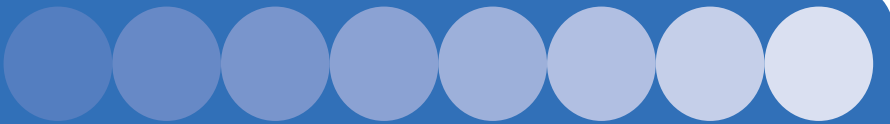
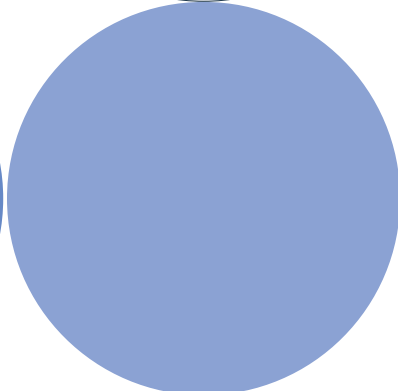
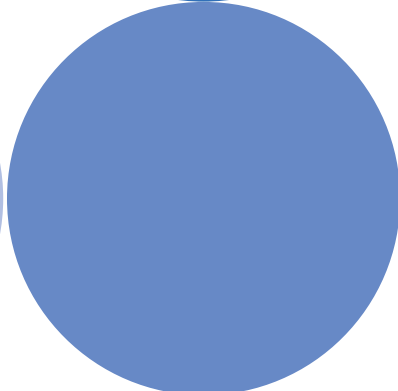
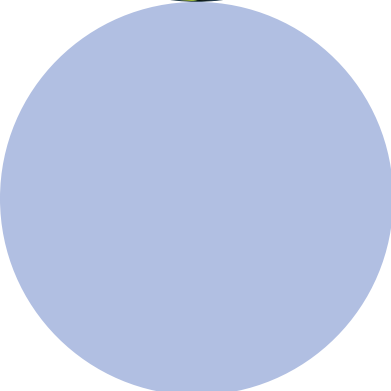
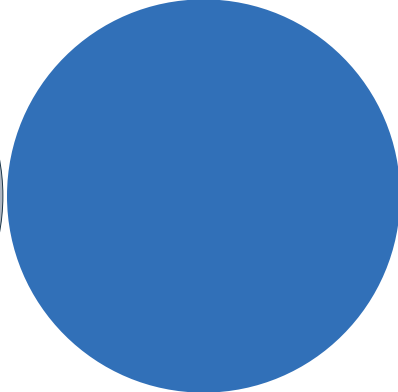
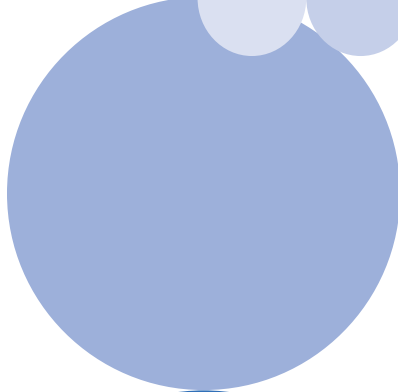
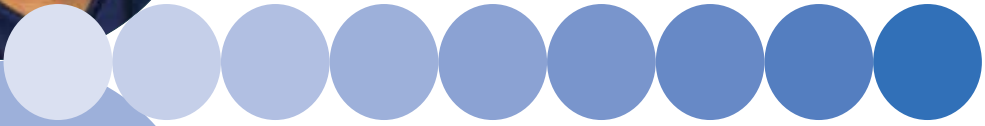




Usdaw
*Union of Shop, Distributive
and Allied Workers*



Getting it Right for Older Workers

Executive Council Statement
to the 2018 ADM



Workers aged 50 and above have always been a vital part of the UK's workforce but never more so than now. Over the next decade, 13.5 million vacancies will open up, but only seven million school leavers will be available to fill them.

Over one in three workers in the UK are over the age of 50 and this figure is set to rise. The age composition of the UK workforce is changing due to a number of factors: a falling birth rate; a decline in the numbers of young people in work largely as a result of their increased participation in further and higher education and the fact that older workers are either choosing to work later in life or feel they have no choice but to do so.

Employers need to recognise the challenges this demographic shift brings with it — an ageing population means an ageing workforce and employers who fail to respond to the needs and aspirations of older workers risk missing out on the valuable skills and experiences that older workers can bring.

Ageing workplaces present challenges to the trade union movement too in terms of organising, representation and bargaining. Trade unions are recognising that the nature of work in later life has changed and many workers either want or are being pushed to work longer. One in three Usdaw members is aged over 50 and so it is vital that the Union understands the pressures older workers face.

