

NETWORK



MAR/APR
2015

The bimonthly magazine for Usdaw Activists

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LATEST NEWS

TESCO UPDATE

POLITICAL CONFERENCE

*New
members
signing up*

... EQUALITIES ... TAX DODGERS ... HEALTH & SAFETY ... LETTERS ...



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Comment

General secretary John Hannett

With the May general election less than two months away we know the political debate will be framed around policies but underlying those policies are values and principles. In fact most voters will associate more with values of fairness and equality than with economic arguments on the deficit, the national debt and GDP.

I know Usdaw members want to make sure they have secure jobs, with enough hours and a decent hourly rate so they can look after themselves and their families. They want safe communities with good schools and accessible health care. Our members want fairness in the workplace and equality in society. They want their children with options of a job, further education or training when they leave school. They also want their adult children to have the chance of affordable homes whether to rent or buy. What they don't want are the energy companies making vast profits while some people can't afford to heat their homes.

When we reflect on the last five years we can see our members' values aren't shared by the Tory-led Coalition. The latest figures have shown there are more than 700,000 people, many of them young workers, on zero-hours contracts and all the insecurity and stress that brings. We know there is a massive problem of low hour contracts and under-employment in the UK with too many people relying on having two or three part-time jobs just to make ends meet.

The NHS has faced a top-down restructure which is costing millions of pounds but more importantly has resulted in longer waiting times for hospital treatment and GP appointments.

Young people in particular have been hit hard by the Coalition's austerity measures with a shortage of jobs, apprenticeships and training. For this generation the prospect of renting, never mind buying, their own property seems a distant dream.

Our values of fairness, equality and justice for the many not the few are alien to the Coalition. Only the Labour Party shares our values and to use its slogan – Britain does better when working people do well – that's why I'll be voting Labour on May 7. Let's choose the politics of hope not despair.



Watch
John on the
importance of
politics



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and Allied Workers

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EX-WOOLWORTHS AND ETHEL AUSTIN STAFF IN SMALL STORES LOST OUT

Set back in legal fight

Usdaw's seven-year battle to win justice for ex-Woolworths and Ethel Austin workers has suffered a set back after a preliminary 'opinion' from the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU).

The workers were denied compensation when the administrators failed to consult with them because they worked in small stores.

The CJEU's advocate general refused to come down on the side of the workers although this is not the end of the line just yet.

However, the final CJEU decision could take months to materialise and has wider

implications for workers made redundant in Comet, Jessops and Phones-4-U.

General secretary John Hannett said: "It is disappointing that we have been unable to persuade the Court of the merits of our case, which is morally and logically robust.

"However, this is only an opinion and we are now pinning our hopes on the final judgement.

"It makes no sense that workers in stores of less than 20 employees were denied compensation, whereas their colleagues in larger stores did qualify for the award. These were mass redundancy

situations where one central decision was made to close the whole company down, with no individual analysis of the viability of each store on a case-by-case basis.

"The companies, through their administrators, have already been shown to have operated illegally by failing to consult about the redundancies with the workforce and Usdaw.

"A protective award was made by an employment tribunal and workers in stores of more than 20 staff were paid years ago. Justice for the staff in stores with fewer than 20 employees is long overdue."

Pride DVDs up for grabs



The hugely popular and BAFTA-winning film *Pride* was released on DVD in early March and *Network* has free copies to give away to the first five readers to email *Network*.

The film tells the unlikely story of the solidarity between a London-based Gay and Lesbian Support Group and a Welsh mining community during the 1984-85 strike.

Usdaw member Mike Jackson was one of the London activists in the '80s and played a key role in helping the director and his team research the actual events.

It is a moving and powerful film and a must-see for every trade unionist.

network@usdaw.org.uk

Jim Carty mourned by Usdaw

Usdaw was deeply saddened to hear the news that former Southern divisional officer and lifelong trade unionist Jim Carty died in January, he was 59.

Jim, who retired in April 2013, had a long and illustrious membership of Usdaw that spanned almost 40 years. He first joined Usdaw in the early '70s when he worked for Tesco.

He quickly became active in his local branch and later went on to study at Ruskin College Oxford on a union scholarship in 1980.

He was appointed to the organising staff in 1982. He was promoted to deputy divisional officer in 2003 and to divisional officer in 2010. He had stints at the Basingstoke, Andover, Faversham, Croydon and Morden offices.

General secretary John Hannett paid this tribute. "It was a tragedy that Jim didn't get to do the many things he had planned for his retirement.

"He gave a lifetime of commitment to the trade union and labour movement and even after retiring was keen to

put more back into his local community.

"I know he took a great deal of satisfaction of seeing the reps in his division progress and grow into their roles just like Jim had back in the '70s. He was a great servant and ambassador for Usdaw, popular with his colleagues and an inspiration to the division's activists.

"Our deepest condolences go out to his family and the many friends he made over the years. He will be sadly and deeply missed."



Union parliament 2015

Rights at work, health and safety and the future of the NHS look set to dominate this year's Annual Delegate Meeting (ADM) to be held in Blackpool from April 26-29.

Other issues include wages, transport and the economy. With 116 propositions appearing on the preliminary agenda paper, any amendments will be included in the interim agenda paper, before the final agenda paper is presented to the conference.

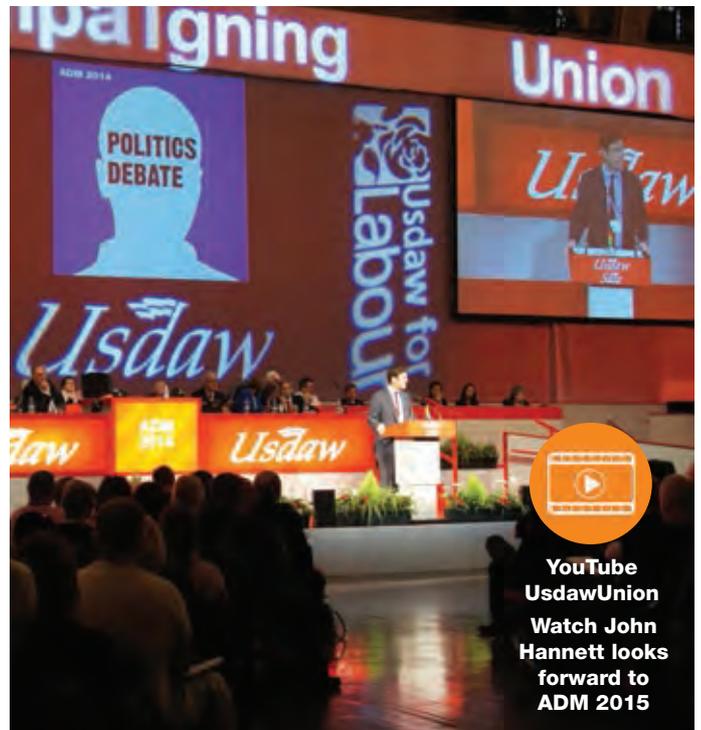
The ADM is just a week before the general election on May 7 giving the event a highly charged political feel. Guest speakers from the Labour Party are expected at the four-day event.

There will also be timetabled debates on the cost of living, equalities, and politics as part of

the three executive council statements to ADM.

"This ADM will give us the chance to set policies and priorities for the coming 12 months," said general secretary John Hannett. "But it will also give delegates the chance to reflect on the last five years of Tory-led Coalition government. Falling real wage levels, rocketing fuel bills, and cuts to in-work benefits are all our members have to show since 2010.

"We've also seen a sustained attack on workers' rights with tribunal fees, the qualifying period increased to two years, and a cut in the redundancy consultation period. If the Tories get back in we can expect more of the same and in fact probably much more severe anti-worker, anti-trade union measures."



Sure Start for Labour

Labour will seek to double the number of childcare places offered by Sure Start centres and create a statutory obligation for them to provide access to childcare, as well as new powers to widen their use.

Shadow education secretary Tristram Hunt told the BBC that Labour would seek to 'save' Sure Start centres following hundreds of closures under pressure from cuts, and offer them the ability to open their doors to charities and local providers.

Labour aims to make the centres 'family hubs in the community' that can reach more people than ever.

Poundland to buy 99p rival

High street discounter Poundland looks set to buy rival 99p Stores for £55 million if the deal gets the go-ahead from the competition authorities.

Store closures could follow where duplicate shops co-exist in the same area. Poundland has 521 shops while 99p Stores has 251.



City money funds Tories

The Tory Party will be funded by Mayfair hedge funds and Monaco tax avoiders according to Labour after details emerged of the Conservative Party's big City backers.

The number of Tory donors who have made their fortunes in the City has doubled during this parliament and are now displacing the more 'traditional' donors of industrialists and entrepreneurs. The money will help fund the Tory's general election campaign.

Labour also claims the Coalition has kept a tax loophole that benefits their London-based financial backers.

Discounter to expand in UK

Aldi has announced plans to open more than 70 new stores in the UK.

The new stores will create roles for 150 store managers and 300 assistant store managers. The discounter will also recruit 4,500 full-time and part-time staff for the stores.

The openings will increase the number of stores in Aldi's UK portfolio to more than 600.



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Con artists at work!

Fraudsters who want to rob workers of their hard-earned pension pots show no signs of stopping their illegal activity.

In fact they are making their operations even more sophisticated in order to hook, hustle and defraud unwitting workers who are conned by the promise of easy cash.

