



# Voices From the Frontline: Revisited

A review of Usdaw's Freedom From Fear Campaign, past, present and the agenda for the future



*Usdaw*  
Union of Shop, Distributive  
and Allied Workers  
[www.usdaw.org.uk](http://www.usdaw.org.uk)

# Contents

Introduction by John Hannett	page 2
Foreword by Rt Hon Jacqui Smith MP, Home Secretary	page 3
<b>Section 1</b>	
Gains from the Freedom From Fear Campaign:	page 4
● Industrial Gains	page 4
● Political Gains	page 4
● Raising Public Awareness	page 5
● Increasing Shopworker Confidence	page 6
<b>Section 2</b>	
Results of the Survey of Usdaw Reps	page 7
<b>Section 3</b>	
Results of the Survey of Shopworkers	page 10
<b>Section 4</b>	
What the Employers Say:	page 14
● The Co-operative Movement's Retail Crime Survey	page 14
● BRC's Retail Crime Survey	page 14
<b>Section 5</b>	
Next Steps:	page 15
● Industrial Aims	page 15
● Political Aims	page 16
● Raising Awareness	page 17
Conclusion	page 19
Appendices	page 20
● A – Reps Survey Form	page 20
● B – Retail Staff Survey Form	page 22
● C – Campaign Order Form	page 23

# Introduction



I launched Usdaw's Freedom From Fear campaign in 2002 to highlight and tackle a rising tide of violence, threats and abuse against our members and all shopworkers.

This high profile campaign has attracted considerable support from the main retailers, their trade associations, Government and the general public. Our members and activists have worked hard to promote the campaign. The many street stalls, petition signatures, postcard campaigns and MPs' workplace visits have made a real difference.

Most importantly, the campaign gives a strong message to our members, 'Abuse is not a part of the job'. For too long shopworkers felt they had to put up with verbal abuse and threats. They also felt there was no real answer to violence against shopworkers.

I am proud to lead a campaign that very clearly says to our members that unacceptable behaviour from customers must not be a part of your daily working lives. I am also proud that our Union is there to support our members and challenge employers and the Government to deal with this problem.

We brought employers to the table to ensure that the issues of violence, threats and abuse of retail staff were tackled together. Some employers were ready to embrace our campaign, but some were not aware of the issue initially. I am pleased to say that our campaign has significantly improved employers' support for a safe working environment in their stores.

The issues of violence, threats and abuse against shopworkers were not on the Government's agenda before we launched the Freedom From Fear campaign. That is no longer the case. The Government is now delivering important policies to help keep our members safe at work and tackle anti-social behaviour in the wider community. I am delighted that the Home Secretary has agreed to write a foreword for this document, which clearly demonstrates the strength of our partnership.

Now that we are six years into the campaign it is important that we reflect on what we have achieved and assess the priorities for our future campaigning. This document:

- Reviews the Freedom From Fear Campaign so far.
- Takes a snapshot of the current situation, using two substantial surveys.
- Sets the campaigning agenda for the future.

I hope that this document inspires you to work with me, campaigning to prevent violent attacks, threatening behaviour and verbal abuse against shopworkers. I hope that as many members as possible will participate in our Respect for Shopworkers Week taking place on 3-7 November 2008.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Hannett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**John Hannett**  
**General Secretary**

# Foreword



It is important that we dispel the myth that retail crime is a victimless crime. Too often shopworkers are the victims and I recognise the cost and disruption that it causes to businesses as well as the knock-on effects for communities and consumers.

Retail crime has fallen in recent years, but there is still more to do. To address the concerns that I know businesses and shopworkers feel about this issue we expect this year to widen the range of recorded crimes against business. We will also conduct another commercial victimisation survey to gather evidence on unreported crime.

The Government is working with Usdaw and retail employers to help lower the incidence of retail crime. Usdaw's pioneering Freedom From Fear Campaign has really moved the issue up the political agenda, which shows how a trade union can effectively engage and protect its members.

The key to tackling this problem is Government and industry working together which is why over the last two years the Government has provided over £1 million to the Action Against Business Crime Group (AABC) to help set up 120 business crime reduction partnerships in towns and cities across the country.

Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and the police are engaging with local retailers to agree local priorities and to develop effective crime reduction strategies together. Meanwhile, we have promoted pilot schemes to link retailers with local drug action teams, allowing them to report on the activities of repeat offending drug users – often the perpetrators of acquisitive crime – and point them towards rehabilitation. We have also provided £15 million for a project that helps small local retailers in deprived areas to install improved security systems.

Since the beginning of April this year, every community in England and Wales has a dedicated Neighbourhood Policing team of Police Officers and Police Community Support Officers in place. This is a clear demonstration of the Government's commitment to working with the police to provide visible, reassuring and responsive local policing – policing that meets the needs and priorities of local people.

In the Home Office we have established the National Retail Crime Steering Group chaired by Vernon Coaker, which will provide retailers with new, innovative solutions to tackle retail crime. I am delighted that Usdaw has agreed to take a seat on the Group, putting the Union at the heart of policy making.

Freedom From Fear is an important campaign that continues to move the agenda forward and will help all stakeholders to improve safety in stores and deliver respect for shopworkers.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jacqui Smith".

**Rt Hon Jacqui Smith MP**  
**Home Secretary**

# Section 1: Gains from the Freedom From Fear Campaign

Since the campaign was launched in 2002 there have been significant breakthroughs in key areas to help prevent violence, threats and abuse against shopworkers, as set out below. Overall the campaign has succeeded in raising the profile of the issue and has forced employers, Government, police and others to take action to tackle this problem.

## Industrial Gains

All the major retailers that we have agreements with have signed up to a Charter of Respect for Shopworkers.

Co-op, Sainsbury's and Tesco now display signs asking customers to respect staff, explaining that abusing the staff is unacceptable. We are working with other companies to do the same.

Morrisons produced a guide to staff on violence at work following the launch of our campaign.

Poundland and Morrisons are looking to work with Usdaw to display respect signs in stores.

Ushaw has improved the way we deal with claims from assaults under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority.

Ushaw has worked with the Co-op to produce a 'Respect' training video for store management and worked with the British Retail Consortium (BRC) to produce a video-based training pack called 'Trouble in Store'.