We know from listening to older members that many are having to carry on working well beyond the point they wish to stop. Juggling a physically demanding job with caring commitments, responding to new technologies, changes in working hours, job role and shift times is difficult enough at any time of life but older workers tell us these pressures can be particularly hard to deal with later in life, and this is not because older workers lack the skills and experience to cope — far from it. In reality the majority of older workers will be juggling their own jobs with caring for elderly or disabled family members and/or grandchildren, at a time of life when their own health may be declining and they are starting to slow down.

For older women there are particular challenges — this is the first generation of older women who have worked all their lives and felt the pressure of trying to 'do it all' — bringing up their families whilst holding down a job. And women born in the 1950's rightly feel a strong sense of injustice that the 1995 Conservative Government's Pension Act included plans to increase their State Pension age to 65. Women were given little or no personal notice of the change and no time to make alternative plans. For many of our women members, the prospect of having to work for between five and ten years longer before they can afford to stop working is not a welcome one.

Trade unions have a vital role to play in lending our voice to challenging injustices like this and to speaking up for older workers. We have much work to do.

Several studies show that older workers are less likely to have access to training at work.

Older workers often face capability and performance procedures that lead to dismissal.

Over one in three workers aged between 50 and 55 are regularly caring for someone and yet access to positive flexible working options is still too limited.

Unions and employers need to work together to address how work in later life is managed. We need to promote healthy and high quality workplaces that work for older workers.

This Executive Council Statement is a welcome opportunity to discuss the challenges facing older workers in Usdaw and to focus on what more the Union can do to reach out to and support them.

I hope this Executive Council Statement will inspire and inform many more of our members to get involved in this work.



John Hannett
General Secretary

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It is not so long ago that being aged 50 or above meant you were seen as unfit for work; your employer could force you to retire whether or not you wanted to and jokes about being over the hill were widespread in workplaces up and down the country.

But things have changed. We are living longer and we are working longer.

The passing of the UK's first ever Age Discrimination Legislation in 2006 helped to tackle the problem of older workers being pushed out of the labour market before they were ready. An employer can no longer force you to retire or set a retirement age except in very limited circumstances.

Growing numbers of workers are staying in work well into their 60s, 70s and beyond. Several studies show that many older workers value work not just for the vital income it provides but also because work offers a sense of purpose, boosts mental and physical health and allows workers to ease into retirement gradually.

And having older workers in the workforce is not just good for the individual worker but is of benefit to everyone — customers, the employer and colleagues as well. The experience of one Usdaw member sums up the benefits to employers and colleagues of having older workers in the workforce:

“I am fit and active and enjoy my job. I feel I bring lots of skills and experience. It is good for me to be able to connect with younger staff who know they can ask your advice. I would be bored at home all day. My manager treats me with respect and there are about eight of us in my store who are over 60. We know the customers many of whom are our sort of age and it makes it easier for me knowing I am not too old to work.”

Older workers bring years of expertise and studies show they often have highly developed communication skills and can confidently solve problems, handle tricky situations and contribute well in teams. Older workers often have unique insights and good judgement gained from their years of experience.

There are clear benefits to employers of retaining and supporting older workers; a worker's ability and skills do not suddenly diminish in the period leading up to and beyond State Pension age. Older workers make a substantial contribution to the UK economy as a whole. The charity Age UK found that people aged 65 and over in the UK contribute around £61 billion to the economy each year through employment, informal caring and volunteering. £37 billion of this amount came from employment and £11.4 billion from informal caring. Childcare contributed £6.6 billion. Nearly £6 billion came from volunteering.

So the economic contribution of older workers and older people more generally is immense and yet the workplace and wider society can still, despite changes in the law, leave them feeling overlooked and ignored.

Many older workers continue to leave work against their wishes. Often this is because the workplace has not made the right adjustments to help an older worker with a health condition or disabilities or it may be due to the physically demanding nature of the work so many of our members do.

Treating older workers with respect and dignity at work is about much more than simply not forcing someone to retire. It must also include:

- Ensuring that the physical demands of the job do not outweigh the ability of individual workers.
- Ensuring adjustments are made to accommodate older workers' requirements.
- Challenging stereotypical attitudes towards individuals based on age in the workplace including for instance the idea that older workers do not have technological skills and are less adaptable to change.
- Supporting older workers who want to take up phased retirement options and have more choice about their working patterns or to reduce their hours. Studies show that older men in particular often want to reduce their hours as they get older.



Employers who offer the right support to older workers and who create a workplace culture where older workers are not afraid to say they are slowing down will continue to reap the considerable benefits of employing workers well into their 50s, 60s and beyond.



Grandparents have always played an important role in looking after grandchildren and despite an increase in formal childcare provision over the past decade, they continue to play a vital role filling the childcare gaps for parents who go out to work.

Nearly two-thirds of grandparents (with grandchildren aged under 16) look after their grandchildren, and one in five grandmothers provide at least 10 hours a week of childcare. Increases in the State Pension age mean that grandmothers in particular are under growing pressure to combine childcare with work.

