

Breaking Down Barriers

Black Members' Development Programme Briefing and FAQs



Why Is the Programme Focusing on Black Members?

Like most other unions, Black members in Usdaw are under-represented in union roles and at union events.

Around 17% of our members are Black – this figure is based on our own internal monitoring data and statistics published by the Office for National Statistics about the sectors in which we organize.

If Black members were accurately represented, we would expect them to occupy 17% of lay roles and to make up just under a fifth of members attending regional and national events.

However, despite making progress over recent years we are still a long way away reaching that. On average, only 7% of lay roles on average are occupied by Black members. For instance, currently 7% of shop stewards, 5.8% of Health and Safety reps and 7% of Branch Secretaries are Black.

Therefore we want to encourage more Black members to step forward so the Union properly reflects its wider membership. Improving the representation of Black members in Usdaw is not only the right thing to do, it is necessary to ensure:

- Black members have the same opportunity as other members to develop and reach their full potential.
- We reflect the workers we are trying to recruit.
- We are, and are seen to be, relevant and welcoming to Black workers.
- We take up the issues that matter to Usdaw's Black members.
- We grow and strengthen the Union.

What Is Meant by the Term 'Black' Members?

Put simply, the term Black includes any member who is at risk of racism and of being treated less favourably because of their skin colour. This term therefore includes a wide range of members including Asian members, African and Caribbean members, Chinese members and members of mixed heritage or multiple ethnicities – who would all be able to apply for the programme.

Why Haven't We Addressed the Issue of Black Members' Under-Representation in Lay Roles Before Now?

The short answer is we have. Going right back to the setting up of the Race Relations Committee in the mid '80s the Union has always tried to find ways to reach out to Black members.

For example in 2006 the Union set up equality forums regionally and nationally with seats for Black members. Usdaw also organises an annual get-together for Black members called Black Members' Weekend Workshop.

Although the Black Members Development Programme is a new initiative it represents a continuation and acceleration of our existing approach.

Many other unions are running similar programmes and we are all being supported by the TUC, although Usdaw's programme is one of the most ambitious.

What Is the Black Members' Development Programme Hoping to Achieve?

The Black Members' Development Programme is designed to help address the under-representation of Black members in the Union's structures and at union events and conferences. We hope the Programme will:

- Give Black members the support they need to become more involved in the Union by developing their skills and understanding of Usdaw and the wider union movement.
- Build a support network of Black activists to help build membership.
- Encourage and support Black members to be pro-active in their workplaces.

Is the Course Accredited – Do Members Receive a Qualification?

No. The reason for this is that the education and training elements of the programme need to be flexible so that tailored support can be offered to members enabling them to reach their own personal development goal. Accredited courses follow a relatively rigid 'curriculum' and so are not appropriate for this programme.

When Is the Programme Open for Applications?

The programme will be launched after this year's Annual Delegate Meeting. This is when the application process will open.

Members can be nominated to the programme or they can self-nominate. There are 15 places available in the first, pilot year.

Successful candidates will take up their places on the programme in Autumn 2023.

Who Can Apply?

For the first year, applications will be open to all Black members who have completed their Shop Steward, H&S rep or ULR rep training with Usdaw.

Applications will open up to all Black members in 2024.

What Happens After a Member Has Applied to the Programme?

Members will be shortlisted according to an agreed marking system / selection process. Members will then be contacted to inform them whether or not they have secured a place on the programme for the year.

The Union will take positive steps to ensure participants reflect the gender balance and ethnic diversity of the Union.

How Long Is the Programme?

It will run for a period of 12 months. Members will not be seconded to the programme but will secure release to attend around 20 days of classroom and non-classroom sessions throughout the year.

Details of the timetable are in development. Sessions will depend on members' personal development goals.

The programme will be reviewed after one year, however the intention is that it will become a permanent part of the Union's rep development programme, with a new group of members taking up places on the programme each year.

Where Can I Find Out More?

If you have any questions at all about the programme, feel free to contact the Equalities Section at Usdaw Head Office on **0161 224 2804** or by emailing: **breakingdownbarriers@usdaw.org.uk**

You can also visit the Usdaw website for information about the programme and details of how to apply once the programme launches:

www.usdaw.org.uk/breakingdownbarriers