Ushaw helped Bury MBC to produce guidance on the risks for retail and licensed premises. This will shortly be available on the Health and Safety Executive's website as a result of a project commissioned by Westminster City Council which we supported.

## Political Gains

The Home Office has set up the National Retail Crime Strategy Group and invited Usdaw to be represented. This gives the Union a voice at the heart of Government, helping to make policy that will improve our members' lives.

The Government is setting standards through the National Police Improvement Agency and through the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships to improve liaison between the police, local authorities and retail businesses in the community. They have delivered on a key initial aim of the Freedom From Fear Campaign.

The Government now understands the issue and consults with Usdaw on changes in legislation that affect our members, for example, raising the age to buy tobacco from 16 to 18.

Following Usdaw's lobbying through the Labour Party's National Policy Forum the Government committed additional funds to the 'No ID – No Sale' advertising campaign.

The Government has invested £15 million in helping local community stores to improve their security and safety for staff.

Magistrates' guidance was amended, following Usdaw campaigning, to state that where violence is used in the course of shop theft, it should be treated as aggravation of the offence and dealt with accordingly, possibly with a custodial sentence.

Local authorities are starting to look specifically at tackling anti-social behaviour in shopping areas through their Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships. Wakefield and Leeds have produced leaflets jointly with Usdaw aimed at shopworkers.

There have also been a number of other joint initiatives with local authorities and local crime reduction schemes in North East England, Wales, Nottingham area and the South West.

In Scotland, Usdaw has been involved in the Scottish Executive/STUC 'Protecting Public Service Workers' Campaign.

We have received tremendous support and recognition from Labour MPs and Labour representatives in the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly. They have helped spread our message of respect for shopworkers in their communities and to local councils and the police.

**The threat from the Tories:** The Tories opposed much of the anti-crime legislation introduced by Labour. Measures like anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs), which are being used to tackle persistent and violent shoplifters, are mocked by the Tories as gimmicks. They say that there needs to be a 'change in culture', a 'more respectful society', but they haven't got any policies to deliver that aim.

**The threat from the Lib Dems:** The Lib Dems opposed Labour's Anti-Social Behaviour legislation and criticised the jailing of shoplifters, even when they were violent.

## Raising Public Awareness

Acres of news coverage has been given to reporting on our Freedom From Fear Campaign. The issue is regularly reported in local newspapers and on local radio, ensuring that the shopping public is aware that there is a real issue to be addressed.



## Increasing Shopworker Confidence

There is no doubt that Usdaw's retail members are now much more confident about raising issues regarding abuse, threats and violence from customers. We saw early on that reporting of such incidents rocketed after we launched the Freedom From Fear Campaign. Here are just some of things our activists have been saying.



Maria Thompson, a part-time shopworker left traumatised after an attempted robbery backs Usdaw's Freedom From Fear Campaign, *"Every shopworker should join the union. We are on the frontline every working day.*

*The only way to improve security and safety is with the Union's backing and support."*

Usdaw activist Su Patel said, *"You have to ask customers if they have their own bag, even if you can see that they don't have their bag. One customer told me, "F\*\*\* off, mind your own business and just put my things through the till".*



*Managers should try sitting on a till sometimes and realise they how daft these questions can be."*



Usdaw activist Darren Travis organised an awareness raising event, *"I spoke to many shoppers on the day about the Freedom From Fear Campaign and it was very reassuring to know many people were familiar with it."*

Shop assistant Lauren Fowler, 19, was too frightened to return to work after an armed robbery left her shaken and traumatised, *"The Respect for Shopworkers Day raises awareness and helps to make work safer for staff everywhere."*



Usdaw rep Ian Campbell identified an issue of frequent verbal abuse from impatient customers in a store he was recruiting in, *"We set up a campaign stall with leaflets, literature and petition to give abuse the red card. Generally customers hadn't realised the amount of verbal abuse shopworkers have to put up with. It was a very productive exercise."*

Usdaw member and shopworker Scott Chohan was subjected to a vicious assault when he stepped in to stop a customer racially abusing a colleague, *"The assault really shook me up and I was off work for two weeks. Shop staff don't deserve this abuse. I'm fully behind the Freedom From Fear Campaign."*



Former rep Tracey Low, now an Area Organiser said, *"We recently ran a Respect campaign outside our store. Just talking to customers can make them think. One couple couldn't see what all the fuss was about as we were 'paid to put up with abuse'. I'm glad to say they signed our petition in the end. A man who had been abusive to two colleagues read about our campaign in the paper and came back into the store to apologise. He just didn't recognise the problem until we drew it to his attention."*



Usdaw activist Sonia Foster said, *"Company signs in stores have worked, they have conditioned the customers. We need the signs at the end of the tills telling customers that they should treat the staff with respect."*



# Section 2: Results of the Survey of Usdaw Reps

Our 2002 report *Voices from the frontline* was based on a survey of the experiences of retail reps over the previous 12 months. The headline results were:

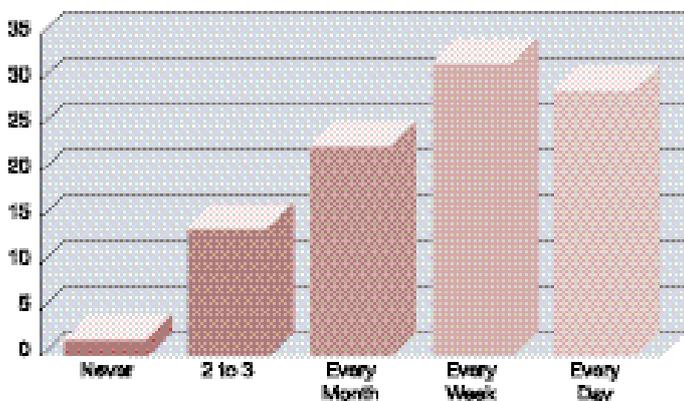
- 47% reported physical violence in their store.
- 72% knew of staff who had been threatened.
- 86% had incidents of verbal abuse.
- 47% knew members who had been off sick because of violence at work.
- 41% had staff in their store who had changed jobs because of fear of violence.