At the same time UK society is ageing. This means that grandparents are caught up in what is often referred to as the 'sandwich generation' meaning not only are they under pressure to combine work with caring for grandchildren but they are also providing care for elderly relatives and friends. Over a quarter of grandparents (28%) are in this 'sandwich generation' and this figure is set to increase in coming years.

Furthermore, grandparents are more likely to be in poorer health themselves and have a partner who needs care. One woman member who responded to Usdaw's survey on the experience of older members at work explains perfectly how it can feel to be in the 'sandwich generation':

"It is becoming increasingly difficult as I suffer from arthritis and no bus service (I don't drive) goes very near the store I work in until after 8.00 am. Three times a week I start before this and have a 30 minute walk after getting off a bus. Also I have four grandchildren and because I work Saturday and Sunday each week, when they are in school I do not get much chance at all to see them. I also have a mother who is 85 years old."

On top of all this are cuts to social care budgets and an absence of affordable and flexible childcare. This further increases the pressure on the health and working lives of older workers. It is worth noting that the UK has some of the highest childcare costs in the world.

Who are Grandparents Today?

- There are 14 million grandparents in the UK, of whom around half are under the age of 65.
- Almost half of children aged under five whose mother is in work are looked after by grandparents.
- Grandparents provide more than 1.7 billion hours of childcare each year.
- The value of the grandparental childcare contribution has been estimated at £3.9 billion.
- 2.2 million grandparents who look after their grandchildren do so to allow the child's parents to work.
- 1.9 million grandparents have reduced their hours of work, given up a job, or taken time off work to care for a grandchild.
- Of working grandparents who have never taken time off work to care for grandchildren under 16, around one in ten have not been able to do so because they have either been refused time off by their employer, or simply felt that they were not able to ask.

The Particular Pressures on Grandmothers

Statistics show that there is little difference in the proportions of grandmothers and grandfathers looking after children but there are significant differences between them in terms of the regularity and intensity of the care they provide.

Grandmothers are more likely than grandfathers to provide higher levels of care of at least 10 hours a week. Because there are more grandmothers than grandfathers in the population, overall nearly twice as many grandmothers as grandfathers are providing at least 10 hours a week of childcare.

Usdaw's own research into the experience of members aged 50 plus echo these national statistics. In a recent survey Usdaw found that:

- Half of all women members aged 50 and above are looking after a family member compared to less than a third of men.
- Half of all women members regularly look after at least one grandchild compared to less than a quarter of men.

What are the Issues for Usdaw Members?

The fact that more and more grandparents are juggling paid work with caring for grandchildren has emerged as a key issue for Usdaw members and will undoubtedly remain a priority as growing numbers of Usdaw members are working beyond State Pension age.

We know that currently one in three members is aged 50 plus, more than two and half times the numbers of members aged under 24 so this is an issue that is not likely to go away anytime soon.

We also know that one of the biggest pressures on members in this age group is the difficulties they have getting or hanging onto hours of work that fit around their caring commitments.

What our members tell us is that just as parents might need to change their hours of work to enable them to better balance paid work with childcare commitments so too do grandparents.

However members who care for their grandchildren find it difficult to get their caring commitments taken seriously by employers. They have told us that managers and colleagues often overlook their caring role, view it as unimportant or as something that 'doesn't really count' as the caring arrangement is more often than not a voluntary one.

One woman member said on her survey form:

"I have my grandchildren to stay for three, sometimes four nights a week. I do not have parental rights (do they look after themselves?). When I was told my hours of work would be changing I was told my caring responsibilities were my own choice and had nothing to do with work. Also having not worked Mondays for 10 years to be asked to change from Friday to a Monday is impossible due to grandchildren and other commitments. At the moment I have no choice but to reduce my hours which I simply cannot afford."

Another member told us that she has recently started working a night shift so that in the day she can look after her grandchildren to enable her daughter to go out to work. She tries to have a nap in the daytime when the grandchildren sleep.

On the other hand, members also explain that a lack of work life balance and a lack of a say in the hours they work mean that they miss out on spending time with their grandchildren.

Usdaw believes it is about time that the important contribution grandparents make both to their families and to the wider economy by providing childcare should be recognised and supported by the Government, employers and policy makers.

Whilst grandparents providing care do have some rights at work these are limited and need strengthening.

Many employers still believe that older workers will be less productive or more prone to injury or sickness absence. They are not. Studies show that the way we perform at work is broadly similar across all age groups, as are sickness absence rates. Age after all is not about declining but about changing.

Our health and physical capacity can of course deteriorate as we age but several other functions improve with age. A major European-wide report into older workers found the following:

“Mental growth is the success story of ageing...strategic thinking, sharp wittedness, consideration for others, wisdom, the ability to deliberate, ability to rationalise...and language skills all improve with age.”

The ageing process means that workers develop different skills and abilities as they get older.

