almost a year after it pledged to introduce a right to carers' leave in its 2019 manifesto the Conservative Government issued a public consultation in March 2020, to which Usdaw responded. In their response last summer they announced their intention to introduce a new right.

Although Usdaw welcomes this announcement, we don't believe the Government has gone far enough in that the leave is to be unpaid. This means that many thousands of low income carers won't be able to afford to use it.

Nor has the Government said when this new right will be introduced. All they have confirmed is that they will do this when 'parliamentary time allows'.

We will continue to make sure reps and members are informed of any further developments but in the meantime this is what we know about the new right so far.

## Who will be eligible for unpaid carers leave?

The right will be a day one right and it will be available to anyone providing care to someone with a long term care need or someone who is terminally ill.

## What can the leave be used for?

Leave can be taken to either provide care or to make arrangements for somebody else to provide care.

## How much leave can be taken?

Five days unpaid leave will be available per year. The leave can be taken flexibly including as single or half days.

## Will carers leave be paid?

Despite presenting evidence of the need to attach pay to leave the Government has refused to do this. The new right to carers leave when it is introduced will be unpaid.

## What proof will be required?

As with paternity leave, employees will be able to self-certify that they are a carer. In our response to the Government consultation Usdaw made the case for a light touch approach to evidence given that



carers cannot 'prove' their caring relationship. Carers will not be required to provide evidence to support their request for leave such as evidence of the medical condition of the person they are caring for or evidence of the caring activities they will be undertaking.

### How much notice needs to be given?

The notice must be at least twice the length of time being requested as leave. For instance if a carer is requesting 2 days leave, they would have to give at least 4 days' notice.

### Which nations are covered?

The new right applies to those living in England, Scotland and Wales but not Northern Ireland as employment law is devolved in Northern Ireland. The Conservative Government has however pledged to engage with the NI Executive on this issue.

## RAISING AWARENESS OF DRINK SPIKING

A spate of drink spikings in clubs and bars around the UK have led to high profile reports in both local and national media.

Spiking a drink is when alcohol or drugs are put in someone's drink without their knowledge or permission. Substances used for spiking usually have no colour, odour or taste and therefore make it difficult to spot. Spiking can also take the form of injecting people with a substance without consent. Motive can include sexual assault and theft.

While drink spiking can happen to anyone at any time, women are more likely to be targeted. In November a YouGov poll found:

- One in nine women have had their drink spiked.
- Over a third of women say them, or someone they know has been spiked.
- Young people are much more likely to report being spiked or knowing someone who has.

Drink spiking is dangerous. It can have severe physical and psychological effects. Drugs are often sedatives that slow brain activity and can cause memory loss and unconsciousness – making victims more vulnerable to sexual assault, attack and robbery. People who have been spiked report changes in perception, nausea, confusion, disorientation, loss of balance, breathing problems and slurred speech.

Because the effects are similar to intoxication, victims are often assumed to be drunk rather than drugged. Many struggle to know where to go for support and are scared of not being taken seriously.

Drink spiking is illegal and carries a 10 year sentence, but it is often difficult to obtain

the evidence to prosecute.

Therefore it's vital that victims are supported and believed in order to feel confident that if they speak to the police or hospital, action will be taken.

In response to the recent spikings, a 'Girls Night In' nationwide boycott of clubs and bars took place in October to call for more to be done to tackle drink spiking. Many nightclubs closed in solidarity with campaigners and victims.

The Government launched an inquiry into drink spikings last December to understand how widespread the issue is, the effectiveness of the police in tackling the issue, and if there is support available to victims to report and obtain treatment following incidents. The report from the inquiry is expected later this year.

But government responses have so far missed the point. Advice continues to put the onus on women to change their behaviour, to 'not put themselves at risk', to look out for each other, not to get too drunk, to check their drink - rather than taking action against perpetrators.

Drink spiking is not an isolated issue. It is part of a pattern of violent and abusive behaviour that makes women feel unsafe in public spaces.

Usdaw is calling for an urgent and joined up approach from government on violence against women that focusses on changing behaviour, educating and bringing to justice those who seek to harm women or spike drinks - rather than continuing to expect women to take responsibility.

Everyone has the right to feel safe on a night out.