In 2007 as part of the activities for our annual Respect for Shopworkers event we revisited the earlier research. We surveyed a group of 200 Union reps in a variety of shops including Co-op workers, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Argos. A copy of the survey form is in Appendix A (see page 20).

## Verbal abuse

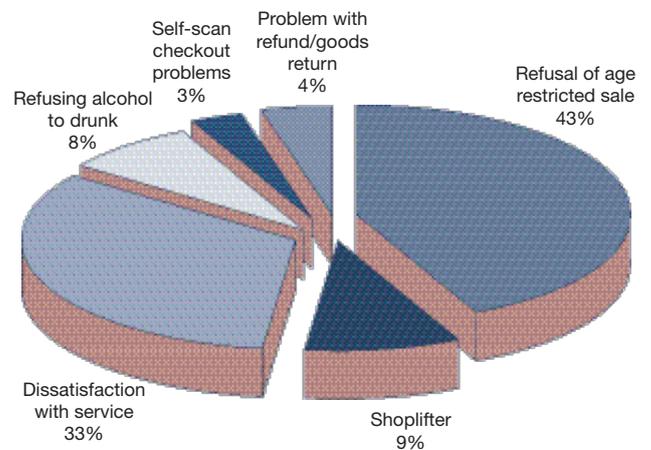
Our sample showed that verbal abuse is still a very common occurrence for over half of shop workers.

### Frequency of verbal abuse in the last 12 months



As in our previous surveys, the commonest cause for verbal abuse was refusal of age-restricted sales. However problems with service – for example, long queues, items not in stock – featured highly. In a couple of stores, difficulty using new self-scan tills was the trigger.

### Causes of verbal abuse

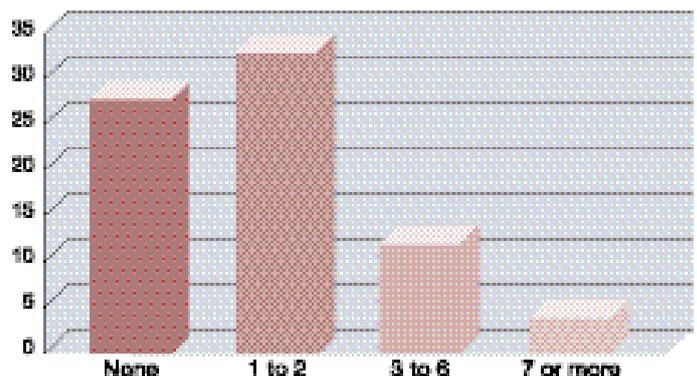


## Physical assaults

Nearly two thirds of the workers knew of incidents of physical violence in their store at some time during their career as shopworkers.

As the graph below illustrates, almost one third of them had witnessed assaults in the last year.

### Frequency of physical assaults in the last 12 months

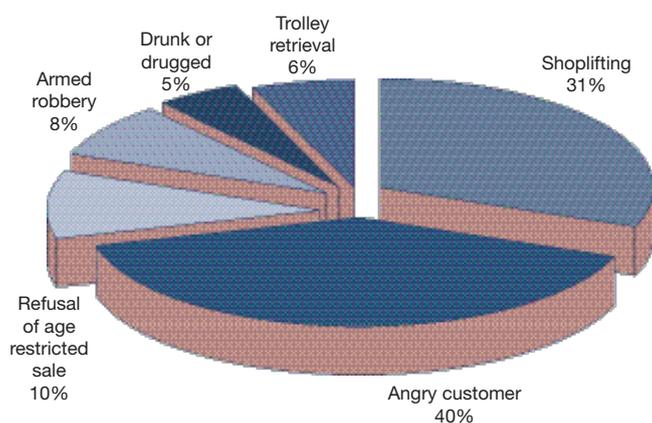


Armed robberies are fortunately rare, but there are some stores which are the target of repeated attacks. One of the small stores in our survey had been the victim of three armed robberies in the last year. Disturbingly, ‘trolley boys’ – the staff who retrieve trolleys in the car park – were a specific target. Theft from shops (‘shoplifting’) is a much more common cause of violence.

Nationally, seven out of 10 assaults happened when staff were confronting or trying to detain customers who steal. Often theft is carried out by people who have drink or drug problems and by people who are involved in other criminal behaviour.

Shop theft is far from a victimless crime. There are direct victims as a result of the physical assaults and indirectly other workers and the wider community can suffer as well. However, it is shocking to note that the most frequent cause for physical attacks in our survey was customer behaviour. So-called ‘trolley rage’ where customers vent their frustration on the nearest member of staff when things are not to their satisfaction appears to be on the increase.

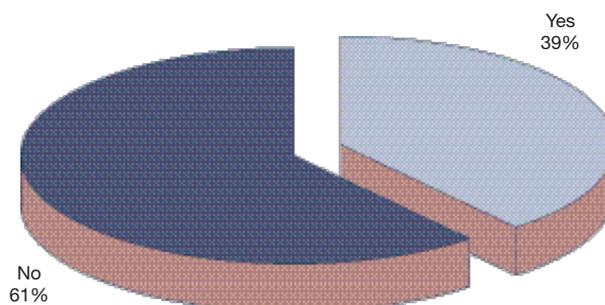
### Causes of physical assault



### Protecting shopworkers

Disappointingly, in view of the efforts that many of the larger employers have put in since the start of our Freedom From Fear Campaign, more than half of reps still thought that their employer could do more to protect their staff.

#### In your view does your employer do everything they can to protect staff from violence and abuse?

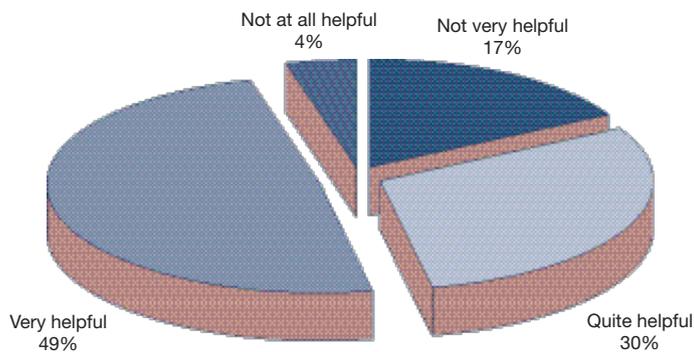


The commonest suggestions for further action were to have more uniformed security staff and for managers to give more support to staff when they felt abused. This suggests that well-intentioned policies are not being delivered consistently in all workplaces. More training of managers and better local risk assessment would help to address these problems.