Some abilities including strength will decline in older age but probably much less than people think.

The TUC in their report *‘The Health and Safety of Older Workers’* suggest that:

“Employers need to recognise that each generation has its own strengths and weaknesses and the strengths of older workers should be better identified and utilised with the aim of making them a valuable asset in the workplace.”

Usdaw wanted to find out more about the health and wellbeing experiences of our older members and so we have been running an Older Workers at Work Survey. You can find a copy in the Appendix on page 19 of this statement.

It reveals a number of issues of concern.

Physically Demanding Work

Slowing down at work whilst still being expected to carry out tiring and strenuous work was a strong theme to emerge from our survey.

Doing physically demanding work undoubtedly becomes harder with age. This is the experience of one Usdaw member:

“As an older worker you are more prone to aches and pains and yet my company sickness absence policy does not recognise this.”

“I am still expected to do work I did maybe 20 years ago. What they don’t understand is that you slow down as you get older.”

“I am more tired and slower.”

The majority of our members are working in stores, warehouses, factories, food processing plants and call centres. They are moving up to a tonne of produce every four hours across checkouts; standing at packing lines; pulling cages full of produce; bending, reaching and lifting heavy items to replenish shelves; coping with extremes of temperature and time limited breaks; standing or sitting for lengthy periods of time; dealing with regular changes to working hours, often at short notice and of course dealing with members of the public.

Musculoskeletal conditions, stress and anxiety are particularly common among older workers. Musculoskeletal conditions can be exacerbated by activities such as heavy lifting, repetitive movements, using force and working fast or on night shifts.

It is no wonder that after many years of doing this kind of work many Usdaw members feel they are starting to slow down as they enter middle and later life.

Members who responded to our survey also talked about a relentless focus on targets which can mean that the skills and experience of older workers, which can't always be measured, are overlooked in favour of the need to hit targets. One member said:

“It’s as if that’s all that matters anymore and they still expect me to work at the same pace as people half my age.”

Another member said she had seen older workers pushed into retirement once they were seen as falling below target.

Illness and Disability

Older workers will face periods of ill-health and disability just like any other worker will. But for older workers the risk that this means being managed out on grounds of capability or ill-health is all the greater.

We know from our survey that older members with a long-term health condition or a disability often worry about asking for help at work for fear that they will lose their jobs.

One member said:

“I have asked to change jobs due to a knee operation and other health issues as my store is a convenience store and always busy. But I can’t change jobs I’ve been told because the manager says all the other jobs involve shelf filling, till routines and he says it won’t be any better. It seems there is no work for me now I am starting to slow down.”

A woman member with rheumatoid arthritis works nights and is supposed to have a regular occupational health check-up but will not go in case her condition is revealed and she is managed out of her job.

Another member working in warehousing said:

“I’m 62 now and I work in a returns centre. I stand up for seven hours a day and find my job really tiring. I pull heavy cages and get back and shoulder pain. I don’t want the company to know I’m struggling though as I need to carry on working. I can’t afford to retire. If they find out I’m not coping I might be made to go. It’s hard when younger people have stacked the cages as they don’t think about us older women having to pull them.”

Members are also reporting higher levels of stress as work has become more intensified in industries like retail and this will have an impact on the health and well-being of older workers. Over half of people 50-59 who are out of work for ill-health report a stress-related or mental health issue.

On the whole UK workplaces are poor at managing older workers and at adapting to the challenges of supporting workers who may be slowing down.

This is in marked contrast with other countries such as Germany and Finland in which unions and employers are working in partnership to adapt workplaces to prepare for ageing workforces.

Older members who have a long-term health condition or disability may be entitled to additional support at work under the Equality Act 2010. There is more information about disability and the Equality Act in the Usdaw leaflet ‘Supporting Disabled Members – An advice guide for Usdaw reps’ (Leaflet 383).

The Menopause

Unions have argued for some time now that the menopause is a workplace issue. Women's experiences of the menopause will vary although most women will experience a range of symptoms that can affect their well-being and their attendance and performance at work.

New research by the Wales TUC which draws on the experiences of over 4,000 working women found that over eight out of ten women said the menopause affected their working life. This ranged from hot flushes, lack of concentration, heavy periods, memory problems and fatigue.

Women can experience the menopause at almost any age but for most women it occurs between the ages of 51-55.

Women often feel that the menopause is treated as a joke at work and this can make it even harder to get the right support. Usdaw's survey revealed women members being disciplined for menopause-related absence under sickness absence policies.

The majority of women say they do not feel comfortable talking about the menopause at work and this was particularly the case where their line manager is male.

The menopause can be a significant workplace issue for many women and union health and safety reps have an important role to play in ensuring it is seen as an occupational health and safety issue.



Usdaw member Vanessa Morrison is finding positive ways to let the women members she meets know that the menopause is an Usdaw issue.