[www.usdaw.org.uk/equalities](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/equalities)



## Health & Safety Rep Interview AMAR SUCHAK

**N**etwork magazine caught up with health and safety rep and Only Fools and Horses fan Amar Suchak.

### Tell us about your job and how you got involved with Usdaw.

I've worked at Weetabix in Burton Latimer near Kettering since 2002. I'm a production operator, it's a fast-paced job and it can be hard work, but I enjoy it. I've been a health and safety rep since 2014. I was always passionate about safety issues and when a position opened in our rep team, I jumped at the chance to put my name forward.

### What does a typical day look like for you?

I start every shift with an

inspection of the floor to make sure everything's set up properly and ready to go. One part of the production process uses X-rays and it's vital that we follow all the regulations to the letter. Aside from that, there's always something that needs my attention whether it's to do with personal protective equipment, making sure everyone knows how to use the machinery safely, and – since the pandemic – issues with the Covid measures.

### What's the rep team like where you work?

Weetabix ensures that there's a safety rep position available on each shift and so we've got a really strong rep team here, which is great because it means

no member is left without proper union representation. In my area there's four of us safety reps and we're spread out across the different shifts so between us, there's always someone present on site. Making sure we're always visible helps us keep membership levels high, because everyone can see we're making a real difference. We also make sure we celebrate our successes, so members and non-members can see that the union are working with the company, to make positive changes.

### You mentioned Covid, did that have a big impact?

Definitely. It was a challenge at first because all the social distancing and safety measures we'd agreed with



the company meant we couldn't have our usual reps' meetings. We adapted quickly though, thanks to technology; we were provided with an iPad anyone can use to report and keep track of issues – it gets sanitised after each use – so, if there are any problems or concerns, they're quickly noticed and addressed. It was something to be proud of knowing that when the HSE team visited during Covid they were complimentary of the safety measures I had helped to implement.

### Anything you've improved that you're particularly proud of?

Some of the operators have to work with compressed air which can be really dangerous if it's not used properly and without PPE. I make sure that everyone working on that section has the right equipment and that they're always wearing it while they work. Sounds simple, but it makes a big difference and it's often those practical steps that have the most impact on safety.

### How did it feel to win the regional Organising Award for health and safety reps in 2019?

It was a big honour to be nominated by my convenor, and an even bigger one to receive the regional award. I've always been keen to find ways to make work safer and to help my colleagues, even before I became a rep, but I couldn't do what I do without such a good team around

me. Any one of them would have deserved the award as much as I did.

### What advice would you give to new safety reps?

Safety reps have a lot of influence, so it's really important to do your reading and understand the extent of what you can do. I'd also say that you need to get good at time management. Balancing your safety work and your everyday job role can be difficult sometimes, but you can't neglect the safety measures that are there to protect everyone. And remember that you're never on your own. If you need help or advice, there's always support available from the union.

### It must be tough at work at the moment. What do you do to relax and recharge your batteries?

I'm really into sound engineering, which involves helping musicians get the best possible sound quality at live events. Old-school analogue equipment gives the best results, digital is convenient but you don't get the same effect. It's the same when I listen to music at home – some of the older recordings sound amazing because they were made using gear that reproduces the natural tone of the instruments. Apart from music, I love watching *Only Fools and Horses*. When I got married, I arrived at the wedding in a replica of Del Boy's yellow Robin Reliant van!

## THANK YOU

I want to give a huge thank you to all Health and Safety Reps for all the hard work you do to keep our members safe.

The pandemic continues to present significant challenges in workplaces but our reps have stepped up to ensure the safest possible working environments for our members. The work you have done on the ground to implement social distancing and other safety measures has been outstanding. The job of a health and safety rep is difficult at the best of times, and you should be proud of your response to such difficult circumstances.

When the challenges facing our members are at their greatest, the union must be at its strongest. I am delighted that our safety reps have gone above and beyond the call of duty during these trying times. You are the face of the union's health and safety work and a vital source of support for our members, as well as keeping a watchful eye on standards and working practices.

As we continue to navigate through the pandemic it is vital that we keep working to improve safety standards at a national level. Usdaw will be campaigning hard on this issue in 2022; we will never cease our efforts to secure stronger legislation to protect our members.

Once again, thank you for all your hard work. You are a credit to yourselves, to your workplaces and to the union.

*Usdaw  
General Secretary  
Paddy Lillis*



# POSITIVE SAFETY CLIMATE NEEDED

Health and safety reps can use their legal functions to ensure that their members are protected in work.