Pensions officer Debra Blow is keen to warn Usdaw members that their retirement income is at risk. "Pension scammers will tell you they can give you cash from your pension pot even if you have not yet reached 55," said Debra. "What they don't tell you is that you will subsequently face hefty fines from the tax man if you do this.

"What's more if members agree to transfer their pension pots they will be hit by massive transfer fees hidden in the small print. The scammers also don't tell you that the remainder of

BEWARE PENSION SCAMS
HAVE YOU BEEN ENCOURAGED TO TRANSFER YOUR PENSION POT?
The HOOK and the HUSTLE

The HOOK
Contact is usually out of the blue: a text or cold call, sometimes via websites.
THIS IS THE HOOK!
Transfer your pension pot to us.
• Guaranteed returns of 8% on your savings.
• Immediate access to cash.
• We can offer non repayable loans.
• Why wait till 55 access to your pension pot now.

The HUSTLE
Scammers will suggest it is part of a Government initiative, or that it is time for your annual review.
They will claim that their offer is a once in a lifetime opportunity, or that they've found a legal loop hole.
They will put you under pressure to sign up quickly often sending a motorcycle courier for your paperwork.
They will have a very professional looking website because the scammers are good at what they do.

THIS IS THE HUSTLE

The Reality
THIS IS THE REALITY
Pension scams are serious. If you fall victim, it's likely that you could lose some, but more than likely all of your pension savings.
The scammers don't tell you that they will take excessive commission costs or fees for dealing with your transfer sometimes up to one third of your pension pot.
If you receive cash from your pension before you are 55 you are likely to be hit by significant tax charges. HMRC will charge you usually more than half of the value of your pension pot!
Last year it was reported that pension scams amounted to a loss of at least half a billion pounds.

Usdaw says, "if it sounds too good to be true it often is!"
If you are approached by an adviser to transfer your pension pot and you have any concerns contact the Usdaw Pensions Section on 0161 224 2904 or email your enquiry to pensions@usdaw.org.uk

your pension pot will be put in very high risk investments leaving members with next to nothing.

"These scammers are clever; they look professional, slick and legitimate but they are still engaged in fraudulent activity which our members should steer well clear of – no matter

how tempting the offer. If something sounds too good to be true – it probably is."

Usdaw has produced a flyer for union noticeboards (available from the stationery section at central office). Reps should also visit the pensions section of the website for all of the up-to-date information on the industry.

Latest news round-up...

- The Low Pay Commission has recommended the national minimum wage should rise in October by 20p to £6.70 an hour for the adult rate. It said the three per cent rise would benefit 1.2 million workers.
- Labour leader Ed Miliband has said serving MPs should not earn extra money as directors or consultants. His call came after former foreign secretaries Jack Straw and Malcolm Rifkind were suspended from their Parties following a sting operation which allegedly showed the two willing to use their contacts for cash.
- Support for UKIP has fallen to its lowest level for over a year the latest poll has shown. It puts Labour on 36 per cent, Tories 32, UKIP 11, and LibDems on seven. Bookies expect another hung parliament.

Cash in the attic for landlords



Private landlords are benefiting from public subsidy to the tune of up to £26.7bn a year, having increased in number by 120,000 in 2014, according to a new report.

Campaign Group Generation Rent has highlighted the figures, which it collated by considering the contributions to landlords made via housing benefit (£9.3bn), tax relief for wear and tear (£1.69bn), mortgage

interest tax relief (£6.63bn) and Capital Gains tax relief (£9.906bn).

The report anticipates a further expansion of the already-booming buy-to-let market following new pension liberalisation measures to be implemented in April, and highlights the preferential terms enjoyed by such purchasers when seeking a mortgage.

www.generation-rent.com

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Election results 2015

President Jeff Broome will serve a fourth term after he was re-elected for the third time in February.

Jeff will head up the 15 lay members of the Executive Council (EC) – the union’s

governing body – for the next three years.

He will be joined by 10 sitting members who were also re-elected; four new members; Andrea Watts Kevin Dolan, Brain Loughhead, and Jean Hession will serve their first

term from late April and they will be joined by Mike Dixon who previously sat on the EC from 2006-12.

General secretary John Hannett said : “Congratulations and welcome to all of the EC members and many thanks to

those EC members who stood down at the last election.

“I look forward to working with Jeff and the rest of the team in the coming years to grow the union, defend our members’ interests and deliver a first-class service to the membership.”



President Jeff Broome



North West Danielle McCusker, Kevin Dolan & Jan Jervis



South Wales & Western Barbara Wilson & Dennis Stinchcombe



Eastern Barbara Woolford & Simon Vincent



Midlands Andrea Watts & Maureen Bowen



North Eastern Brian Loughhead & Mike Dixon



Scottish Jean Hession & Peter Devine



Southern Amy Murphy & John Barstow





Judge the Coalition on its record says Usdaw

Network talked to the main players at the national political conference...

John Hannett

“Our reps can play a vital role in securing a Labour victory. We don't have the money the Tories have but we do have people on the shopfloor who can talk face-to-face to members, explain policies on the minimum wage, the NHS, schools and our communities.

Character assassination of Labour politicians is a tactic to divert attention from the Coalition's record. It's policies that matter. Labour MPs listen to our members, Tory MPs don't.

In fact the Coalition has stopped new rules being introduced to protect public-facing workers from attack. It also spent thousands to stop our legal attempts to compensate workers made redundant without consultation.

I'm fearful if the Tories get back in workers' rights and trade unions will be attacked further. Our living standards, and the future of the NHS are both at massive risk should the Tories win.

Liz Kendal MP

“Labour wants to help carers who work and look after a loved-one. We want to work with unions and employers to make it work and get a fair deal for family carers. It's good for business, the economy and families.

This election isn't about politicians. It's about you. Your jobs and careers; your rights and dignity at work; your homes, communities and local

services; your kids and your hopes for a better future.

Without progress on all these issues, families will continue to struggle and we'll struggle as a country too.

Yes the right-wing press will attack Ed Miliband but Usdaw members know what's happened to their wages, what's going on in their communities, they don't want another five years of the Tories. People want to know about the issues and what we're going to do for them and their families and we'll be talking to people directly, not resorting to personal attacks. We won't let Usdaw members down.

Greg McClymont MP

“The big difference between us and the Tories is we want to rebuild the pension system so it works for working people and that money invested provides a decent income in retirement. In particular we want to ensure pension investment companies don't take too much in fees.

Our policy of auto-enrolment has worked but the Tories set the threshold too high and still many people miss out. We want a system that shares the risk between employers, employees and the state and is not shouldered exclusively by individual workers.

Our message is one of hope – on pensions, on jobs, on wages, on the economy – only Labour will tackle the low pay problem, but it's critically important we get the 16m people who didn't vote in 2010 back to the ballot box in May.

Rob Flelo MP

“This is serious stuff. It's about rights at work, it's about the NHS, it's about wages and a decent standard of living for Usdaw members.

We know voter turnout has been falling for many years but voting does make a difference otherwise non-voters are allowing others to make decisions on their behalf.

The Tories' claim that they've fixed the economy is a sham. They have also hidden behind the austerity agenda to launch an ideologically driven assault on those on low pay, the disabled, the ill and the vulnerable.

If you want a government who cares for you, your family, your workplace and your community it has to be Labour. For more despair vote Tory.

Lucy Powell MP

“May 7 represents a big choice between more of the same or a better plan to ensure all working families succeed and not just those round the boardroom table.

We have strong policies on the economy, on energy, on training, on employment and the NHS – which is in crisis after five years of the Coalition. Voters are sick and tired of personal attacks we want to talk about the issues and policies. We want to appeal to young voters who have been hammered by the Tories.

The vast majority of Usdaw members have seen wages fall and bills rise. Our policies are the only ones that will deliver to those around the kitchen table and not just those round the boardroom table.



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LIZ KENDALL MP



GREG MCCLYMONT MP



LUCY POWELL MP



ROB FLELO MP



JOHN HANNETT
GENERAL SECRETARY



DEBRA TOWNER



LORRAINE HAVES



SIMON WILLMOTT

LABOUR'S PLANS

In the workplace

- Increase the minimum wage to £8 an hour and strengthen enforcement measures for non/under payers.
- Cut taxes for the low paid and increase taxes for the very wealthy.
- Tackle zero-hours contracts.

In the community

- Give young people better prospects on training, education and employment and votes for 16 and 17 year-olds.
- Build 200,000 new homes each year.
- Protect tenants from being ripped-off.
- Freeze energy prices and replace the energy watchdog.
- Extend and improve childcare.
- Invest in the NHS, give mental health higher priority and improve care for cancer patients.



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Debra Towner South Wales and Western division

“The local foodbank has seen a two thirds increase in usage over the last couple of years. People are struggling, tax credits have been cut, bedroom tax has hurt people, for normal working people it's hard and I don't believe the Tories when they say the economy is fixed.

I've been inspired to work towards a Labour government to help get better wages and turn the economy around. The speakers have been very good and they have cut through the

negativity we see in the media. We have to get people registered and using their vote. Our NHS depends on it. We can make a difference.

Lorraine Haves North West division

“We looked at the impact on family incomes since the Coalition came to power. I'm a working parent and struggling to make ends meet and so are my colleagues. It's been tough since 2010. There are too many low hours contracts. It's great to discuss the issues with like-minded people and we all realise the importance of getting the Labour vote out.