"I am really interested in how the menopause affects women at work as this is something we just don't talk about. My concern is that it is viewed by employers as a personal problem as opposed to an employer taking responsibility and being more accountable for their female employees."

Usdaw has a leaflet on the menopause, 'Women's Health — The Menopause – An advice leaflet for Usdaw Members' (Leaflet WE WH 006). You can find out more about the work we are doing on this issue by contacting equalitymatters@usdaw.org.uk

The Union is aware that members' incomes are under pressure like never before. Rising gas, electricity and utility bills, a fall in the real value of wages, rises in inflation and a shortage of affordable housing together with short working hours contracts and cuts to in-work social security benefits are all taking their toll on members' household and living expenses.

Three years ago the Union conducted a broad reaching survey to discover the impact austerity measures are having on members' lives. Over 2,000 responses were received.

Over three-quarters of respondents feel worse off than they did five years ago. Day-to-day household bills are placing a serious strain on members' household finances. Over half the respondents said that they had missed meals in order to pay their bills, with one in five doing so regularly. Three out of every four members reported cutting back on other essentials in order to cover travel and transport costs.

"I very often go without meals so I can feed my children and put gas and electricity in my meters."

"I am constantly in arrears and always struggling. We can't get on our feet as we can't make enough to cover the basic needs."

The Disproportionate Impact on Older Women

The squeeze on working families' finances has a particular impact on women. Research suggests that women are the main 'shock absorbers' of poverty of households and feel the pressures of managing on a low budget most.

The freeze and cuts to social security benefits, the gender pay gap, discrimination in the labour market, the increase in the State Retirement Pension age and the fact that women continue to carry the main responsibility for care all add up to putting women workers at greater risk of poverty than men and this worsens with age.

The Gender Pay Gap

The gender pay gap is a key factor in the economic disadvantage women aged 50 plus face. Research by the TUC using the Office for National Statistics Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings reveals that the gender pay gap is twice as large for women in their 50s as it is for women overall.

- Women in their 50s earn nearly a fifth less than men of the same age — the widest gender pay gap of any age group. Both men and women face falling hourly wage rates when they are in their 50s but this decline is somewhat worse for women, with women in their 50s earning less than women in their 30s and 40s.
- In all age groups, men's median hourly rate is higher than women's.
- In all age groups, women are more likely than men to work part-time. Excluding the 16-21 age group, which includes a large number of students in full-time education, the proportion of women workers who are part-time rises steadily and peaks for women over the age of 50. The fact that nearly half of women over 50 work part-time is important because part-time wage rates are so much lower than full-time.

The result of a lifetime of low pay particularly for women members combined with the gender pay gap means women are more likely to experience poverty in older age and retirement than men and the situation is worsening. Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in the Autumn of last year found 300,000 more pensioners in the UK were living in poverty last year compared with 2012/13, the first sustained increase in pensioner poverty for 20 years.

The average net income of female pensioners each week is approximately 85% of their male counterparts and despite a slight reduction since 1994/95, over two-thirds of pensioners living in poverty are women.

How women aged 50 plus are feeling is summed up by the TUC in a recent report into the experiences of older women at work to which Usdaw contributed:

“This generation of women has been let down. They entered the workforce in the 1970s or 80s. They were the first generation protected by equal pay and sex discrimination laws and the first to have rights to paid maternity leave. Many returned to work after having children and struggled to combine work and childcare at a time when few employers offered flexible working. But after decades of hard work many of these women feel short-changed. The fact this generation of women earns a fifth less than their male counterparts and less than any other age group should set alarm bells ringing.”

What are the Issues for Usdaw Members?

Not surprisingly Usdaw’s own research findings into older members’ experiences reflect what is going on in society more generally.

Usdaw’s survey of older workers found that two-thirds of women members and just under half of men in Usdaw are planning to work beyond State Pension age and in the vast majority of cases this is because members simply cannot afford to retire when they would like to.

In their research the TUC found that three-quarters of older workers said that they would need to continue to work in order to supplement their pension income. Other studies show that one in five workers say that they will never be able to afford to fully retire. The numbers of people saying that they will have to work beyond State Pension age is now at an all time high.

Case Study: Jacqui Hill, Wisemans

“I’m lucky as I’ve found my employer to be supportive of older workers who might need to slow down. But for me, as for so many older workers, the issue is as you get older you might want to reduce your hours or not go at the same pace but you worry about losing pay. I do 40 hours a week plus overtime and the money I earn isn’t something we can do without. Like many people me and my husband have no pension plan, we rent our home and there isn’t a lot left over at the end of the month.”

Usdaw successfully campaigned for part-time workers to be allowed into occupational schemes so now it is illegal to prevent part-time workers from joining a scheme on that basis.

Usdaw is continuing to work with employers encouraging them to pay both higher hourly rates and make bigger contributions towards their pension schemes.