According to the senior management of most large organisations the safety and health of their workforce is vitally important. They want a positive safety climate that promotes staff wellbeing. But achieving that good safety climate can be difficult in all parts of the organisation.

This has been made very clear during the pandemic as organisations have struggled to make sure that protective measures work effectively across all their workforce. Research by the University of Greenwich, which was funded by the TUC, has shown that trade union health and safety reps have played a crucial role in making sure that it does happen.

## Covid-19 and Health and Safety Reps

They looked at the response to Covid-19 in the essential industries of food manufacture, distribution and retail. According to the research, workers in workplaces with a union health and safety rep were more likely to feel that they were consulted by managers over covid-related health and safety. Twice as many workers in workplaces with no health and safety rep said that they did not know if a risk assessment had been carried out in comparison with those in a workplace with a union rep.

That is not surprising. There is a long history of research showing the positive effect of trade union health and safety reps over the last

40 years. Much of it is summed up in the TUC's report 'The Union Effect' (see further reading). The reason for the 'Union Effect' is that the union health and safety reps can use their independent legal functions to help to ensure that there is proper consultation, co-operation and commitment to build a better safety climate.

## Positive Safety Climate

According to the HSE a positive safety climate is essential for good health and safety. The safety climate means basically 'how we do safety round here'. It refers to how the whole workforce tackles safety and it is not about an individual's behaviour. The HSE argues that the key to a good safety climate is the engagement of the workforce. It requires proper consultation from the employer along with co-operation and a clear commitment.

## Cogs in an engine

Safety in your workplace can be considered like cogs in an engine. The 'cogs' include the senior management team who approve H&S policies, the line management on the shop floor who are required to implement their H&S policies and risk assessments and the workforce doing things according to safe systems of work and being well trained.

Like any engine the cogs need oil to run smoothly and to perform at their best. A positive safety climate



provides that oil. In other words, regularly injecting positive safety climate oil into the H&S engine is needed if the words in a H&S policy and risk assessment are to be put into action and become normal workplace practice.

At this point you might be thinking why are reps not a cog in the engine? This point is key, when you perform your functions as a rep and are doing inspections and talking to the workforce you do so as an Usdaw rep with an independent voice from the employer. The functions you do are like a mechanic checking that the safety engine is running as intended. That is why, a poor safety climate, is not a reflection on the rep, it simply means they have highlighted where things may not be working as



smoothly as they should.

Over the next few issues of *Network* we will look more closely at how union health and safety reps can organise to make best use of their legal functions. We will look at the importance of their inspection powers under the regulations and how they can best represent the members to ensure they are protected.

### Further reading

- Covid-19 workplace safety outcomes in the food and drinks sector. [www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk) search **University of Greenwich research**
- TUC Union Effect report. [www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk) search **The union effect**

## TO ASSESS THE SAFETY CLIMATE IN A WORKPLACE, REPS SHOULD CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

### Does the management:

- Set a good example for safety on the shop floor?
- Discuss safety with the workers and explain why it is important?
- Go on H&S inspections with reps?
- Come to reps for their view when there are H&S concerns raised by workers?
- Act in good time to H&S concerns raised from rep inspections?
- Ask reps to attend accident investigations?
- Take concerns seriously and explain their decisions when reps' views on an issue differ?
- Make the staff aware of the risks before undertaking new tasks?
- Bring up H&S when the team have shift briefs?
- Give the staff refresher H&S training where necessary?
- Consult reps for their views before new working machinery or systems are introduced?

If you find the answers to a lot of these questions are negative – the management never or hardly ever do what the question asks – that is evidence of a poor safety climate in your own workplace.

Look out for the advice in future issues of *Network* to explain how you can help to turn that around by using your powers as a health and safety rep.



OMICRON AND ON

# GOVERNMENT SHOULDN'T RELAX RULES

The appearance of the highly infectious Omicron variant of Covid-19 showed the need for tighter control measures to continue at least until the numbers of new cases of the disease have substantially declined.

## VENTILATION

Usdaw welcomed the decision to bring back compulsory face-coverings in stores and public transport before Christmas but we believed more needed to be done to protect members including the reintroduction of social distancing measures in retail and limits on the number of people allowed in shops to avoid overcrowding. The increased transmissibility of the virus means that adequate ventilation has become increasingly important. Whilst many shops with high ceilings and modern air conditioning systems will have effective ventilation on the shop floor, smaller outlets and areas such as stock rooms and staff rooms are likely to require improvements. The

Government should be providing clear advice for such areas and engaging assistance from local Environmental Health teams.