Shops form a vital part of the local community. If the local shop is the target for violent crime or anti-social behaviour this is bad news not only for the staff who work there but for customers as well. At its most extreme, if nothing is done to tackle the problems, stores are forced to close down, further impoverishing the communities where they were based. It is therefore vital that retail crime is a focus for local crime and disorder strategies.

Our reps’ experience echoed the findings of our earlier survey on this topic as well. The vast majority – 82% – were not aware of any contact between local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and their stores. But where there had been some contact the experience was generally a positive one.

## Helpfulness of partnerships



## What our reps say

*"Our team leader was tripped up on purpose by a woman customer who was unhappy with the service as he went to open another checkout. He fell on the till badly injuring his right shoulder. He has been off sick for five months."*

Sarah, Tesco, Norwich

*"The customer is always right message seems to give them the ammunition to do what they want. Maybe if the management didn't always adopt this attitude things may improve."*

Linda, Boots, London

*"I think education is the key – employers could make sure that appropriate guidelines are clearly displayed in key areas of the store, so that customers are aware of what they can/cannot do."*

Andrew, Tesco, Cardiff

*"A group of youths were ejected from the store following an incident. They threatened the staff, manager and security guard that they would get them when the store closed at 10pm."*

Christopher, Somerfield, Liverpool

*"A general assistant would not reduce the price of a chicken for a customer so he called her a fat bitch."*

Brian, Morrisons, Glasgow

*"The manager was rammed with a wheelchair by a dissatisfied customer."*

Debbie, Tesco, Bristol

*"An under-age customer was refused alcohol. The assistant was sworn at by him and his mates. They waited outside the store and continued to abuse while she was waiting at the bus station on her way home from work."*

Peter, Sainsbury's, Southampton

*"Customer last month. Short staffed leading to queues. Customer was allowed to scream and shout abuse, some of it personal, and a member of staff from beers, wines and spirits had to come and help me. A newly appointed manager finally came and customer lied about what I had said and done. He is still allowed to shop in our store. I feel that we have no voice here and we are not allowed to complain. This is not the first time this has happened, and I find it demeaning. I want to leave."*

Lynne, Morrisons, West Midlands

*"The trolley team leader was collecting trolleys one night and came upon a group of youths messing around they set upon him and almost killed him he was lucky to survive. This is just one example of the many assaults that happen in our store."*

Sue, Tesco, Sussex

*"We asked the police to come round more often and the reply was, it's your fault that you are open."*

Tony, Tesco, Leeds

# Section 3: Results of the Survey of Shopworkers

Usdaw's survey of shopworkers took place during the Summer and Autumn of 2007. We received over 2,000 responses. A copy of the survey form is in Appendix B (see page 22).

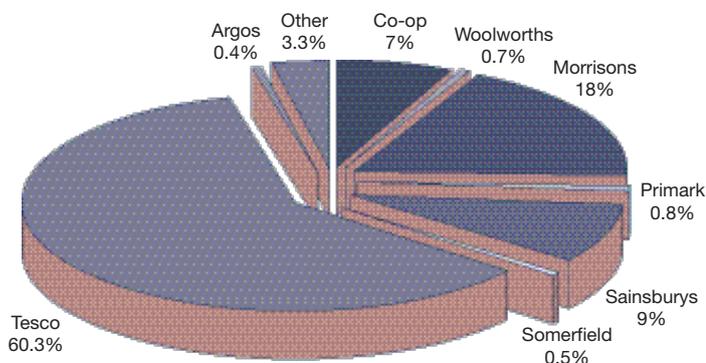
Surveys were completed in face-to-face interviews between Usdaw reps and shopworkers. More than half of the interviews were conducted by Usdaw's Academy Reps as part of their recruitment and development work.

Of those surveyed 55% were members of Usdaw and 45% were non-members. Following the interview more than one-quarter of the non-members expressed an interest in joining the Union.

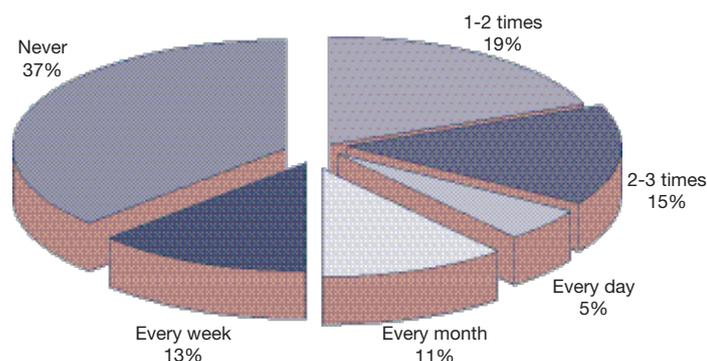
This was a nationwide survey with respondents coming from all parts of the UK. Respondents were asked to identify which of the seven Usdaw divisions they work in.

The spread of companies that respondents work for is broadly proportionate to Usdaw's retail membership. The section marked 'other' contains employees of small independent retailers and a small number of employees from the following companies: Ethel Austin, Ikea, Lidl, Makro, Poundland and Shoefayre.

## The companies respondents work for



## How often have you been a victim of verbal abuse in the last 12 months?



63% of respondents said that they had been verbally abused at sometime over the last 12 months. Almost one third are abused every month, nearly one in five weekly and one in 20 on a daily basis.

The situation is slightly worse in the convenience store sector. 70% have been verbally abused, almost 40% every month, just over one quarter weekly and 6% on a daily basis.