Section 5

Guidance for Reps

There is a lot that Usdaw reps can do to support and help older members at work. This section has some practical tips from other reps about what steps they have taken to do this.

Performance

Our workplace introduced a new IT system that meant instead of working from one screen our advisors had to work from several at the same time. All new starters and the younger members of staff sailed through the change and enjoyed the variety this change brought to the role, others took a little longer but still picked it up within the 13 week transitional period agreed with Usdaw. However one older woman was on the brink of being performance managed out due to errors she was continually making. The member approached the Union and we explained to the business how our member was struggling due to not being able to navigate around the new system. Our member had worked for the company for a long time and had only ever worked from the one screen. We believed that with extra coaching on a one-to-one basis the member would reach the standard expected. The business agreed to extend the 13 weeks by a further eight weeks to allow for this, their decision took the pressure off and our member eventually picked it up within the agreed extra time.

The Menopause

“I wanted women to know that they can talk to the Union about the menopause particularly if it is causing them problems at work. The workplace can make the symptoms of the menopause worse.

I see women struggling with things like not getting proper rest breaks, so-called jokes about hot flushes and pressure to meet targets. This can make women feel stressed and even more tired at what can be a really difficult time in a woman’s life.

So I made sure women in my store knew this is an Usdaw issue and spoke to managers so they would understand what women going through the menopause might need.”

Some steps are fairly easy to put in place but can make a big difference. Things like letting women step outside for fresh air and allowing more frequent breaks in work to go to the toilet.

Often the menopause can really mess up your sleep and so reps can also ask for members to have a temporary adjustment of their shift pattern to help with this. I wanted to get across the message that the menopause is an occupational health issue and not something that should stay invisible and never be talked about.



Pensions

“I have organised Pensions Awareness Days to help members feel better informed about their options. There is lots of information out there but ours is different — coming from the Union members feel they can trust what we say and we make it easy to understand. I would say to other reps just go for it — the Usdaw Pensions Section will send you everything you need and give you lots of support. The Usdaw Pensions Survey is a great ice breaker to get the conversation going.”

Women have definitely had a raw deal when it comes to pensions but at least we can say “look you do have options”.

“I think members feel less worried and confused after the Usdaw Pensions Awareness Days.”

You can also:

- Use the Usdaw leaflet ‘*Checking Out Health and Safety in Shops*’ (Leaflet 254). It has a checklist for reps which can be used to help older workers working in shops. It covers workplace temperature, seating, lifting and carrying, slips and trips, checkout design and more.
- Hand out the Usdaw Older Workers at Work Survey and discuss the results at your rep team meetings.

- Leave leaflets aimed at older workers in your staff canteen or elsewhere. They include:
 - *Discrimination — Older Workers — An advice leaflet for Usdaw Members* (Leaflet 418)
 - *Discrimination — Older Workers — An advice leaflet for Usdaw reps* (Leaflet 423)
 - *Parents and Carers — Looking After Grandchildren? — An advice leaflet for Usdaw Members* (Leaflet 422)
 - *Women’s Health — The Menopause — An advice leaflet for Usdaw Members* (Leaflet WE WH 006)
- Hold a Pensions Awareness Day — you can get all the support and materials you need from the Usdaw Pensions Section.



Section 6

Taking Up the Issues with Employers and Government

In common with many other European countries, the UK has an ageing population resulting in a growing proportion of older people in paid work.

There are three main reasons why.

- We are living longer. Life expectancy is increasing by the equivalent of five hours a day, or three months a year.
- The birth rate is falling. With fewer people being born, the supply of younger workers to fill jobs will decline.
- People cannot afford to retire and so are having to carry on working. The number of people who have an adequate retirement income is at an all-time low.

The facts below illustrate that these trends are set to continue for decades to come.

- The number of people aged between 50 and 64 in work in the UK has increased by two million over the last 15 years.
- In the next 10 years there will be 13.5 million job vacancies but only seven million school and college leavers.
- The percentage of workers over 65 in employment doubled in the period 2001-2010.
- By 2020 a third of all workers will be aged 50 and over.

Aside from the fact that it is the right thing to do the above facts demonstrate that there are powerful economic reasons for employers to develop policies and practices that work for older people.

At the organisational level, there are often serious concerns that workers become more expensive and less productive as they get older. However, employers who adopt a positive approach to employing and retaining older workers report real and demonstrable business benefits as outlined opposite:

- Recruiting older workers means that employers gain extra experience and skills.
- Employers benefit in the long term when they invest in the skills and health of their older workers.
- Retaining older workers avoids the expensive loss of skills and may increase market share.