## TESTING, SELF-ISOLATION AND SICK PAY

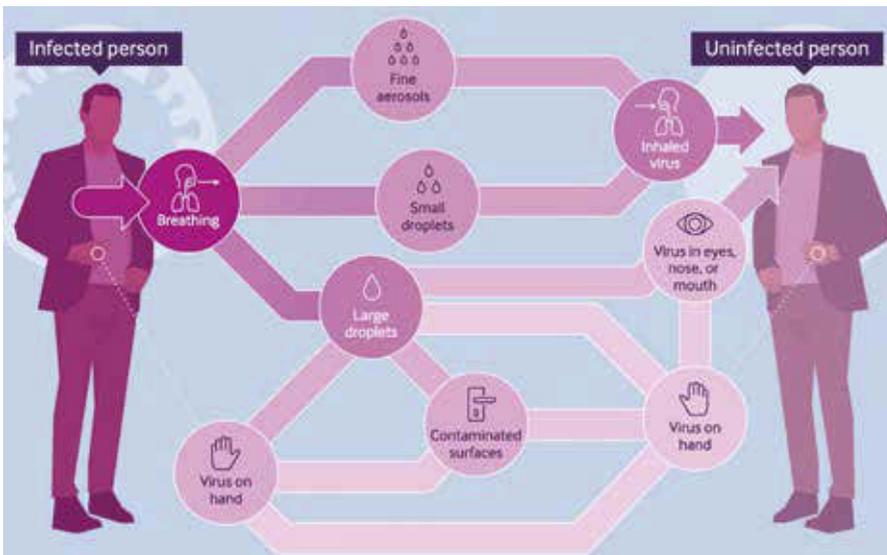
Testing and self-isolation are paramount in ensuring, as far as possible, that the virus does not enter the workplace. Lateral flow devices (LFDs) should be freely available to all key workers, and employers and the Government must also ensure that workers have the ability to self-isolate. As a priority, this must include sick pay to be paid at an individual's normal earnings.

## HIGH ABSENTEEISM

There are significant concerns that high levels of absenteeism will result in significant health and safety issues for remaining staff. High absence rates can not only lead to remaining staff being overworked but also to increases in abuse, threats and violence from

customers who believe they are not getting the service expected. The increase in absence rates may result in retailers having to close some stores in an effort to protect the health and safety of staff. High demand for home delivery services with fewer staff to drive the vans is also a concern. Working time rules for drivers need to be enforced to ensure that individuals are not overworked, and that road safety is not compromised.

Reps may be interested in an interactive infographic that has been produced by the British Medical Journal to show the routes of transmission of the virus. It was developed before Omicron became the main variant but demonstrated the importance of airborne transmission of large droplets and smaller aerosol particles and gives an indication of the relative risks of touching contaminated surfaces, close contact with others and working in confined spaces with poor ventilation.



This diagram shows the different pathways that can be taken by the virus that causes covid-19 when it transfers between two people. The darker the colour, the higher the estimated risk.

Graphic courtesy of the BMJ. For further info: [www.bmj.com](http://www.bmj.com) search **transmission graphic**

## HSE FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH

## UNIONS CENSURE NEW HSE CAMPAIGN



The HSE statistics covering the 2020/21 period show that of the 1.7 million workers suffering from a work-related illness, 800,000 were stress, depression or anxiety.

The HSE has recently launched a mental health awareness campaign to raise the profile and understanding of stress and the impact it has on mental health and business.

With the slogan 'Make It Routine' employers are asked to:

- Reach Out to the workforce,

- Recognise when there are signs of stress,

- Respond to the need to change the way things are done and to

- Reflect on how well they are managing stress.

They are asking organisations to sign up as Working Minds champions. Find out more at [workright.campaign.gov.uk](http://workright.campaign.gov.uk)

However, the campaign has been criticised by the TUC and by union health and safety campaigners for being too vague in its approach.

While it does say that employers have a duty to manage stress and includes some sample risk assessments, it lacks a lot of detail.