Simon Willmott Midlands division

“We looked at the myths put out by UKIP who don't have any policies for our members in fact they want us out of the EU but workers' rights have been improved by being in the EU.

Labour's approach is honest and open. My members haven't seen any upturn in the economy or their household income. We can't afford another five years of the Tories.

THE COALITION'S RECORD ON WORK, WAGES AND THE NHS

- Increased the qualifying period before you can claim unfair dismissal from one to two years.
- Introduced fees for employment tribunals from at least £1,200.
- Cut the redundancy consultation period.
- Stood idly by as the growth in zero-hours contracts soared.
- Cut back on health and safety inspectors and weakened regulations.
- Increased VAT to 20 per cent.
- Average real wages down by £1,600 since 2010.
- Froze and/or cut in-work and other benefits.
- Failed to invest in the NHS with waiting times increasing.
- Massive cuts to social care budgets.
- Spent £3 billion trying to reorganise the NHS.

MPs slam tax avoiders

The public have had enough of large corporations and wealthy individuals avoiding their tax obligations but revelations continue...

One of the Big Four accountancy firms is promoting corporate tax avoidance on an 'industrial scale', and the tax industry needs more stringent government regulation, according to the House of Commons' Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

A PAC report slammed PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC) and its fellow big firms for 'marketing and promoting tax avoidance schemes'.

Labour MP and PAC chair Margaret Hodge said: "The Government must take a more active role in regulating the tax industry, as it evidently cannot be trusted to regulate itself."

A cache of almost 28,000 documents unearthed by the



International Consortium of Investigative Journalists describing tax deals struck with Luxembourg, showing the tiny EU state was facilitating more than 1,000 multinationals in tax avoidance activities, which although entirely legal, the effect of the schemes was to reduce the corporation tax bills of large multinationals.

The PAC was also 'sceptical' that the firm had kept Her Majesty's

Revenue and Customs abreast of its activities. "We believe there is no clarity about the boundary between acceptable tax planning and aggressive tax avoidance.

Multinational companies do not need to conduct any business of substance in the countries where they shift profits to in order to avoid tax," said Hodge.

PwC said it disagreed with the PAC's conclusions.



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Committee

HSBC under fire over tax dodging

Global bank HSBC, senior politicians and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) have been accused of failing to act over claims that HSBC helped clients dodge millions of pounds in taxes.

Documents detailing secret Swiss accounts run by the bank were leaked by an IT worker in 2007. Now the details of 30,000 accounts holding almost £78 billion of assets are being revealed after they were obtained by a French newspaper and analysed by a team of investigative journalists.

They were reported – by the BBC's *Panorama* and *The Guardian* – to include evidence that the bank colluded with some clients to hide accounts from tax authorities in their home countries.

The BBC said the documents include details of almost 7,000 British clients. Among those alleged to have been exposed as having accounts with the Swiss arm of HSBC are said to be

politicians, sports stars and celebrities, as well as criminals and traffickers.

Offshore accounts are not illegal, but many people use them to hide cash from the tax authorities. And while tax avoidance is perfectly legal, deliberately hiding money to evade tax is not.

Margaret Hodge MP said HMRC had not been sufficiently determined in tackling dodgy practices. "You are left wondering, as you see the enormity of what has been going on, what it actually takes to bring a tax cheat to court," she said.

"If this had been a benefit cheat they would have been up in court years ago. Now we have had only one tax cheat taken before the British courts."

Tax expert Richard Murphy pointed out that it was HMRC boss Dave Hartnett who negotiated the notorious tax deal that granted HSBC's bankers virtually guaranteed immunity from prosecution for any crimes they might have committed relating to tax fraud in Switzerland. And then in January 2013 he went on to work for ... HSBC.

In an angry parliamentary exchange Labour leader Ed Miliband accused David Cameron of being a 'dodgy prime minister surrounded by dodgy donors', in a row over Tory Party supporters with Swiss bank accounts.

The *Guardian* reported the Conservatives have raised more than £5m from HSBC clients with Swiss accounts. In a heated clash at Prime Minister's Questions, Mr Miliband asked Mr Cameron how he would explain the 'revolving door between Tory Party HQ and the Swiss branch of HSBC'.

Ed Miliband said none of the Labour donors named in the list had 'given a penny on my watch' and claimed Mr Cameron was 'up to his neck in this'.

TESCO AN UPDATE

As Network went to press Usdaw was busy providing all the necessary support to members and reps as the retailer looks to close 43 stores, restructure its management roles, relocate its head office and change the pension scheme.

Store closures

Tesco announced their intention to close 43 stores. All stores have been selected because Tesco says they are unprofitable.

Despite Usdaw's effort, the tremendous support from our reps, and the help Usdaw has received from local Labour MPs and candidates it is unlikely to result in Tesco reversing its decision.

Usdaw's first priority has been to optimise redeployment opportunities for affected staff who wish to stay with Tesco. Arrangements are in place to facilitate this.

Where redundancy is unavoidable Lifelong Learning Reps have been supporting members with learning events in stores and providing access to, eg CV writing, interviews skills, money advice and arranging one-to-one guidance on courses, vocational qualifications and external job opportunities.

Store management structure change

Following a pilot last year in January 2015 Tesco announced they wanted to make changes to the management structure in all large stores (Extras and Superstores).

How the changes affect store structures and management roles will vary from store to store. The largest population of staff affected are team leaders. This role will be removed in most departments with the exception of checkouts, dotcom and post office. The store management structure changes are not about a reduction in headcount in stores but a restructure of roles in stores.

A range of options are available to support as many staff as possible to stay with Tesco. Briefings have taken place to provide an overview of the changes in each store.

The briefings mark the start of the 45 day individual consultation period

(90 days Northern Ireland). The first individual consultation meetings will explain how and why their individual role is affected and the options available to consider. They will receive a colleague guide to take away from the first meeting to reflect and consider their options. Members are entitled to be supported and represented during the consultation meeting by union reps.

Head office restructure

Tesco intend to close their Cheshunt Office and relocate Head Office functions to Welham Garden.

In the first instance it has been agreed to invite applications for voluntary redundancy. All staff employed on a Tesco Head Office contract, with the exception of a couple of functions that are not in scope, can apply for voluntary redundancy.

There is no obligation on either the company or the individual to accept or take voluntary redundancy. However, it is hoped that this will limit compulsory redundancies although some may be unavoidable.

Proposed changes to Tesco pensions

Tesco wants to change the pension scheme and is legally obliged to consult with Usdaw on its proposals. Usdaw will consider in full the company's business case. At the end of the process, should Tesco go ahead and close the defined benefit scheme, they will be required to provide an alternative pension arrangement, which will also form part of the consultation. Usdaw's priority will be to maintain good pension provision

General secretary John Hannett

"All of this upheaval has been very unsettling for our members but our reps and officials are working hard to protect jobs and deliver practical help and representation on a one-to-one basis.

"We are also looking to provide advice and guidance where redundancy is unavoidable via our lifelong learning team.

"I'd also like to thank those Labour MPs and prospective Labour Party parliamentary candidates for the support they have offered Usdaw locally during the last few months.

USDRAW Our aims

- First and foremost to save members' jobs and avoid compulsory redundancies.
- Secondly to ensure members are redeployed if their job is at risk.
- Thirdly to make sure members are fully supported during the consultation process.
- Fourthly to inform members of the choices available to them whether that's on voluntary redundancy, redeployment, transfer, re-training and support to apply for other vacancies in Tesco or externally.
- Individual circumstances will determine which options are best for affected members so it's important individuals have the time, information and support to make an informed decision.

How will Usdaw keep its reps up-to-date and fully informed?

- Regular updates and briefings via the post, the website and email communications.
- Regular contact from your local area organiser.
- Support from the Tesco Team at central office.

for all Tesco staff. We recognise that this is a worrying time so we will be supporting, advising and keeping our members updated on any future developments.

Remember: for those members who are in the scheme the pension they have already built-up will not be affected.

"This is a fast moving and fluid situation and I'm aware by the time reps read this, events will have moved on. But I'd like to reassure members and reps Usdaw is doing everything it can to support them at this very difficult time."



www.usdaw.org.uk/news

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Usdaw
Organising
For
Equality

Manchester
13 & 14 June
2015

Usdaw is organising a national get-together for its LGBT members in Manchester on 13 & 14 June 2015

This is a chance to find out more about the issues LGBT members face and what support you'd like from Usdaw to tackle harassment, get more involved and organise your workplace.

To put your name forward, you can:

- Email lgbt@usdaw.org.uk
- Phone your local Usdaw office **0845 60 60 640***
- Visit www.usdaw.org.uk and download a nomination form.

Places are limited so don't delay – put your name forward by **Friday 10 April**.

*calls charged at local rate



Shared leave option



THE RULES ON PARENTAL LEAVE ARE CHANGING

A new way for parents to share leave in the first year after their baby's birth is on the way, writes equalities officer Jo Bird.

Eligible parents whose baby is due on or after the 5 April will be able to opt in to a new scheme called 'Shared Parental Leave'. It allows a new mother to give notice to end her maternity leave and pay period any time after the first two weeks of her baby's birth and share the remainder of her leave and pay (up to a maximum of 50 weeks' leave and 37 weeks' pay) with her partner.

The new scheme does not replace maternity leave and pay or ordinary paternity leave and pay currently available to new parents. Maternity and paternity pay and leave will continue to run alongside the new scheme.

The introduction of Shared Parental Leave is an alternative option and gives parents the opportunity to use the leave available to them in their baby's first year more flexibly.