*"A customer asked me to look for a particular product. When I said we don't stock it he was very abusive."*

*"Another time a customer threw a phone at me on the customer service desk. Customers are often verbally abusive when complaining."*

*"Several customers swear at me when ID has been requested and sale refused."*

*"A customer was very angry, I couldn't find what he wanted on the computer and so grabbed the mouse off me. He was loud, angry, uptight and very rude to me. I told him I wouldn't serve him speaking to me that way."*

*"A group of teenagers were in the store and tried to purchase cigarettes, became aggressive when asked for ID. A lady became verbally abusive because she was kept waiting."*

*"Nearly all abuse and threats are late at night and drink related."*

*"Being shouted at and a load of verbal abuse, you walk away from it, but customers still follow you around the shop floor."*

*"Customer was verbally abusive when refused alcohol – had no ID, looked under 21."*

*"Customer calling me a silly cow and saying the job was a joke."*

*"Customer shouted loudly all the time – how she wanted goods processed as if I was ignorant - picked me up on items already processed – when weighing veg she loudly hissed 'TIME! TIME!' – made me feel incompetent."*

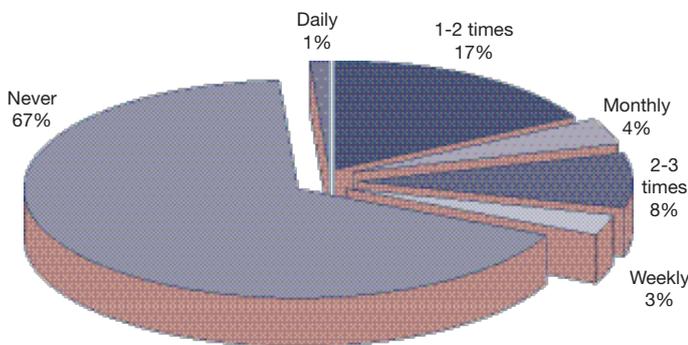
*"Customers are rude and abusive most days towards staff if there aren't things on shelves of whatever they need."*

*"Received a dirty phone call from customer who knew my name because of my name badge."*

*"Once a man made a sexual threat to me to 'drop my knickers'. He wasn't joking, he was being serious and he was very scary."*

*"Colleague taking racist verbal abuse."*

**How often have you been threatened by a customer in the last 12 months?**



33% of respondents said they had been threatened in the last 12 months.

Again the situation is slightly worse in the convenience store sector with 40% having been threatened by a customer.

*"A customer looked young so I asked for ID, she didn't like it, she had no ID on her, she started swearing and threatening me, she was very abusive and for a minute I thought she was going to hit me. The whole store heard her but the manager nor the checkout manager came to my aid."*

*"One man threatened to 'slap my mum, to get her to teach me some manners' after I informed him that we hadn't any tins of kidney beans in stock."*

*"A guy threatened to punch me for 'eyeing up' his girlfriend who was trying to steal."*

*"I asked a man to stop abusing the customers and he threatened to punch me."*

*"A woman customer threatened to put my head in the slicer machine and told me she would wait outside for me."*

*"Had a male pursue me down the store and threaten to kill me, police had difficulty removing him."*

*"Customer threatened to hit me with walking stick whilst intoxicated."*

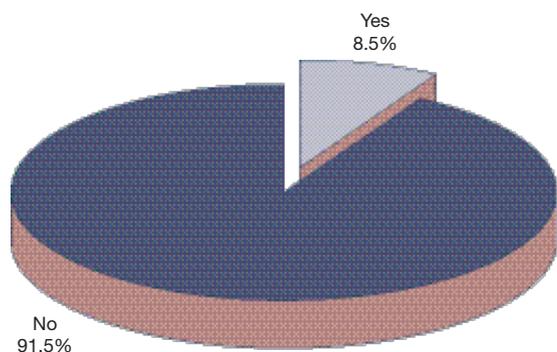
*"Customer complained I hadn't said 'excuse me', which I had. She then followed me around the store, approached me three times, spoke right in my face, felt threatened."*

*"Customer physically threatened me when delivering to their home, but was restrained by his partner."*

*"Customer pulled a knife when I tried to stop him stealing vodka."*

*"Customer was verbally abusive towards me, I asked him to leave the store, when I was outside on my break he threatened me!"*

### Have you ever been a victim of physical violence?



Almost one in ten shopworkers have been a victim of violence by a customer during their career. The number in the convenience store sector is nearly double at 15%.

*"Once when I caught someone using stolen card, he punched my shoulder to get past me."*

*"A shoplifter tried to bite me."*

*"A frustrated customer deliberately caught me with his basket after moaning about trolleys in the aisle. The same customer did this again to a male member of staff on another occasion."*

*"A shoplifter was stealing Playstation games. I stood at the fire exit so he couldn't leave the store, I was pushed through the fire door causing injury to my arm."*

*"Was once spat on and another time hit with a bottle thrown by customer."*

*"At Christmas time, busy, was waiting with a dolly of stock to get down aisle, a large man pushed me hard with his shoulder. I said to him have you never heard of excuse me, he replied you're in my way. It got a bit heated and another customer backed me up."*

*"When collecting trolleys, chaining them up, drunk came over wrapped chain around my neck – I guess trying to kill me!"*

*"A customer smacked my backside when I was bending down. I told my manager and he told the man that it wasn't acceptable and if he did it again he would be barred from the shop."*

*"Customer asked me to reach an item on the top shelf. I explained that I needed to get a kick stool, customer grabbed my arm and told me to stand on bottom shelf, because was in a hurry."*

*"Two black eyes and cut lip after refusing to serve cigarettes to under-age man."*

*"Customer returned shoes that were in a sale but insisted she'd paid full price, after much arguing with various managers on phone etc, became abusive and violent tried to attack me, I fought her off."*

*"Customer shouted and pushed the door at me as I tried to get out of van. I left the premises without delivering shopping."*

*"Group of young people being abusive when asked for ID. Spat at by customer and called a bitch when I refused to serve cigarettes."*

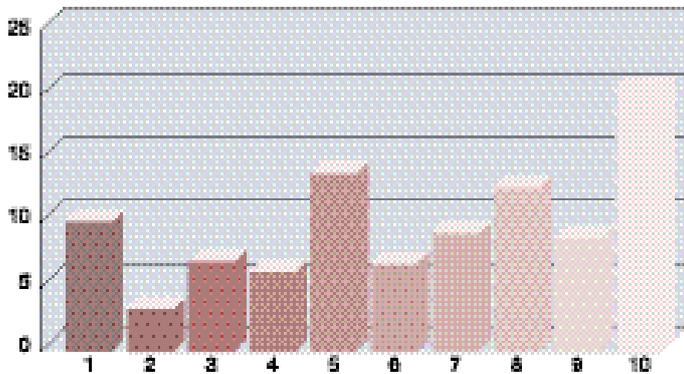
*"Held by the throat by someone who didn't like me looking at them."*