To quote Rory O'Neil, editor of Hazards magazine, "It's a hand-holding strategy that will dismay some. There is no mention of HSE's primary, statutory role – to inspect and enforce safety at work. It is this hands-off strategy that the TUC has warned repeatedly is allowing the workplace stress crisis to escalate." [www.hazards.org/stress](http://www.hazards.org/stress)

## EFFECT OF DECREASED SAFETY ENFORCEMENT

## RISE IN ILL HEALTH AND DEATHS AT WORK

HSE safety statistics for the period 2020/21, (i.e. when much of the UK economy was shut down because of Covid-19), show there were 1.7 million cases of work-related ill health, around half of which (822,000) were stress related. Prosecutions dropped to 185 cases and there were only, 2,929 enforcement notices issued.

According to the TUC, it means since the Conservatives came to power, the number of workers harmed by their jobs each year has increased by 30 per cent, but convictions have fallen by

75 per cent.

The figures do not include statistics on cases of work-related Covid-19, but they do state that there were 93,000 self-reported incidents of Covid-19 infection at work and 645,000 workers reported that other work-related ill health conditions were caused or made worse by the pandemic.

The number of self-reported incidents of Covid-19 infection is substantially more than the number of incidents reported to HSE by employers under the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous

Occurrence Regulations over that period.

In a separate report HSE states that employers reported 32,000 cases and 383 deaths in 2020/2.

## HSE Statistics

[www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/index.htm)

## RIDDOR-reported Covid-19 case

[www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/coronavirus/management-information.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/coronavirus/management-information.htm)

**CONTACT** ■ Health and safety officer  
Doug Russell  
0161 249 2441

■ Health and safety assistant  
Tony Whelan  
0161 249 2474

■ General health and safety enquiries email:  
[healthandsafety@usdaw.org.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@usdaw.org.uk)

# MemberOffers

## CARS & TRANSPORT

Car Hire  
Car Maintenance  
Car Parking: Q-Park  
Fiat  
Griffin Motoring  
Startrescue  
Vauxhall Cars

## INSURANCE

Accident Protection Cover  
Home/Motor/Travel Insurance  
Gadget Insurance  
Life Insurance  
Pet Insurance  
50+ Personal Accident Cover  
Free £5,000 Accidental  
Death Cover

## MONEY & FINANCE

Debt Advice  
Financial Advice  
Mortgage Advice  
Pensions Advice  
Pensions Annuity Service  
Shepherds Friendly Savings  
The Co-op Credit Union

## HEALTH & BEAUTY

Comfort Insoles  
Gym Membership  
My Active Discounts  
Usdaw Health Plan  
Usdaw Dental Plan  
Vision Express

## LEISURE & ENTERTAINMENT

Beer52  
Cinema at home: Chili.com  
Cinema Tickets  
Discount Card  
English Heritage  
Go Ape  
Golf Membership  
Magazine App: Readly  
Magazine Subscriptions  
National Trust Gift Cards  
Online Ticket Store  
SAA Art Membership  
Theme Parks & Attractions  
Virgin Experience Days

## HOLIDAYS

Airport Parking, Lounges  
& Hotels  
Away Resorts  
Cottage Breaks  
James Villa Holidays  
Lost Luggage Protection  
Parkdean Resorts  
Pontins  
Wightlink Ferries

## SHOPPING

Apple  
Charles Tyrwhitt  
Crown Decorating Centres  
Dell  
Discount Card  
Domestic Appliances  
Gift Card Savings  
Magazine Subscriptions  
Usdaw Prepaid Cashback Card  
UsdawRewards Cashback  
Virgin Wines

## MISCELLANEOUS

Gas and Electric  
Mobile Phones  
TOTUM Pro Card  
International Student ID



Don't forget about the Union's free legal services such as free will writing and Legal Plus.

[www.usdaw.org.uk/legal](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/legal)

# [www.usdaw.org.uk/offers](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/offers)\*

\*Terms and Conditions for individual offers on the website.

# Find out more [www.usdaw.org.uk/offers](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/offers)\*

★ NEW YEAR OFFERS ★ NEW YEAR OFFERS ★ NEW YEAR OFFERS ★

## CREATE MEMORIES



### *Fantastic savings on UK family holidays with Parkdean Resorts...*

Usdaw members can save on a holiday at one of over 65 holiday parks. With fantastic locations in coastal, lakeside rural or woodland locations. Great entertainment with free live shows for the whole family to enjoy and quality accommodation from caravans and lodges to glamping and safari tents.