For example, under existing

arrangements a woman must end her maternity leave and return to work before her partner can take up any remaining leave as additional paternity leave. Under the new scheme there is scope for parents (who qualify) to take shared parental leave at the same time so that they can both be at home with their new baby.

Not all parents will qualify for Shared Parental Leave or pay as each parent has to meet length of service conditions as well as an employment and earnings test. The rules for qualifying are similar to the existing rules for establishing entitlement to statutory maternity and paternity pay. Similarly not all parents will want to opt in to the new scheme as shared parental pay mirrors the relatively low levels of statutory maternity and paternity pay. From April 2015 Shared Parental Pay is £139.58 a week.

The mother can only share her leave with one other person and that person has to share the main responsibility for caring for her child and be either the child's father or the

mother's partner. A partner is a spouse, civil partner or someone you are in a relationship with and live with at the time of the child's birth.

Unfortunately this means that a single parent, who does not share responsibility for bringing up her baby with the other parent cannot share her leave with anyone else.

Shared Parental Leave is also available to adoptive parents who have a child placed with them for adoption on or after the 5 April and to parents in same sex relationships who meet the eligibility criteria. In some circumstances parents who have a child via surrogacy arrangements may also be entitled to Shared Parental Leave and Pay.

The union is keen to ensure that reps and members know about and understand the new scheme. Usdaw's maternity and parental rights guide will be updated and re-issued in April 2015 to reflect the changes.

In the meantime if you have any questions contact the equalities section or your area organiser.



Watch
John Hannett
on the LGBT
get-together



equalities
@usdaw.org.uk

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MEMBERSHIP WEEK 13-19 APRIL 2015

This 'extra' Membership Week compliments the ones held in January and June.

These weeks have made a significant contribution to Usdaw's membership growth over the last eight years.

There is a wealth of recruitment materials available for reps to help promote the Week.

Reps can use themed events on Legal Plus, FirstCall Usdaw, pensions, health and safety to raise awareness at their workplaces



During Membership Week, union officials dedicate all of their time to working with reps to mount on-site recruitment drives to bring in new members.

A bigger union is a stronger and more influential union at work and in the community

Don't forget to let the Network team know what you do during Membership Week and send your photos to network @usdaw.org.uk

Did you know? Usdaw has added more than 110,000 new members in the last 15 years and is the fastest growing union in the UK

It is tough in 2015 with restructures, closures and short-hour contracts, but I'm proud of the work our reps do on a day-to-day basis standing up for their members, signing up their colleagues and making the workplace fairer.

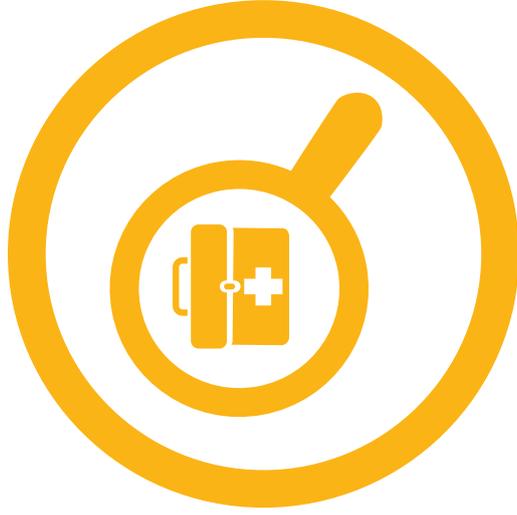
General Secretary John Hannett



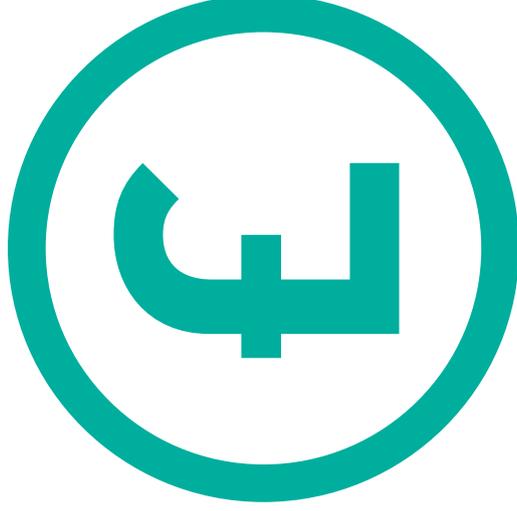
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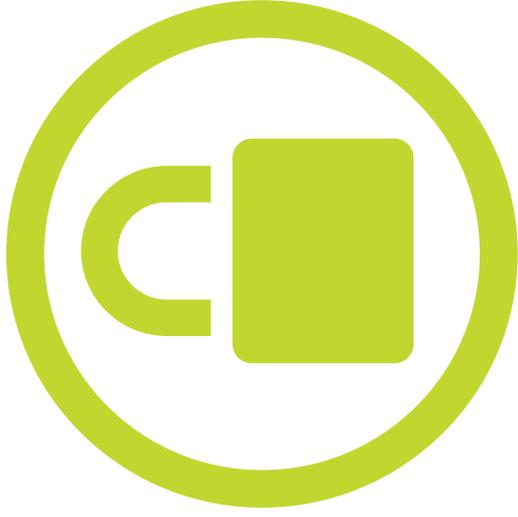
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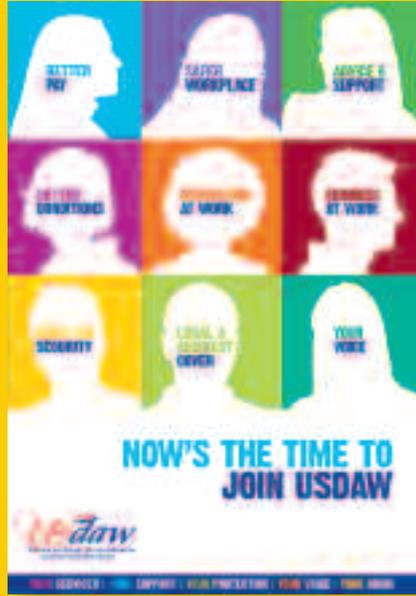
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Workers' Rights
A guide for full-time and part-time workers

Usdaw



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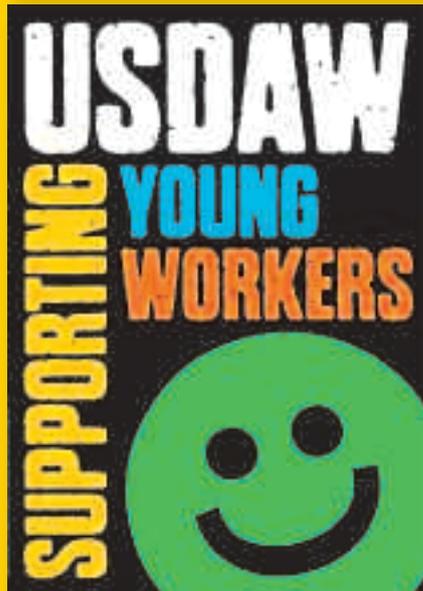
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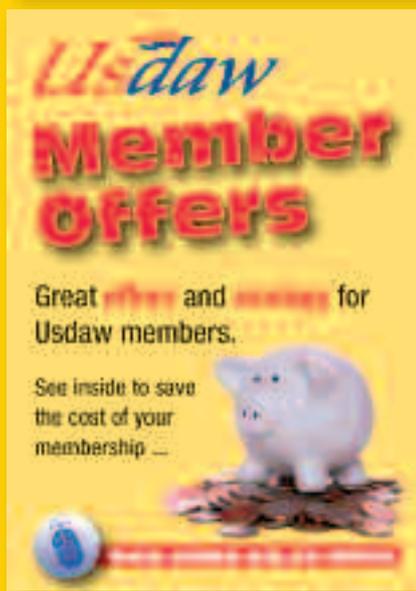
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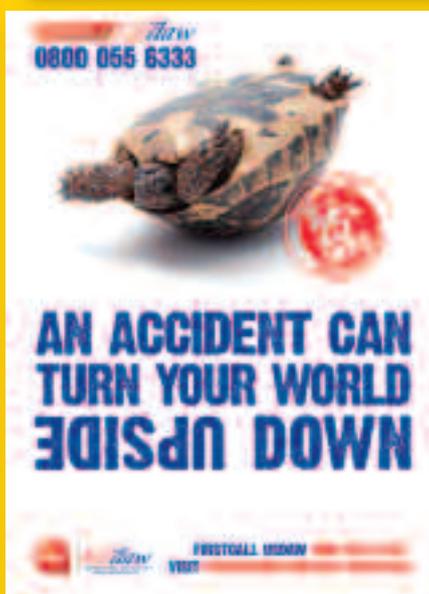
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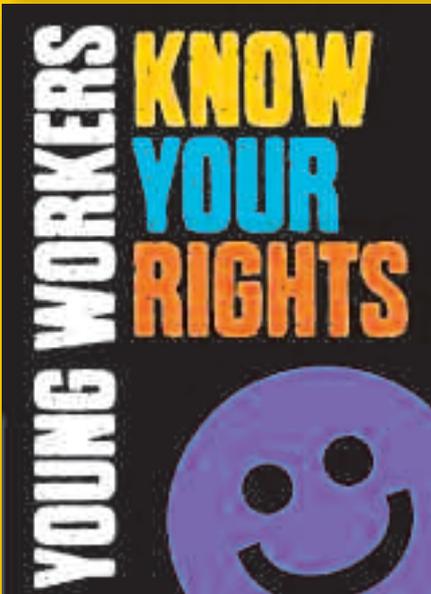
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In the spotlight *James Dietsch*

North Eastern division's James Dietsch talks to Network about his experiences as a rep...