*"I am a security guard at our store and have to deal with customers during the night so have had fights and drunken people to deal with."*

*"I was grabbed by a customer after I refused an alcohol sale. He grabbed my breast. There was no security present to assist me, so I had to retaliate to get away from him."*

*"If by definition violence means being pushed or hit by their trolleys, then it happens all the time."*

**On a scale of 1 to 10 is your employer doing enough to protect you from incidents of violence, threats and abuse?**



The respondents scored their respective employers quite well. 73% of respondents marked their employer as being average or better. The average score was 5.7 out of 10. The key measures that respondents wanted their employers to introduce to make the workplace safer are (in no particular order):

- More full-time security.
- Management to back the shopworkers.
- More training to deal with situations.
- Ban repeatedly abusive, threatening and violent customers.
- More signs in stores to promote respect.
- Panic alarms at tills.

It is worth noting that the respondents who gave a high score to their employer generally commented that some or all of the above had been introduced in their store.

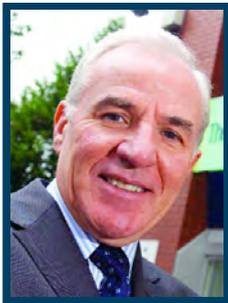
# Section 4: What the Employers Say

## The Co-operative Movement's Retail Crime Survey

Leading consumer-owned co-operatives in the UK have, now for seven years running, come together to track retail crime issues and incidents, in a survey co-ordinated by the Co-operative Group. In its latest report, 15 Co-operative employers, accounting for 63,698 staff working in 3,602 retail food stores recorded:

- 15% more incidents in the 2005-6 year, than compared with the previous year.
- Increases in reported incidents of violence against retail staff, and higher verbal abuse too.

This is despite an increase of 30% in spending by Co-op Societies on contract security guards and in-house guarding.



Peter Marks, Chief Executive, Co-operative Trading Group said: *"Crime is an ever growing concern that faces businesses across the UK. However, the costs are not just financial – in human terms the costs can be impossible to measure."*

*The Co-operative Movement is involved in a variety of projects and schemes to address the problems faced by our staff. But we are in no position to rest on our laurels. It is crucial that retailers, neighbourhoods, the police, local authorities, Government – and trade unions too – work together to address the issues, create solutions and make change happen."*

## BRC's Retail Crime Survey

Every year the British Retail Consortium conduct a survey of their members to establish the levels of retail crime in their stores.

The initial impact of the Freedom From Fear Campaign appears to have been to raise the level of reporting of incidents as the attached table illustrates. Hopes that we were beginning to turn the corner were dimmed when the figures for 2006 showed a 50% increase in physical assaults on shop staff and an increase in threats of physical violence, although there has been a slight reduction in verbal abuse.

YEAR	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Physical assaults	16,900	18,900	21,500	10,800	16,200
Threats and abuse	40,400	189,000	135,000	62,100	83,700
Total	57,300	207,900	156,500	72,900	99,900

Figures based on BRC Annual Retail Crime Survey.

BRC Director General

Stephen Robertson said:

*"These figures show there is more to do in tackling shop crime. Last year retail employees were subjected to around half a million incidents of abuse or violence in the work place. This is not just about a cost to the bottom line, behind these figures there is individual human pain and distress. It is unacceptable."*



# Section 5: Next Steps

The Freedom From Fear Campaign has:

- Established that violence, threats and abuse against shopworkers is an issue that needs to be addressed.
- Promoted recognition of the issue amongst employers, Government, police, local authorities, the shopping public and shopworkers.
- Delivered policies and measures to help deal with the issue as outlined in Section 1 of this document.

The results of the surveys detailed in Sections 2, 3 and 4 of this document clearly show that the campaign must continue. Despite the gains we have made for our members over the last six years, there is more to be done. This section sets out our future campaigning agenda in terms of our industrial aims, political aims and the work we do to raise awareness amongst shoppers and shopworkers.

## Industrial Aims

The Government has introduced a range of legal powers that can all play a part in tackling the problem – including informal acceptable behaviour contracts (ABCs), dispersal and parenting orders, anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs), penalty notices for disorder (PNDs), drug treatment orders through to fines and even custodial sentences for serious or persistent offenders.

There have been several useful initiatives in many parts of the country. But more needs to be done. Our surveys confirm earlier research that shows that retail workers are not aware of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) that do exist and there is still not enough support and engagement from the local police.

The recent commitments from the Home Office to include business engagement in the targets for local authority CDRPs and in community policing targets are very welcome. The establishment of the National Retail Crime Steering Group by the Home Office should also help to give a clearer focus to the issue.

But retailers can do more to help themselves and their staff by:

- Supporting local business crime prevention partnerships.
- Sharing information about serious and persistent offenders with other businesses and with the police and community safety teams.
- Complying with their duties under health and safety law to protect their staff from violence and abuse.
- Working closely with Usdaw Health and Safety Reps to make sure that risks are reduced.
- Working with staff to make sure they are trained and equipped to deal with offenders.



We are aware that different employers are at different stages in supporting the aims and objectives of the Freedom From Fear Campaign. Below is a shopping list of negotiating issues to improve the safety and security of our members at work:

- Encouraging employers to sign up to an updated Respect Charter. With more emphasis on use of signs and other means to get the message across to the public.
- Encouraging employers to commit to support local business crime reduction schemes and work with local police and local councils.
- Respect Signs – where employers have not yet started displaying signs for customers encourage them to follow the example of others.
- Respect Signs – where employers have started displaying customer signs encourage them to do more – for example, signs at entrance to store, small reminders on tills, etc. Ideally we are looking for a profile in store similar to the ‘Think 21’ Campaign.
- Review the findings of our latest survey and report to boards of directors and senior management in the larger retailers.
- Encourage employers to set up better reporting systems to capture information about both physical attacks and incidents of verbal abuse. Make sure that the reports are reviewed and discussed at store level by management and Union Health and Safety Reps.
- Encourage employers to involve reps as well as managers in support for local business crime reduction initiatives with local police and local councils.
- In mid 2008 the Health and Safety Executive will publish a toolkit for retail and licensed premises employers on prevention of violence to staff – another opportunity to review current policies and practices.
- In October 2008, the Union’s Health and Safety Section will be producing a short organising checklist for reps to use at local level with store staff and managers to check that the employer’s policies are working properly in their store.