Save 10% (excluding school and bank holidays) and 5% during all school and bank holiday periods.

To find out more go to [www.usdaw.org.uk/offers](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/offers)\* and don't forget to quote **USDAW76** for your special discount

## GET FIT AND SAVE

### *Savings on your gym membership, digital fitness subscriptions and more with MyGymDiscounts!*

As an Usdaw member, you can save up to 25% on a membership at your chosen club. Choose from a wide range of options at over 3,300 gyms, leisure centres, yoga and Pilates studios and bootcamps across the UK.

If the gym isn't for you – don't worry! They also offer up to 55% off digital fitness subscriptions so you can kickstart your fitness regime from the comfort of your home.

To find out more go to: [www.usdaw.org.uk/offers](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/offers)\*



## PRIORITISING HEALTH IN 2022



### *Get moving and save with MyActiveDiscounts*

MyActiveDiscounts offers Usdaw members great savings on things that get you active and healthy such as footwear, sportswear and nutrition.

You can also save money on adventure days, travel, spa breaks\* and more! To find out more go to: [www.usdaw.org.uk/offers](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/offers)\*

## HELP WITH MONEY WORRIES

### *StepChange Debt Charity offer free, confidential debt help and solutions*

If you are struggling with your debts you can access their online advice service 24 hours a day: [www.stepchange.org/start.aspx](http://www.stepchange.org/start.aspx)

or call their freephone helpline **0800 138 1111** 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 4pm on Saturday. Don't struggle on.



\*Terms and conditions apply to all benefits. See website for details. Offers subject to change without notice. Usdaw Discounts & Offers is managed and run on behalf of Usdaw by Parliament Hill Ltd. Further benefits are organised directly by Usdaw Membership Services. See website for details. Neither Usdaw nor Parliament Hill are part of the same group as the providers.

# STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS

National officer Pauline Foulkes steps down after a stellar 30-year career and Tony Doonan becomes the deputy regional secretary for the Scottish region.

## PAULINE FOULKES

**National officer for Tesco retail, Pauline Foulkes, retires after 30 years of conscientious service.**

Pauline, 63, worked for TJ Hughes for 18 years before becoming an Usdaw area organiser for the North West region in 1992. In 1999 she was promoted to national officer.

"I started working for TJ Hughes when I was 16, with the intention of staying until I could do my nurses' training at 17," said Pauline. "As soon as I started work my dad ordered me to the join the union. And I've not looked back since.

"As the national officer for Tesco it has been a privilege representing our members. And I couldn't have done it without the help and guidance of the national forum reps whose feedback and lived experience has been vital in helping us secure a whole host of improvements. It was very satisfying developing our agreement from scratch, seeing membership grow and seeing first-hand the improvements the union had negotiated benefitting our members.

"Once I retire, I'm looking forward to spending time with my family and friends, going to the theatre, and seeing live music. I also want to travel and explore some of the stunning landscapes we have in this country as well as taking a road trip around the southern states of America.

"Working for the union has been an absolute honour, I have loved every moment of it. I'm going to miss all my friends and colleagues in Usdaw. I want to thank Usdaw's Tesco Support Team for all their



Pauline Foulkes



Tony Doonan

support and to wish Daniel Adams every success in leading the Usdaw/ Tesco Partnership."

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: "Pauline has been a friend and a colleague over many years and she will be sorely missed by everyone in Usdaw. Her loyalty and commitment to the union and trying to do the right thing by her members was second to none. I want to thank her for her 30 years of impeccable service and wish her a long and happy retirement."

## TONY DOONAN

**Usdaw Area Organiser Tony Doonan relocates from the North East to take up his new role as deputy regional secretary for the Scottish region.**