I became active because I wanted to support our members who were not so confident, boost moral in my store, and to make it a better place to work. Rep Catherine Wright recruited me, Liam Algor and organiser Mick Soper supported me too – so special thanks to all of them.

The best thing about being active is meeting new people, talking to members about their problems, supporting someone in their time of need... and getting the results they want.

The downside is there's not enough hours in the day to do everything I want.

The most important issues for our members are not enough increase in the hourly wage, recent restructure changes within the big 4 supermarkets and welfare being cut.

Since I became an activist I have become more confident in my role and as person. I feel I can approach anybody. Before being a rep I was an unorganised mess – but now I'm extremely organised and practically sleep next to my file-o-fax!

Recruitment has been easier at the moment as I would say people are crying out for our union.

The advice I would give to a member thinking about becoming a rep is, go for it! So far I'm having the time of my life, I love the people I work with, the training is first-class and the support you get from the area organisers is amazing.

The Tory-led Coalition's policy on the bedroom tax, benefits and tax-credit cuts have upset my members. And still no decent increase in the national minimum wage.

If I was prime minister I would make it illegal to work on Boxing Day along with Christmas Day, so that our members can enjoy what limited time they have, with their families.

The news story that has caught my eye is that certain people in the Tory government are helping some people avoid tax. Helping the rich get richer and the more vulnerable people less well off.

If I could change anything about Usdaw it would be to give a greater voice to our younger members – more presence in schools, colleges and universities.

I have applied for Academy1, so have to wait and see if I have a place. I would also very much like to get involved in becoming a Union Learning Rep.

The most important issues for young workers are zero-hours contracts and the need for more full-time jobs. They are also vulnerable because they don't know enough about their rights at work. There should be more quality apprenticeships too. Wage increases haven't been great and I think the national minimum wage should be more than £8 an hour to give people the chance of a reasonable standard of living. I'd also regulate the banks more.

Have you been on any Usdaw training courses? Yes the rep courses and health and safety courses which I've almost completed.

I'm hoping to go to the ADM this year, I'll find out at my next branch meeting.

We are looking for the next volunteer for our activist in-depth series, email Network to tell your story



network@
usdaw.org.uk

Fact file & trivia

EMPLOYER *Tesco*

OCCUPATION *Customer assistant* AGE *27*

LIVES *Chesterfield, Derbyshire*

JOINED USDAW: *2011*

USDAW ACTIVIST SINCE: *2013*

UNION POSITIONS HELD: *Shop steward, health and safety rep, North Eastern divisional youth committee*

I SPEND MY SPARE TIME: *Reading, socialising, shopping, gardening and plane spotting!*

MY FAVOURITE...

TV... *Benidorm*

BOOK...

Jason Bourne Books, anything spy related

THE BEST MOMENT OF MY LIFE SO FAR... *has been meeting my partner Lindsey and becoming a union rep*



Latest appointments

One promotion and two new appointments...

Chris Henry

Christine 'Chris' Henry is the new deputy divisional officer for Eastern division, which boasts more than 65,700 members.

Chris, 56, has worked for Usdaw for 18 years and took up her new role last December and remains based at the Bury St Edmunds office.

The former Tesco shop steward joined the union's staff in 1996 when she was appointed area organiser at the old Norwich office and has moved offices following the divisional reorganisation.

"I've seen a few changes in the division during my time as an area organiser with the closure of our offices in Norwich and Ipswich and the opening of the new Bury St Edmunds office, which is now well established," said Chris.

"But what has remained constant is the spirit of the division. I'm looking forward to working with my colleagues and our dedicated teams of reps and activists to help build and develop our division even more during the challenging times ahead."

Meanwhile, two new area organisers have joined the Southern division's staff. Aron Vernon and Bryan Kee took up their roles at the Morden office in September.

Aron Vernon

Aron Vernon, 29, joined the union in 2002 aged 16 when he worked for Tesco, Faversham in Kent.

Four years later he was elected a shop steward and in 2008 he was selected for the union's Academy1, aged 22. Last year he represented his branch as a delegate at ADM.

"I'm very happy with my appointment," said Aron. "I've wanted to work for the union for a long time and I'm delighted to have the opportunity.

"I'm responsible mainly for retail, the 'Big 4' as well as Marks and Spencer, Boots, Poundland and Argos to name a few, along with one distribution site.

"I also have responsibility for Berendsen, the industrial laundry service company based in Chatham.



Pictured: Chris Henry, (top right) Bryan Kee and (right) Aron Vernon



"I've been in my role six months now and I'm thoroughly enjoying it.

"I'd like to say a big thank you to everyone in the Southern division for helping me settle in so quickly."

Bryan Kee

Bryan Kee, 52, is a former Sainsbury's shop assistant from Farnborough in Hampshire. He joined Usdaw in 2007 and was elected shop steward and health and safety rep two years later.

He was selected for Academy1 in 2012 and later Academy2. In 2013 he was elected divisional councillor.

"I'm loving the job and the best bit about it is no two days are the same," said Bryan.

"Getting to know the South London area has been challenging yet very rewarding

"I'm lucky enough to work with and have the support of a dedicated, hard-working and focused network of reps.

"The Academies were vital. They were both excellent training grounds for me and were instrumental in my development.

"I'm looking forward to working with and developing our reps in the division so together we can build the union and raise the profile of Usdaw."

Job vacancy in Eastern

There is a vacancy for an area organiser based at the London office in the Eastern division.

Applicants should have experience of recruiting and organising in Usdaw sectors and should be a member of the union.

Area organisers are responsible for providing detailed advice and representation to members on a wide range of issues including employment law and health and safety.

A full driving licence is also required and the successful applicant will be required to live within a 50 mile radius of the London office.

Completed application forms should be returned to central office and marked 'organiser' by Friday March 27.

For details on this and other vacancies with the union visit the website.



www.usdaw.org.uk

BEDROOM TAX HIT

The bedroom tax will hit another one million people and cost families £3,800 if the Tories are re-elected, warns Labour MP Helen Goodman.

I first realised what a devastating impact the bedroom tax was going to have two years ago when one of my constituents, a woman with a chronic illness, told me that it would leave her with just £18 to live on after she'd paid rent and utilities.

So I thought I'd see if it was possible to live on £18 a week – and as you can see in my video diary, it of course, isn't possible and on the last day I ran out of food.

In the last two years nearly one million people have been subject to this change – costing them on average £700 a year. No wonder we've seen an explosion in the use of food banks – a phenomenon barely heard of in Britain five years ago.

I met a woman who was unlucky enough to have her job hours cut just as the bedroom tax was introduced. To avoid going into debt she gave up her family home and slept on the sofa at her daughter's for nine months. Some 60 per cent of people paying the bedroom tax are in arrears. Once people are in serious debt like this they are of course prey to loan sharks and payday lenders.

The cruelty of the bedroom tax is illustrated by the fact that two thirds of those paying are disabled or have a disabled person in the family. Though disabled children are allowed a room of their own, under the rules disabled adults must share. This isn't always possible and they also need space to store their equipment.

What will Labour do?

Labour has pledged to abolish the bedroom tax as quickly as possible, if we win the election.

What if the Tories win again?

If the Tories win again the average bill over the life of the parliament will be £3,800, according to The House of Commons Library and in London this rises to a staggering £5,300.

All the time, new people are being caught in this net and the Government's own figures show one



Udaw member Sarah Langton and her family faced severe problems when the bedroom tax was introduced.

million people not currently paying, will be caught if the Tories win again.

This is because people often find that under the Government's rules they are treated as having a spare room if their children leave home or someone in their family dies. A major group affected are carers and sometime carers, when a parent dies they have a brief respite before the bedroom tax kicks in. This is a disgraceful way to treat those who have devoted years looking after relatives – and in doing so saved the taxpayer thousands.

People's circumstances are of course changing all the time – so all of the six and a half million tenants in social housing under pension age are at risk.

Why don't people move to avoid the tax?

When the Tory-led Coalition Government introduced the bedroom tax they said it was to give people an incentive to move to smaller units and free up larger homes for families. But only one in 20 has moved to a smaller place in the social sector. This is because there is a shortage of one and two bedroom flats.

Moreover, the Government knew this when they introduced the bedroom tax. When it was

introduced there were 1.7m households on the waiting list in England of whom 870,000 wanted one bedroom flats and the original impact assessment forecast 660,000 people would pay a total of £480 million. This shows how cynical this move was.

Of course there is a housing shortage and everyone knows that in the long run we need more houses including affordable homes. That's why Labour is also committed to building 200,000 homes a year by the end of the parliament if we win.

The Tories and Lib Dems introduced this measure together. Only a Labour prime minister in Downing Street will guarantee that the bedroom tax is abolished.

Helen Goodman MP



Video Diary
Watch Helen's challenge to live on £18 a week

Reps recruit at sites across UK

Retail workers, clerical staff, food manufacturing, transport and warehouse workers can all join Usdaw

Tesco House, Cardiff, Membership Week

Teamwork is paying off at the Tesco House call centre in Cardiff as reps continue to raise the union's profile with regular campaign and awareness days.

