

# Retail Workers

abuse is not  
part of the job



Violent crime and abuse is a very real hazard for retail workers. Every year around 10,000 retail workers are physically attacked and hundreds of thousands are subject to verbal abuse and intimidation.



Usdaw, the Union for retail workers, knows just how serious the risk of work-related violence can be. The Union campaigns to make work safe for all retail workers.

### ***What to do if a customer harasses you:***

- Stay calm – do not respond with aggression.
- Do not tackle the situation on your own – either call for a supervisor/manager to come to you, or go to them and ask them to deal with the customer.
- The supervisor/manager should explain that harassment of staff will not be tolerated and take appropriate action.
- Let your Usdaw rep know what has happened and report the customer to management, whether it is inside or outside the store.
- Always report to management when you see a banned person re-enter the store.

### ***What to do if you see a suspected shoplifter:***

- Report it to your manager.
- Only take further action if trained to do so.

### ***What to do if an armed robbery takes place:***

- Do not try to disarm, apprehend, or argue with attackers.
- Do not risk your personal safety to protect property.
- Comply as far as possible, do not resist and avoid sudden movements.
- Raise the alarm when it is safe to do so.

# Prevention: making your working life safer

The best way to protect retail workers against violence is to prevent incidents happening in the first place. Through its Freedom From Fear Campaign, Usdaw is working with your employer to make your working life safer. Your employer has a legal duty to protect you from customer harassment.

Every workplace is different and there is no single simple solution in most workplaces. But here are some pointers:

- 1. Be prepared.** Would you know what to do if you spot a shoplifter or credit card fraud or if there is a robbery? Your employer should have procedures in place to deal with these incidents when they happen and you should be trained on these procedures.
- 2. Physical protection.** Security measures, alarms, CCTV, protective barriers, panic buttons can all help. Staff need to know how to operate security systems provided.
- 3. Journey to work.** Abuse, threats and violence can happen on the journey to and from work, as well as outside the entrance to the store. Always be vigilant and aware of your surroundings, especially if returning home after dark.
- 4. Cash handling.** Cash should be kept out of sight and not allowed to build up in the till. Your employer should have clear cash handling procedures and have trained you in them.
- 5. Banking.** Where possible banking should be done by specialist security staff. It should not be done alone, on foot or by public transport. Staff who are expected to do it should be fully trained.
- 6. Shoplifting and armed robbery.** Over half of physical assaults are linked to attempted shoplifting. Employers should make sure all staff know what to do if they see a suspected shoplifter. Similarly, employers should also train people to be prepared for armed robbery.
- 7. Lone working.** Working alone at high risk times, such as late at night, should be avoided. Where staff are expected to work alone, for instance at a petrol kiosk, extra precautions should be taken.
- 8. Reporting and reviewing.** A reliable system for reporting incidents helps employers to know what risks their staff are exposed to and allows employers to review their procedures on a regular basis in line with the Union safety reps.



## How Usdaw can help

- Usdaw National Officers work with companies to make sure that clear policies to support and protect retail workers are in place.
- Reps and Area Organisers are available to offer advice and support for workplace issues.
- Usdaw works with companies to clarify, support and enforce policies on age-restricted sales.
- Reps work to support members when things go wrong.
- Usdaw offers support through FirstCall for accidents and injuries sustained while at work.
- The Retail Staff Survey helps Usdaw make a better case to employers and politicians to secure stronger protections. Share your experiences and suggestions here: [www.usdaw.org.uk/respectsurvey](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/respectsurvey)

## Legal support

If you're a victim of violence and you suffer serious injury in the UK call FirstCall Usdaw

on **0800 055 6333** to start your claim. Usdaw Legal Plus can help members claim compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority, a state funded scheme.

To qualify for compensation, your injuries must be sufficiently serious to justify the minimum amount of compensation, £1,000; you must personally report the incident to the police within 48 hours and get a crime reference number; you must see a doctor immediately for treatment of physical injuries as well as psychological ones such as stress or shock.



## Join Usdaw

The more members we have, the stronger our case is with companies for better policies and better protections. Usdaw has a large number of retail workers as members and understands the issues that they face in the workplace.

For immediate membership and full protection, simply complete a membership form and return it to Usdaw's Central Office. Just write **FREEPOST USDAW** on the envelope and put it in the post. You can also join online at [www.usdaw.org.uk/join](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/join)

You'll receive a membership card with our Helpline phone number and a New Member's Pack giving the details of all the benefits and professional services available to you.

## For further information

Call our Helpline on **0800 030 80 30**  
or visit [www.usdaw.org.uk/freedomfromfear](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/freedomfromfear)

**Improving workers' lives  
– Winning for members**

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Union of Shop, Distributive  
and Allied Workers