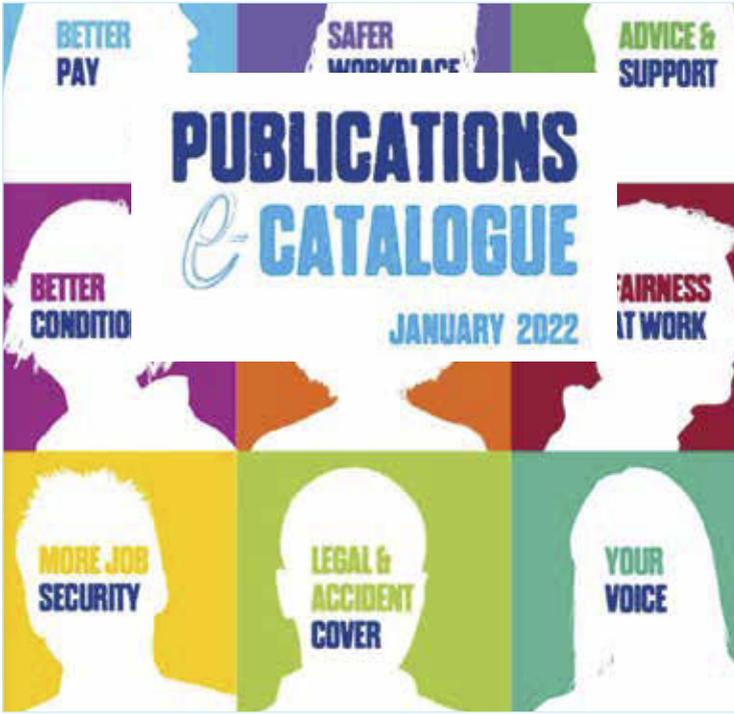
Tony, a former Tesco activist from Northern Ireland, joined Usdaw in 2011 and immediately became active. He was elected as a shop steward in 2012 and completed bouts of stand down in 2013 and Academy 1 in 2014. A year later, he became an area organiser for the North Eastern region.

"I'm going to miss being an area

organiser as it's a very hands-on role and there's a lot of job satisfaction," said Tony, 44. "My favourite part of being an area organiser was representing members. It was really rewarding standing up for someone who had been unfairly treated or when your representation saved someone's job.

"Recruitment and organising is a huge part of any deputy regional secretary's remit and I will be focusing on that. I'll be looking at every recruitment opportunity to ensure sure we are making the most of it. One of my key priorities will be supporting and developing reps. At the moment, we have some fantastic reps who, for whatever reason, lack the confidence to recruit. I want to make sure that every single rep in our region has the ability and the confidence to recruit in their workplace.

"I want to thank my colleagues in the North Eastern region for the support they showed me over the years and I look forward to working with colleagues and reps in the Scottish region."



## REFRESH YOUR UNION LIBRARY THIS YEAR

Usdaw's publications catalogue outlines our latest range of leaflets, factsheets and posters.

Usdaw is constantly working to provide our reps and members with the latest information and advice to help them at work. Our extensive range of leaflets, factsheets and posters is regularly updated – as we head into 2022, why not take a look at what's on offer and refresh your union noticeboard?

If you're not sure what's available, our online publications catalogue is a great place to start. Featuring an overview of all our most popular

literature, you're sure to find something to help you organise your workplace. The interactive catalogue includes links to digital editions of everything listed, so you can find out more at the touch of a button and download the content you need. Keep your Usdaw literature up to date – bookmark <https://dtp.usdaw.co.uk/PublicationsCatalogue/> and check back regularly to make sure you don't miss the latest additions.

For a complete list of Usdaw publications and to order visit: [dtp.usdaw.co.uk/PublicationsCatalogue](https://dtp.usdaw.co.uk/PublicationsCatalogue)

## NEW IN!

### Leaflets & Booklets

The Usdaw Home Study  
(Leaflet 130)

Merchandise Order Form  
(Leaflet 273)

Courses for Usdaw Reps  
(Leaflet 292)

Training for Members - The Open University (Leaflet 367)

Member Offers (Leaflet 398)

Training for Members - Summer Schools (Leaflet 431)

Learning Through the Usdaw Gateway

An Usdaw Guide to Maternity and Parental Rights

### Posters

Usdaw Logo Poster

Ten good reasons to join Usdaw  
(Poster R2)

Usdaw's Transport Section for all Professional Drivers (Poster R5)

Legal Plus - Looking After You and Your Family (Poster R10)

Free Will Writing Service for Usdaw Members and their Partners (Poster R60)

Disability isn't a Laughing Matter  
(Poster R62)

UsdawLearn Gateway Poster  
(NB23)

### Surveys and resource sheets

Getting on with Maths and English (LLL RS3)

Mental Health in the Workplace Survey

### Online Bitesize courses

More than Words - English online bitesize course - [www.usdaw.org.uk/morethanwords](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/morethanwords)