Membership Week provided the platform for their latest event in January with all the team chipping in with their contributions.

"We've done a few now and getting better organised each time," said **Andrew Jones**, 39, who has been a rep for almost three years and is one of a team of 20 reps.

"Planning ahead helps to get the most out of these events and ensures every staff member knows about Usdaw and the benefits of joining.

"Several members took the chance to speak with Mike Jenkins, an Usdaw panel solicitor, and the feedback was very positive, especially about Usdaw's Legal Plus service.

"We think it's important to hold these events on a regular basis. Even with all the publicity and promotional material we put out there, we still get plenty of people who don't know about the union, what it offers and how it improves our working lives.

"But it's very satisfying when staff say the day has been really helpful and informative. Many didn't realise the Legal Plus service was so comprehensive in its coverage. It's even better when new members sign up as three did on the day.

"We were also fortunate to have Tom Willis along from Usdaw Protect, which is one of Usdaw's affinity partners that provides members with offers and advice on life insurance.

"Members were pleased to find out more as some said they hadn't heard about it.

"And after the event we had many more enquiries from staff. We'll be following it up over the coming weeks and planning our next event."

Tesco Twickenham Membership Week

Academy2 graduate **Sally Payne** is putting her new skills to good use as a stand-down rep visiting stores across the Eastern division and supporting and organising reps in their own workplaces.

"I'm enjoying it – a different kind of challenge but I'm confident I can get results," said Sally, 48, who works for Morrisons in Yiewsley, Greater London.

"During Membership Week I joined area organiser Kevin Harrison and retired activist **Zaleem Rahiman** at the Tesco Extra store in Twickenham in Middlesex.

"I recruited 33 new members in no time on the day and went back a week later and signed up nine more.

"It was an interesting session as the news that Tesco were going to make store closures had just been announced and staff were obviously worried about the changes and the effect on their pensions.

"As well as the Legal Plus service which was extremely popular, staff were keen to make the most of our member offers across a broad range of issues like insurance, discounts, and support and advice.

"The general opinion from members was that they didn't know about many of the member offers available to them.

"That's why these awareness days are vital. We also need to make sure they are aware of the Usdaw website where members' benefits are only a click away."

Morrisons, Crewe Legal Plus Day

Highlighting the many benefits of Usdaw membership is helping to raise the profile of the union in workplaces across the UK.

"This was the first Legal Plus day we've had in our store and it was very popular, staff are already asking us to hold another one," said union rep **Sandrene Wright**, who has been a rep for eight years

Along with fellow rep **Susan Turner** the two have built



TESCO HOUSE
CARDIFF



TESCO
TWICKENHAM

membership up to 75 per cent at their Morrisons store in Crewe, Cheshire.

"Running a campaign day in-store is an ideal way of informing staff about the benefits of joining the union and in particular the many benefits the Legal Plus service provides for them.

"Such as reminding them not to use a high street or TV advertised solicitor because with Usdaw's Legal Plus and FirstCall service they get to keep 100 per cent of their compensation for personal injury and all other accident claims.

"Also our members have the benefit of a free session with a union solicitor to discuss any legal issue outside of the workplace, whether



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View the Recruitment and Organising gallery on the [UsdawUnion flickr page](#)



MORRISONS
CREWE



2 SISTERS FOOD GROUP
CARLISLE

that's about housing, consumer or matrimonial or any other issues.

"And don't forget the legal advice is available for close family members too.

"A lot of members were unaware that Legal Plus provided these services for them.

"Overall members were really impressed with the free will-writing service and many signed up on the day. Usdaw panel solicitor Danielle Durr enjoyed it too, she was kept busy all day.

"I'm delighted to say the event highlighted the union in a really positive way.

"We'll certainly be doing another Legal Plus campaign day soon."

2 Sisters Food Group, Carlisle, Legal Plus

The union's free will writing service proved popular at the 2 Sisters Food Group site in Carlisle when more than 30 members signed up after Usdaw's panel solicitor Rod Etherington visited the site.

"We have a good team of reps who made sure the event was a huge success," said **Carol Gill** who has been a rep for 16 years and helped to organise the event.

"We advertised the day on the noticeboard along with timeslots for members so that they could sit down with the solicitor. Every appointment was taken up within no time.

"And we were pleased that word

about the Legal Plus service got around fast and delighted when we were asked to put on another day especially for colleagues who couldn't make this one.

"Everyone sang the praises of the solicitor saying he made them feel relaxed and at ease when they were speaking to him.

"One member said: 'I've been thinking about getting a will but didn't know how to go about it so I kept putting it off'. While another said: 'I didn't feel like I was speaking to a solicitor, everything was explained in simple English in an easy-to-understand way. I felt like a weight had been lifted off me'."

"Another member had been having

Continued on page 24...

Awareness days play pivotal role

...continued from page 23

problems with her landlord and Rob wrote a list of steps she should take. She was delighted and is following his advice.

"We signed up three new members on the day and spoke to many more who took leaflets away with them."

Tesco Bank, Newcastle Membership Week

The team of reps at Tesco Bank in Newcastle ran a series of daily union awareness events during Membership Week and signed up 15 new members in January.

"Our first event was a Legal Plus Day on the Monday with 25 people completing the free will writing service," said **Garry Evans**, one of 11 reps at the site.

"This was really popular and people were surprised how easy it was to complete. We also had people who spoke to the solicitor for free advice on all kinds of things.

"Tuesday was our Learning Day, again, a great success! We offered free courses through Tribal, a flexible learning provider, 38 people signed up.

"Wednesday was member benefits day where we had information available about all the discounts and days out and offers available to members when they join.

"We gave away goody bags to every new member who signed up.

"Thursday was Better Health at Work day. We invited a fitness instructor and someone from the NHS who offered advice and gave out leaflets on a number of health issues as well as Drink Awareness.

"Friday was a mixture of everything we'd done throughout the week so we had people coming to sign up for the courses who'd missed the session on Tuesday.

"And we also had a tutor from the TUC who encouraged staff to interact and take part in brain training sessions on the ipads he provided.

"It was a really successful and busy week. We were all delighted our pre-planning and organising paid off. We'll be looking to do it again later in the year."

Greg Lucas, stand-down rep, Cumbria

Young Tesco rep **Greg Lucas** is making a name for himself as a stand-down rep around the Cumbria area.

The 21 year-old who has been active for 14 months has been seconded to help organise events in other workplaces.

"I ran a Legal Plus day in my own store in Whitehaven. It was a great success," said Greg, who is also the vice-chair of his branch.

"We have a well organised team of five reps and membership is at 81 per cent. I've been helped and supported all the way.

"I jumped at the chance of stand-down as it would test my skills and I would also have the opportunity to work with reps from other stores and learn from them too.

"I worked with the reps to organise Legal Plus Days at the Workington store in January and the Carlisle store in February.

"Staff were genuinely pleased to see someone from the union in their store.

"Both events were hugely successful in terms of the interest in the legal services. Staff joined mainly because they were uncertain about the changes and also the latest news about store closures.

"The feedback was very positive: One lady came to me the day after to thank me and said she couldn't believe how easy it was to use the free will service for herself and her husband.

"And we had so many staff take up appointments for the free will writing service at the Carlisle store that I had to request we have two solicitors on the day.

"I'm delighted with how well it's going for me and I'm keen to learn more."

Morrisons, Middlewich Legal Plus Day

With 12 months as an activist already under his belt Morrisons rep **Curtis Butler** from Middlewich in Cheshire is keen to take advantage of every



TESCO BANK
NEWCASTLE



GREG LUCAS
TESCO WORKINGTON

opportunity to get more involved.

"I can't stress enough how much I enjoy being a rep and helping members. It's a very worthwhile role. The only downside is I wish I had more time to spend on my union duties," said Curtis, 27.

"I've had a lot of support and encouragement from my area organiser and the training I've had has been superb and a real eye opener.

"I've learned a lot and I feel very confident dealing with union issues now.

"I'm also a member of our divisional young workers committee, again I'm enjoying it.

"Being involved in divisional activities has helped improve my understanding of how the union operates divisionally and nationally.

"I organised my first workplace event, a Legal Plus Day, in November which allowed me to put everything I've learned into practice. It was a



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MORRISONS
MIDDLEWICH



MORRISONS
SHELDON

great success for lots of reasons.

“It really showed the union and the excellent free Legal Plus service off in a very positive way. The solicitor was kept busy all day.

“It also gave me the opportunity to spend quality time with members and to speak to non-members and convince them to join.

“I feel as though I’m developing with every new experience. I’m looking forward to the advanced shop stewards course and I’m thinking of signing up for the vital role of health and safety rep.”

Morrisons Sheldon, Midlands,

Over the last 18 months new activist **Sue Ewer** has almost single-handedly transformed the Morrisons store in Sheldon in the West Midlands where membership has hit an all-time high of 72 per cent.

The brand new store opened in

June 2013 and employs 300 staff. Sue took on the role of union rep in November 2013.

“I was keen to get the communication channels up and running,” said Sue, 54.

“Apart from keeping the noticeboard up-to-date and making sure reps are known and available, I also put together a regular newsletter for members which has been really well received.

“We held our first in-store union campaign, a Legal Plus Awareness day, in October which was a huge success with seven new members signing up within no time.

“We were amazed how many members took advantage of a free legal session with our union solicitor and spoke to him about a range of issues. And 22 members registered for the free will-writing service.