## Political Aims

Labour in Government is committed to working with Usdaw and the retail employers to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in shops and shopping areas. Usdaw will continue to gather the evidence and present the case for political solutions to the problems our members face. Below are some of the key policies that we are campaigning for through the Labour Party’s policy making process and discussions with Ministers:

- Government to promote the use of the whole range of the criminal justice system to tackle retail crime, including the use of anti-social behaviour powers or custodial sentences where appropriate.
- Tighten up on the use of Penalty Notices for Disorder (PNDs) to make sure they are recorded and other more appropriate action is taken against repeat offenders. Retail staff should be consulted before they are issued. The £100/£200 guideline levels for the value of a theft to qualify for a PND should be drastically reduced.
- Maintain the option of custodial sentences for shop theft.
- Magistrates’ guidance was amended to state that where violence is used in the course of shop theft, it should be treated as aggravation of the offence and dealt with accordingly, possibly with a custodial sentence. We remain concerned about the actual implementation of that guidance by magistrates.

- Police and local authorities should have to co-ordinate with local businesses on the use of ASBOs to ban persistent offenders from shopping areas and town centres.
- Improve the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme to make it more generous and easier for victims to apply.
- Small retailers should be offered incentives and support to invest in physical security by offering 100% first year tax relief for stores of less than 3,000 square feet.
- Government should monitor the impact of the Licensing Act on violence in stores.
- Longer term resources and support should be available for Safer Shopping Partnerships – business partnerships against crime have been shown to have a very positive effect.
- Police and local authorities should have to involve local shops in crime and disorder reduction partnerships and invite union reps to participate.
- Wider recognition of the importance of tackling retail crime to delivering viable town centres, regeneration and social inclusion in isolated areas.
- Local Education Authorities and other agencies such as the police should work with retailers on truancy initiatives.
- There should be many more initiatives like those in Bury MBC and in the City of Westminster to bring together local authority health and safety enforcement officers and the police to provide practical support and advice to local shops and businesses.
- There should be a greater emphasis for local council environmental health officers on the prevention of violence and more co-ordinated work with union officials and health and safety representatives in shops and stores, together with greater resources for environmental health departments to carry out this important work.

- Government should work with all sectors that employ frontline staff and with unions to tackle the growing culture of violence and abuse throughout society.



## Raising Awareness

A key aspect of the campaign is to raise awareness of the issue amongst:

- Shoppers – promoting a culture of respect in stores.
- Shopworkers – ensuring that abuse is not just a part of the job.

The work our activists do is crucial to delivering the awareness raising:

- Representing members – ensuring that they are aware of the issues and helping them understand how to stay safe at work.
- Working with store management – ensuring that they are doing everything they can to improve health and safety in store and that they are delivering the policies that the company has signed up to, particularly the Usdaw Charter of Respect.
- Recruiting new members – ensuring that all shopworkers get the protection at work they deserve by being a part of the Union.

- Running street stalls – to increase awareness amongst the shopping public and demonstrate to members and potential members that the Union is working to create a culture of respect in store.
- Involving your Labour MP – and in Scotland your Labour MSP, Wales your Labour Assembly Member and Northern Ireland your MLA. Organising a workplace visit can help get the message over to your elected representatives. They can then lobby Ministers on your behalf and talk to the local authority and the police about tackling issues in your store.
- Respect for Shopworkers Week – a national Usdaw event that seeks wide media coverage and helps raise the profile of the issue with the general public. This year Respect for Shopworkers Week is on 3-7 November 2008 and will be calling for respect during the stressful busy pre-Christmas period.

# Conclusion



In many ways this document marks the start of a new phase of our campaign to prevent violence, threats and abuse against shopworkers. We knew at the outset that it is a major problem to overcome and that we had our work cut out to establish retail crime and its effects on shopworkers as a high profile issue. There is no doubt that our campaigning has achieved that.

The Union is working with employers and Government to deliver policies and initiatives to improve our members' lives at work. We have gathered the evidence, made the case and now we are looking for delivery.

It is important that we continue to give our members the confidence to raise these issues as well. We cannot allow abuse to simply become a part of the job. Promoting respect for shopworkers raises the expectations of our members and encourages employers to deliver a safe working environment. Stress caused by fear of violence at work is a big factor in the health and well-being of shopworkers. Delivering freedom from fear for our members is clearly at the heart of our campaign.

The campaign continues. Our negotiators will continue to seek improvements from employers. The Union will continue to push for new policies from Government to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour. Our reps, members and activists will continue to promote respect with the shopping public and amongst their colleagues.

The Union is committed to high-profile campaigning all year round, but key to raising awareness is our Respect for Shopworkers Week, taking place on 3-7 November 2008. We are looking for as many activists, employers and politicians as possible to get involved and raise the awareness of this issue.

Please use the order form in Appendix C (see page 23) to obtain all the materials you need to run a successful campaign in your workplace during Respect for Shopworkers Week.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Hannett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**John Hannett**  
**General Secretary**

# Appendices

## A – Reps Survey Form (page 1)

### Survey of violence and abuse to retail staff

#### Usdaw Rep Survey Form



Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Rep's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime or Mobile phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

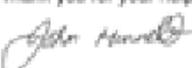
Division or Branch: \_\_\_\_\_

---

#### Introduction

Your experiences and views are important to Usdaw's Freedom From Fear Campaign. By completing and returning this questionnaire, you are providing important information that will help us to carry the campaign forward.

You may need to speak to your store manager to get the answers to some of the questions. Thank you for your help and assistance.



John Hannett  
General Secretary

---

#### Survey Questions

1. Are workers in your store exposed to verbal abuse from customers? **YES / NO**  
(Verbal abuse includes shouting, swearing or insults).