Data Protection online bitesize course - [www.usdaw.org.uk/protectiononline](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/protectiononline)

Using Zoom online bitesize course - [www.usdaw.org.uk/zoom](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/zoom)

# ACTIVE & INFORMED

AS AN USDAW ACTIVIST THERE'S A LOT TO DO AND A LOT TO REMEMBER, BUT DON'T WORRY THERE IS ALWAYS HELP AT HAND VIA YOUR AREA ORGANISER, THE USDAW WEBSITE OR OUR HANDY ACTIVE & INFORMED PAGE

## ARENA

Arena magazine is posted out to every member. Make sure you have a few spare copies to show potential members or for the noticeboard – you can download copies from Usdaw's website: [www.usdaw.org.uk/arena](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/arena)

## TRAINING

Ushaw reps have rights to time off for training. It is vital that all new reps attend Usdaw training courses. Union training can give you the knowledge, skills and confidence to better support your members. Usdaw courses are friendly and informal and there are no exams.

## LEAFLETS & FLYERS

Ushaw produces lots of different leaflets, posters and merchandise. Make sure you order leaflets or materials specific to your workplace or company and leave them on canteen tables, noticeboards or in staff rooms.

## DATA PROTECTION

As a rep you will regularly come across personal data and information about your members. Data Protection is therefore an important aspect of the rep's role and you will need to deal with personal data fairly, securely and confidentially. The union has produced a booklet and an online short course that provides guidance for you to follow. For more details go to: [www.usdaw.org.uk/gdprguide](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/gdprguide)

## NOTICEBOARD

This should be changed and updated regularly. You should also display the names and contact details of all the reps in your workplace on your noticeboard so members know where to find you. Don't forget to promote Usdaw's success stories on your noticeboard.

## CAMPAIGNS

Ushaw prides itself on being the campaigning union. Our successful campaigns include; Freedom From Fear, Parents and Carers, Time For Better Pay and Save Our Shops – these are down to the hard work of reps who continue to stand up for members wherever they work, whatever they do. Campaigns are a great way of getting members involved. Contact your area organiser if you are interested in running a campaign in your workplace.

## SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES

You can contact us regarding any workplace experiences, success stories, organising initiatives or campaigns you have been involved in. Please keep us up-to-date, you can do this either by email, telephone or through your area organiser.

## WWW.USDRAW.ORG.UK

The internet is a great way of getting information to and for your members. Visit the Usdaw website where you will find leaflets, communications, campaigns and lots of useful information about the union.

## EMAIL

You can sign up to receive regular news and campaign alerts by email from Usdaw's website.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Ushaw is active on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram at [@usdawunion](https://www.facebook.com/usdawunion) and regularly publishes updates and advice for reps and members. It's also an important part of our campaigning work, so we need as many reps as possible to share and retweet our posts with their friends and followers. Make sure you're following us and encourage your members to do the same.

Share your success stories at: [network@usdaw.org.uk](mailto:network@usdaw.org.uk) or tweet us at: [@usdaw](https://twitter.com/usdaw)



## Head Office

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Walthamx@usdaw.org.uk

### E Midlands Region

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Kegworth@usdaw.org.uk

### F North Eastern Region

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### G Scottish Region

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Glasgow@usdaw.org.uk

### H Southern Region

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Andover@usdaw.org.uk  
Morden@usdaw.org.uk

### K North West Region

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Belfast@usdaw.org.uk  
Warrington@usdaw.org.uk



## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

View and download the reps handbooks  
and courses to keep yourself fully  
up-to-date.

[www.usdaw.org.uk/RepsHandbook](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/RepsHandbook)

union





# SAMARITANS

- Whatever you're going through, a Samaritan will face it with you.
- 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
- Via phone or email.

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)



[www.stepchange.org/contact-us](http://www.stepchange.org/contact-us)

## Citizens Advice

- If you can't pay your bills.
- If you're struggling to pay your rent, want to end your tenancy or are worried about being evicted.
- If you have no money for food.
- Check what benefits you can get.

Citizens advice can advise you on benefits, money, housing, family, health and more. Contact via phone/email/live chat at:

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/contactus](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/contactus)

- Free, confidential and expert debt advice and money guidance.
- Find the best solution or service for your individual circumstances.
- Support while you deal with your money worries, for as long as you need their help.