“Staff also gained a new awareness of the excellent legal

package and other support Usdaw membership provides.

“The event created a real buzz and because there were so many people milling about other staff stopped to see what was happening, including one of our regional managers.

“I am enjoying my role and I was proud to win the Midlands divisional nomination for Most Promising New Activist and attend the National Organising Award ceremony in Manchester in January.

“I’m pleased with my progress and I’m looking forward to getting more involved and gaining more experience with the union.”



SUE EWER

Running a campaign day?
Let the Network team know at:
network@usdaw.org.uk

The Academy 2009 - where are they now?

The 2009 Academy saw four reps promoted to the union's organising staff, one works for Unison and most are still active...

Sharon Langham, 48, area organiser, Kegworth office.

Former Tesco team leader. "The Academy brought out the real me in terms of personal and vocational development. It was a great experience and I've made some friends for life. I was fortunate to be selected for Academy2 and in 2011 I was appointed area organiser. I'm still learning and loving my job and last year I attended and won my first employment tribunal."

Rab Donnelly, 41, area organiser, Edinburgh office.

Former driver Robert Wiseman Dairies. "The Academy – was the best thing I've ever done. It took me out of my comfort zone and my confidence grew with every new experience. I was going into workplaces for the first time communicating with managers on a daily basis, speaking to large groups of people. I could never see myself doing this. And thanks to that experience I'm now doing a job I love, working for the union."

Susan David, 56, area organiser, Cardiff office.

Former nightshift worker, Morrisons. "It's a fantastic opportunity to improve your skills, knowledge and self-confidence. The support and training both divisionally and nationally is second to none. When I was on Academy2 a vacancy came up for an area organiser, I applied and was successful. I can't believe I've been an organiser for nearly five years now. My colleagues are very supportive and I'm lucky to work with some amazing, hardworking reps."

Adrian Grabarski, 32, area organiser, Bristol office.

Former process technician, Robert Wiseman Dairies. "After completing

Academy1 and 2 I applied for an area organiser position and was successful. In June 2010 I took up my new role in the London office and two years later I transferred to the Bristol office.

"The Academy was a very positive experience, different to anything I'd ever done before. I had to learn how to adapt to different situations and this helped my development."

Gary Cleaver, 31, regional organiser, Unison.

Former team manager Home Delivery Network. "After the Academy I applied for an organiser's role with Unison and was successful. I'm now regional organiser for Yorkshire and Humberside.

"Moving from Usdaw to Unison was a massive culture change, however the basics are the same no matter where we organise. But if it wasn't for the organising techniques I learned on the Usdaw Academy I would not be where I am now."

Rep Janette Thomas, 49, Tesco Lewisham, London.

"The Academy gave me the confidence to get more involved. In 2010 I was elected branch chair and then secretary. I've attended the TUC conference, the TUC Black Workers' and Women's TUC, Usdaw's black and Asian weekend get-together and the retail trades conference. I've also sat on the Standing Orders Committee at ADM and I've stood again for this year."

Rep Michelle Fury, 41, Tesco Atherton, Manchester.

She is also a part-time tutor for the TUC. "The Academy opened my eyes and gave me the support, training and skills to progress. In 2010 I joined the divisional Tesco reps committee and in 2011 I was elected a divisional councillor for Usdaw.

"I spent last year shadowing Usdaw training officers Jenni Murray and Mark Bibby and in September I started as a part-time tutor with the TUC, which I do alongside my job with Tesco."

Rep Ben Baldwin, 48, Tesco Dereham, Norfolk.

"It gave me the confidence to take on new roles. I've represented members in other stores and companies other than Tesco.

"I'm also branch chair and an active branch member and attend ADM when funds allow of course!

"This year I'm up for selection as a Labour councillor in the May elections. I would never have thought about doing this if it hadn't been for the Academy."

Rep Kelly Hyde, 33, Co-operative Food, Durham.

"I'd been a rep for 18 months when I was selected for Academy1 and then Academy2. It was a great learning experience and confidence builder. Since then I've done a lot of stand-down and supported area organisers with new site openings in the North Eastern division."

Rep Nick Freeman, 50, Tesco Portadown, Northern Ireland.

"I was lucky to be selected for Academy2 in 2012. The experience was great for my development and gave me the confidence to apply for two area organisers' jobs with Usdaw. I always tell new reps about my experience and to put themselves forward for stand-down and the Academy, they'll never look back."

Rep Alan Hopson, 48, Morrisons Produce, Cheshire.

"I'd been a rep for 18 months when I applied for the Academy. I wanted to stretch myself and that's exactly what it did. I'm still an active rep, health and safety rep and in 2011 I was elected on to Usdaw's North West divisional council."

Rep Elizabeth Adegoke, 59, Poundland, Telford, Shropshire.

"The Academy encouraged me to get more involved. I'm an active member of my branch. I've been to summer school, many ADMs, divisional conferences and weekends, I even attended the national Political conference in Manchester in



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Academy graduates . . . (l-r, front row) Ruth Hayles, Dee Solomon, Donna Heapy, Chayoung Jeong, Maria Aldred, Julie Hainsworth, Andrina Stanislawski, Elizabeth Adegoke, (second) Joan Samuels, Janette Thomas, Viv Anderson, Scott Malcolm, Kim West, Sharon Best, Sharon Langham, (third) Nicholas Freeman, Adrian Grabarski, Paul Galluccio, John Brennand, Martin Baker, Susan David, Kelly Hyde, Terry Johnson (fourth) Alan Hopson, Robert Donnelly, Gary Cleaver, Andrew Wilson, Tony Sneddon, Michelle Fury, and Benedict Baldwin, (not pictured) Tracey Blunn and Sylvia D'Costa.

February. Being involved with the union there's always someone I can contact for advice and support and I've made some great friends."

Rep Joan Samuels, 56, Sainsbury's Oldbury.

"The Academy was a great learning experience and gave me the confidence to get more involved in my division. I'm a regular at branch meetings and I'm also chair of our divisional equalities forum having been vice-chair previously. I've attended the national black and Asian workers weekends and the political conference. I've met some great people along the way, I'd recommend it to anyone."

Rep John Brennand, 56, Sainsbury's Cramlington.

"I thoroughly enjoyed Academy1 and was lucky enough to be selected for Academy2 last year. I do a lot of stand-down where I can use the experience I've gained. I've learned to listen to people and then offer good advice. I've also learned to speak out and ask questions, it's the only way to learn. It's been one of the best things I've ever done."

Rep Tony Sneddon, 57, Kettle Produce, Fife.

"The Academy put me on a new road and gave me the confidence to push myself and take on new challenges. I do a lot of stand-down now and visit

lots of different retail stores in my area. I've also taken on the role of branch secretary and I'm a divisional councillor. I really enjoy my role with the union."

Rep Donna Heapy, 50, Co-op Group, Essex.

"I enjoyed the challenges with both Academy1 and then Academy2. I do a lot of stand-down in the London area focusing on the big four as well as Selfridges. I enjoy supporting reps and passing on the benefits of my own experiences. It's very rewarding supporting and helping to develop and encourage them.

"The Academy gave me the opportunity to develop and I love my role helping the union grow."

Terry Johnson, 46, Wincanton, Middlesex.

"The Academy has changed my life forever. It gave me the confidence and self-belief to push myself not only in my union work but in my job too. I was a fork-lift truck driver when I went on the Academy but last year I applied for a promotion at work and was successful."

Maria Aldred, 45, Morrisons, Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

"I went on to complete Academy2 and remained very active as a rep, branch chair, divisional councillor and a national rep for Morrisons. I'd also won the union's National

Individual Recruitment Award in 2008.

"Every experience gave me the confidence to push myself. I'm now a personnel manager and have a good relationship with all the reps I come into contact with."

Tracey Blunn, 48, now retired. Morrisons Beccles, Suffolk.

"I retired in February 2014 through ill-health but I keep in touch with the reps and help out whenever I'm needed.

"It was my rep Sharon Newson, who is sadly no longer with us, who saw something in me and pushed me to apply for the Academy. When I returned to my workplace I wanted to encourage and help my fellow reps too."

And the other graduates...

Still active are Sharon Best, Viv Anderson, Martin Baker and Julie Hainsworth.

Scott Malcolm and Chayoung Jeong **are still members** but not active.

Ruth Hayles, Dee Solomon and Sylvia D'Costa have since **left the union**.

Unfortunately Network was **unable to contact** Andrew Wilson, Paul Galluccio and Andrina Stanislawski.

Academy 2015 starts in May.

Controlling hazardous substances at work

The international TUC theme for this year's Workers' Memorial Day is prevention of exposure to hazardous substances.

In Britain most hazardous substances are covered by the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH).

Hazardous substances can kill. HSE statistics say there are well-over 13,000 deaths a year from lung disease and cancer. In addition thousands of workers suffer from painful skin disease and irritation as a result of exposure to common substances such as cleaning products and food ingredients. Here are answers to some common questions about COSHH.

Q. How do I know if something might cause me harm?

A. Under COSHH your employer has to identify substances at work that pose a risk to health. For serious risks such as cancer or asthma, they need to eliminate the chemical where possible or control exposure to the lowest level they can. For all substances they need risk assessments. To help them, suppliers are obliged to provide Safety Data Sheets with basic information on the risks. Union safety reps are entitled to see copies of risk assessments and Safety Data Sheets.