Research by the CIPD revealed the following benefits to employers of having an age diverse workforce:

- Improves the knowledge and skills base of the workforce.
 - Colleagues of different ages have different skills and knowledge sets which are valuable, both to other colleagues and to the organisation as a whole.
 - Younger workers feel that they can learn from older workers as older workers can share their experiences 'on the job' and are often able to share practical advice which they wouldn't have experience of otherwise.
 - Older workers also feel that they can learn from the skill-sets of younger employees. Younger colleagues are often seen to have knowledge around new practices, gained from recent training, as well as specific skills relating to IT and social media.
- Generates new ideas.
 - Different generations have varied approaches to work which bring new perspectives. Younger workers are sometimes associated with 'quick' reactions and thought processes while older workers are associated with more measured reactions, utilising their experience. There is clearly a role for both approaches in the workplace as these different perspectives bring about fresh ideas.
- Enhances customer experience.
 - Older and younger customers who see older and younger workers in stores and shops link this with good customer service.

Flexible Working for Older Workers

Examples of positive approaches to flexible working from across the world

Co-op Adriatica, Italy

Co-op Adriatica is one of the largest Italian business co-operatives in the retail trade. Working time flexibility is offered to cashiers, with the aim of improving employees' work-life balance whilst still meeting the business needs of the company. The initiative *orario a isole* ('island timetable') allows approximately 600 employees to independently decide their own schedules. Organisation of time has improved, particularly for older workers who constitute 20% of the company's employees. The scheme has enabled them to dedicate themselves to personal and family related activities such as caring for parents or spending time with grandchildren.

SCA Laakirchen, Austria

To prevent exhaustion and improve quality of life for workers in this paper mill, the company agreed an initiative to cancel 15 shifts for shift workers aged over 52 years. This provides 15 more days of rest and reduces the annual workload of night and morning shifts. It represents a concrete recognition of the performance and commitment of these long established employees. Older shift workers chose this option over that of a financial bonus.

Stamboliiski Plc, Bulgaria

The company offers temporary contracts for retired employees in its paper factory, under which they transfer their professional experience to younger workers. The practice is described as a very effective one, and appears to help retired employees feel both esteemed and committed.

Verkehrs Aktiengesellschaft Nuremberg (VAG), Germany

VAG, a public transport company, conducted a project entitled 'Improvement of the work situation of drivers of public transport'. In response to this project, the company developed a number of measures; of these, the 'special driver group' measure proved the most effective. (A driver group is a group of drivers who are scheduled to work on the same shifts.) The measure allowed for a reduction in the working hours of drivers over the age of 57, irrespective of their state of health. Older drivers were released from one shift per week (a short morning shift) without their pay being affected.

De Klink, Belgium

The organisation, a residential home, seeks to meet all of the individual time demands and needs of its staff. It has implemented a wide range of possible work schedules. Moreover, in response to legal obligations, the working hours of employees aged 45 years and above have been reduced.



Flexible Working – Bargaining Priorities

Employers should be encouraged to:

- Adopt a flexible approach to allow for changes to working patterns as older workers take on caring responsibilities, such as the care of grandchildren or move towards retirement. Changes to working hours (rather than cuts in working hours) and job redesign should be offered.
- Recognise that flexibility is a tool to get the most out of older workers, for example, by allowing them to manage their personal needs. In return, the evidence shows that older workers are likely to be appreciative and more loyal, and to work harder. The evidence suggests that fears about people abusing the offer are unfounded.
- Examine how flexible working can interact with other services and benefits, for example, their occupational health policy or pension scheme.
- Reduce or remove the 26 week service condition from the right to request flexible working, making it a day one right.
- Reintroduce into policies the right for those requesting a change to meet with their manager to discuss the request, to be accompanied to that meeting, to be issued with a written decision and have the right to appeal a refusal.

Flexible Working – Government Action

- Make flexible working a day one right and extend this beyond employees, to include agency workers.
- Reframe the right to request flexible working so that it is clear that it can cover changes in working hours that many Usdaw members are seeking, eg more predictable working hours or an increase in working hours.

- It should be made harder for employers to justify rejecting a request by enabling employment tribunals to scrutinise an employer's reasons. At the moment tribunals can only decide upon whether or not the procedure has been followed. Furthermore, employment tribunals should have the power to ask employers to trial new working practices with a greater emphasis on new forms of working that do not involve a cut in pay.
- The Government should promote flexible working and disseminate good practice guidance as widely as possible.

Rights for Older Carers Including Grandparents

Examples of positive approaches from across the world

Germany

Parental leave can be transferred to grandparents if the mother is a teenager, still in full-time education, is seriously ill, disabled or dies. Grandparents who are primary carers are entitled to parental leave. Working grandparents are also entitled to take up to 10 days paid leave to look after a grandchild in an emergency, or to take unpaid leave of up to six months.

Familienpflegezeit ('family caring time') allows eligible employees to reduce their working week to a minimum of 15 hours for up to two years if they need to care for a dependent, but are allowed to 'smooth' their income. They are paid at a higher rate of pay during the period of reduced hours but a lower rate when they return to full hours to compensate. The scheme offers job security and flexibility for employer and employee.