2. How often has this verbal abuse happened in the last 12 months?  
1-2 times  2-3 times  every month  every week  every day  never

3. Have workers in your store been threatened with violence by a customer? **YES / NO**

4. How many times have workers been threatened in the last 12 months?  
1-2 times  2-3 times  every month  every week  every day  never

5. Please give us an example of the verbal abuse or threats involved:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Has any worker in your store been the victim of physical violence from customers? **YES / NO**  
(Physical violence includes being spat at, kicked or pushed as well as more extreme violence).

**PTO >**

Freedom From Fear – Usdaw's campaign against violence towards shopworkers

## A – Reps Survey Form (page 2)

7. How many incidents of physical violence have there been in the last 12 months? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Please give a brief description of one of these assaults:  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

9. In your view, does your current employer do everything they can to protect staff from violence and abuse? **YES / NO**

10. Is there anything else they could do that would make you feel safer?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

11. Have you ever raised any concerns about violence and abuse with management as a union rep? **YES / NO**

12. If so, can you please give brief details of the issue raised and what happened as a result?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

13. Have you heard of your local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP)? **YES / NO**

14. If so, do you know if your local CDRP has been in touch with your store? **YES / NO**

15. Do you think there is more your local council could do to help stores in your area? **YES / NO**

16. If yes, what do you think your local authority could do to make stores safer?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

17. Do the police respond to incidents in your store? **YES / NO**

18. How do you think the police could help to make shops in your area safer?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

19. Do you know if your store is involved in any joint scheme with other shops in the area to fight against retail crime? **YES / NO**

20. If so, do you find these schemes are helpful?

Not at all helpful     Not very helpful     Quite helpful     Very helpful

---

**Thank you. We will use responses anonymously to campaign on behalf of our members.**

Please return to: Reps Survey, Freedom From Fear Campaign, Usdaw, FREEPOST NAT19625 Manchester M14 7DJ

Or by fax to: 0161 257 2566, or by e-mail to: [freedomfromfear@usdaw.org.uk](mailto:freedomfromfear@usdaw.org.uk)

**www.usdaw.org.uk**

*Usdaw*  
 Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers

Freedom From Fear – Usdaw's campaign against violence towards shopworkers

## B – Retail Staff Survey Form

# Survey of violence and abuse against retail staff




## Retail Staff Survey Form

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_ Division: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How often have you been a victim of verbal abuse in the last 12 months?
 

1-2 times <input type="checkbox"/>	2-3 times <input type="checkbox"/>	every month <input type="checkbox"/>	every week <input type="checkbox"/>	every day <input type="checkbox"/>	never <input type="checkbox"/>
------------------------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------------
2. How often have you been threatened by a customer in the last 12 months?
 

1-2 times <input type="checkbox"/>	2-3 times <input type="checkbox"/>	every month <input type="checkbox"/>	every week <input type="checkbox"/>	every day <input type="checkbox"/>	never <input type="checkbox"/>
------------------------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------------
3. Have you ever been a victim of physical violence from a customer? YES / NO
4. Can you tell us a little about the incidents of abuse/threats/violence you have experienced?
 

---



---



---
5. On a scale of one to 10, is your employer doing enough to protect you from incidents of violence, threats and abuse from customers?
 

POOR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	GOOD
------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	------
6. What more could your employer do?
 

---



---



---
7. Are you a member of Usdaw? YES / NO
8. If not, would you be interested in hearing more about joining and about how Usdaw can help you if you feel threatened by violence at work? YES / NO

**For reps use only:**

Your name:	Your workplace:
------------	-----------------

The person you interviewed

Member <input type="checkbox"/>	Non-member <input type="checkbox"/>	Joined <input type="checkbox"/>	Didn't Join <input type="checkbox"/>
---------------------------------	-------------------------------------	---------------------------------	--------------------------------------



www.usdaw.org.uk

Freedom From Fear – Usdaw’s campaign against violence towards shopworkers

## C – Campaign Order Form

Thank you for taking the time to read this document. If you would like to get more involved in promoting respect for shopworkers through Usdaw's Freedom From Fear Campaign, please complete and return this form.

# Freedom From Fear Campaign Order Form



### Please send me information about:

- Organising an event in my store for Respect for Shopworkers Week on 3-7 November 2008.
- Becoming a health and safety rep in my workplace.
- Organising a workplace visit for my local Labour MP.

### Please send me copies of the following Freedom From Fear Campaign materials

(Please indicate number required, as applicable):

- 50 / 100 / 200 Recruitment leaflet with membership form  
*While you are looking after the shop who is looking after you?* (Leaflet no. 262).
- 50 / 100 / 200 Freedom From Fear Survey for Retail Staff.
- 50 / 100 / 200 *Abuse is Not a Part of the Job* (Leaflet no. 296).
- 50 / 100 / 200 *Preventing under-age sales* (Leaflet no. 351).
- 50 / 100 / 200 *Protecting Shopworkers from Anti-Social Behaviour* (Leaflet no. 338).
- 50 / 100 / 200 *Late Night Working – Preventing Violence to Staff* (Leaflet no. 294).
- 50 / 100 / 200 *Don't be a Victim of Violent Crime* (Leaflet no. 313).

- Please send me a copy of the health and safety reps guide  
*Preventing violence to retail staff*

All the above leaflets can be viewed on the Usdaw website at:  
[www.usdaw.org.uk/resource\\_library/](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/resource_library/)

**Usdaw**  
Union of Shop, Distributive  
and Allied Workers

Name _____	
Branch _____	Company _____
Delivery address _____	
_____	
Postcode _____	
Telephone _____	e-mail _____

Please complete and return to: Freedom From Fear, Usdaw, 188 Wilmslow Road, Manchester, M14 6LJ.  
Or by fax to: 0161 257 2566 Or by e-mail to: [freedomfromfear@usdaw.org.uk](mailto:freedomfromfear@usdaw.org.uk)

# Improving workers' lives – Winning for members

To find out more, visit our website: [www.usdaw.org.uk](http://www.usdaw.org.uk)  
or e-mail: [freedomfromfear@usdaw.org.uk](mailto:freedomfromfear@usdaw.org.uk)

**Usdaw**  
*Union of Shop, Distributive  
and Allied Workers*  
[www.usdaw.org.uk](http://www.usdaw.org.uk)



Published by Usdaw  
188 Wilmslow Road  
Manchester M14 6LJ