Q. I have to sweep the warehouse which has a concrete floor and there is dust everywhere what can I do?

A. The level of risk depends on what is in the dust but any dust can be dangerous in high concentrations. COSHH sets control limits for dust exposure.

However in recent years experts have decided that the limits in the regulations are far too high and that all dust should be much more tightly controlled. Dry sweeping is not a good idea. It would be better to use a vacuum fitted with a suitable filter. In really dusty places a suitable dust mask may also be needed.

Q. The vehicles delivering to our store keep their engines running and the smell of fumes are making me ill what can we do?

A. Diesel exhaust fumes are known to cause cancer. HSE estimated that over 650 people a year die from lung or bladder cancer caused by diesel exhaust. The fumes can also cause or aggravate other lung diseases. So it is important to stop exposure to the fumes. If the

engines cannot be turned off, can the vehicles park elsewhere on site? In some places use of local exhaust ventilation to remove the fumes may also be needed.

Q. Do I need regular medicals because I work with hazardous substances?

A. If a substance causes symptoms which can be observed or measured then health surveillance should be provided. Examples include lung function test for substances which cause asthma or visual inspections for dermatitis. Health surveillance

won't prevent ill health but it will show if control measures are working and, if workers are removed from exposure at an early stage it can prevent further damage.

Q. Do I need training to use chemicals and dangerous substances?

A. You should be provided with information, training and instruction when you work with substances hazardous to health. Remember, even common cleaning chemicals can be dangerous if they are not used properly. Instruction on safe handling, use and storage of chemicals is essential.

28 April Workers' Memorial Day

28 April is International Workers' Memorial Day (WMD), when the international trade union and labour movement commemorates all those who are killed by workplace accidents and disease with the slogan 'Remember the Dead: Fight for the Living'. Usdaw has been supporting WMD since 1995.

This year WMD falls on the Tuesday of Usdaw's Annual Delegate Meeting (ADM). Purple commemorative ribbons and leaflets about the Day will be available at conference and the event will be commemorated as in previous years.

For members and reps who are not attending ADM, we ask you to get involved – either by promoting the Day in your own workplace or by attending one of the local events organised around the country by Trades Councils or Hazards campaigners.

The International TUC has decided that this year the theme should be 'removing exposure to hazardous substances in the workplace'. So the

Usdaw materials will address that theme as well as up-dating people on the damage this Government is doing to health and safety for workers.

Details of local events will be available on the TUC website www.tuc.org.uk/WMD2015

More Usdaw materials including a leaflet and poster, for use in workplaces, are available from the health and safety section at central office.



www.gmhazards.org.uk

Order WMD ribbons, car stickers, t-shirts and posters from GM Hazards



TUC survey

In preparation for international Workers' Memorial Day, the TUC is carrying out a survey of workers to check their exposure to hazardous substances.

The survey aims to show how many workers are exposed to substances in the workplace that could potentially injure or make them ill and what, if any, action employers are taking to remove them or prevent exposure.

Most people think of hazardous substances being a problem in the chemical industry or manufacturing, but there are also problems in offices or shops where many Usdaw members work. Cleaning chemicals, flour dust in bakeries, asbestos in older buildings, and diesel exhaust fumes are just a few examples.

The TUC is keen to show that health or safety risks from hazardous substances can be an issue even in sectors which this Government considers as 'low risk'.

We are asking Usdaw members to think about what type of dangerous substances you might be exposed to as part of your work and to fill in the short survey before 31 March.

www.tuc.org.uk/tuc-survey-on-hazardous-substances

Q&A with..

Cathy Kirk, 59, who works for the Co-op Group in Rotherham. She has been a rep for two years, and is secretary of South Yorkshire Co-op branch F7.

Q What sort of issues do you deal with?

I work in the petrol filling station and compared to working in the store the issues aren't as big or as many. Storage space can be an issue but having spoken to the manager this has been sorted out. Taking deliveries is obviously a vital task and adequate staffing is crucial at these times.

Q Why did you get involved in the safety side of things?

After my initial reps course I became involved and found it very informative and interesting. It's surprising how small issues, unless dealt with

properly, can escalate into bigger problems very quickly. The training is excellent too.

Q What steps do you take to keep your workplace safe?

I use safety mapping to highlight any risks and I speak to staff on a regular basis about any safety issues they have or any problems in the workplace.

Q Do you enjoy your work as a safety rep?

Yes. The knowledge you build up also helps you in your day-to-day work.

Q Are your members safety conscious?

Yes I think so. Working in the

forecourt most have done the necessary training and are aware of the issues we have around safety and deliveries etc.

Q What advice would you give to a new rep?

Settle in to your role as a rep first then find out more about the additional responsibilities of the safety rep from a colleague who is already doing the job. Being a safety rep is very rewarding but hard too as there are a lot of procedures to follow. But I'd say – stick at it and you'll get there.

Tell us about your views on being a health and safety rep. Email network@usdaw.org.uk



Improved recipe for food and drink industry



An updated and completely revised version of the *Recipe for Safety* guidance is now available on the HSE website.

The guidance covers the main health and safety hazards in the food and drink industries and gives practical advice on how to manage the associated risks.

This latest edition has been revised by a working group of the Food and Drink Manufacture Health and Safety Forum.

According to the HSE this means it has been written by the industry for the industry so the content is even more relevant and accessible. This edition also has an increased focus on occupational ill

health, which is a very important issue for the industry.

The *Recipe for Safety* initiative was first launched by the HSE in the early 1990s with support from the employers and the main trade unions. Since then, there has been a 60 per cent reduction in the accident rate and significant improvements on occupational ill health issues such as upper limb disorders and asthma from flour dust.

The initiative also led to the formation of the national HSE forum in 2004 and to a regularly updated common strategy agreed between the HSE, employers and unions.

Health and safety officer Doug Russell said: "The

success of earlier versions of the *Recipe for Safety* campaign demonstrates the value of the HSE, employers and unions working together. Usdaw has played a major role in the development of the campaign and the national forum.

"We now need to make sure we get the message out to health and safety reps in food and drink manufacture about the up-dated campaign so that they can work with management to identify the priority issues on their sites and use the *Recipe for Safety* guidance to make them safer and healthier."

To see a copy of the updated Recipe for Safety go to: www.hse.gov.uk/pubns



Your Letters & Pictures

Obituary Janet Harris



It is with deep regret that I have to inform readers of the death of Janet Harris who died in January after a long fight against cancer.

Janet was a senior rep for Tesco and branch member of Southampton and Wessex branch for just under 30 years.

She always maintained a high membership at her Southampton store and was highly respected by members, fellow reps, officials and management.

She was also an award-winning rep being recognised for her health and safety work both in the division and nationally.

I had the pleasure of working with Janet during my time as a full-time official for the union and I know she will be sorely missed by all who knew her and we send our deepest condolences to her family and friends.

Colin Davies
Retired area organiser
Southern division

Rep takes his skills to charity abroad



Xavier Chevillard, seated centre, has been a member of our branch for 28 years and is leaving us to live in Brussels and work abroad with countries such as India and Korea.

Xavier was a member of the Leeds Trades Council and worked with many charities

helping people with immigration and other issues.

The branch will miss Xavier's advice and wisdom that he brought to us and we wish him well in his future role.

Angela Partington
Branch secretary, Leeds PT F148

North West young workers take action



The North West divisional young workers' committee held a campaign day in February at Co-op head office in Manchester. It was a good day and there were a handful of new members recruited.

The vibe towards the campaign was positive, people were welcoming, taking the time and stopping to have a quick chat even though most were

rushing for their dinners.

We were getting asked a variety of questions which covered everything from maternity rights all the way to holidays.

All the women were loving the nail files, they were a real conversation starter!

Callum Harrison
North West divisional young workers' committee chair

No pain no gain for Callum's charity call

The National Young Workers Committee have selected CRY (Cardiac Risk in the Young) as their charity of the year and they are raising money in a slightly different way this year.

Committee member for the North West division, Callum Harrison, has agreed to have his back waxed if we can raise £500 by the start of ADM on the 26th April.

You can donate to our very worthwhile cause at

www.justgiving.com/backwax4cry

or pledge to donate at conference by contacting your national young workers committee rep.

Please donate generously so that this year we can beat it together and cause one of our members a little bit of pain as well!

Dean Wilson
Southern divisional young workers' committee



Listening to women

Activists met in Manchester in February to discuss the key issues and concerns of women members. Rising food and fuel prices, cuts and caps to in-work benefits and falling real wages on the agenda. More news on these issues affecting all Usdaw members in the next issue of *Network*.



A dedicated space to share your news, views and achievements. Let us know what you have been up to and you could win £50! Keep it brief. We reserve the right to edit all letters published.

Reps and members in the picture



Campaigning in Redditch with Rebecca Blake PPC



Carolyn Harris PPC for Swansea East at Morrisons Swansea



North West Argos reps at the Warrington training centre



Midlands Division's Academy graduates



Branch officers course, Warrington

Members reach 30 year milestone



Pictured top left – Brendan O'Connor (centre), SATA East Midlands E64; top right – Moira Smith, Tyneside Co-op F70; bottom right – Naseem Shivji, South Essex Retail C32; bottom left – Lynn Clarke, NW Serco K132.

Are you one of the missing millions **NOT** registered to vote?

**GENERAL
ELECTION
MAY 7 2015**

NON-VOTERS OUTNUMBERED THE SUPPORTERS OF EVERY SINGLE POLITICAL PARTY IN 2010