Hungary

Parental allowances and parental leave can be transferred to a grandparent if the parents agree and if the child is looked after in the grandparent's home.

Japan

Japan has a time bank system — Hureai Kippu — for elder care. Created in 1995, the programme allows members to accrue time credits that can be cashed in later via a centralised clearing system.

Older Carers Including Grandparents — Bargaining Priorities

Encourage employers to:

- Give more support to carers and grandparents and recognise that there are different types of working carers and grandparents each with their own different needs.
- Adopt a more flexible approach including allowing changes in working patterns and hours.
- Better train and support line managers so that they understand the benefits of supporting carers and grandparents and are encouraged to do so.
- Ensure that all employees are given the training, coaching and encouragement they need to develop their skills and progress in their careers regardless of hours worked. This should include advertising the fact that flexible working is an option.

Older Carers Including Grandparents — Government Action

- Usdaw supports the call made by Carers UK for five to ten days of paid carer's leave per year or those caring for dependants.
- In recognition of the significant and growing number of grandparents who juggle work with helping to care for grandchildren, consideration should be given to introducing an unpaid leave entitlement, similar to parental leave, which could be used up to the child reaching 18.
- A legal right to a period of adjustment leave when someone first becomes a carer to help them deal with immediate caring crises and allow time to adjust to a new caring role.
- A right to temporarily reduce your hours of work while smoothing loss of pay over a longer period.

- Collective bargaining has an important role in promoting better rights for carers and should be promoted. The Government should stop trying to reduce trade union rights and focus on encouraging employers and unions to work together to address the challenges of an ageing population.



Usdaw

Campaigning
For Equality

Usdaw
Union of Shop, Distributive
and Allied Workers

Older Workers at Work Survey

Usdaw wants to find out more about the experiences of older workers. If you are aged 50 or above, could you take a few minutes to tell us about your experience? We will use this information to work with the Government and employers to do more to support older workers.

Could you spare us a few minutes to answer the following questions? Your response will be confidential and you do not have to provide personal details.

1. Are you:

Male

Female

Another gender identity

2. How old are you?

50-54

55-59

60-64

65-69

70+

3. What is your job title? _____

4. Who do you work for? _____

5. On average how many hours a week do you work?

Less than 10

Between 10 and 20

Between 20 and 30

More than 30

More than 40

6. Are you planning to work past the State Pension Age (SPA)? *The SPA is currently 60-65 for women and 65 for men. It will rise to 66 for men and women in 2020, and to 67 between 2026 and 2028.*

Yes

No

7. If yes, on a scale of 1 to 5, to what extent is your decision to carry on working influenced by financial considerations? (With 1 being not at all and 5 being the main reason, please circle below as appropriate.)

Not at all

1

2

3

4

5

The main reason

8. If no, please tick the reason(s):

I want to retire

Job too physically demanding

Ill-health or disability

Caring responsibilities

Cannot find alternative work

Other

9. As well as going out to work, do you help to look after a family member or friend?

Yes

No

If yes, please tick all that apply:

- Children Grandchildren Foster children
 Disabled partner Parent Other elderly relative
 Neighbour or friend

10. If you help to look after a family member or friend, is this on a regular basis?

- Yes No

11. If yes, have you asked for any of the following changes to help you juggle work and family life?

Please tick all that apply:

- Changes to the times of day/night you work Changes to the days of the week you work
 To reduce your hours To increase your hours

12. Were the changes you asked for:

- Agreed Agreed in part Refused

13. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your experiences of being an older worker?

14. Are you a member of Usdaw?

- Yes No

15. If not, would you like to join?

- Yes No

If yes, you can join online at: www.usdaw.org.uk/join

Your response will be confidential and you do not have to provide personal details.

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

On completion just write FREEPOST USDWAW
on the envelope and put it in the post.

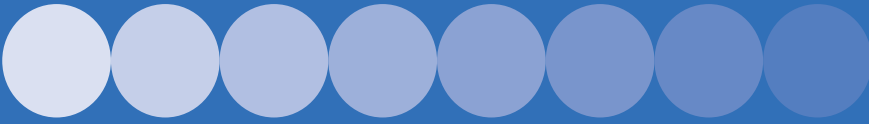
You can also email your views to: equalitymatters@usdaw.org.uk

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equalitymatters@usdaw.org.uk

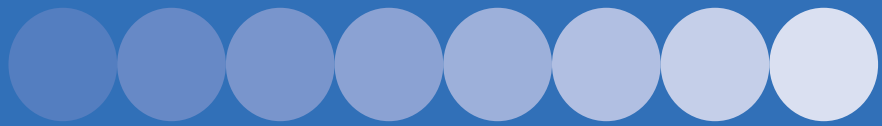
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