



Getting Started – The Role Of The Rep

Reps' Handbook – Part 1

Welcome to Your New Role



Welcome to your new role as an Usdaw rep. By volunteering to become a rep, you have taken an important first step to help your colleagues build a strong union in your workplace.

The involvement of reps has protected many thousands of our members who are facing issues at work. A rep who can confidently promote Usdaw to their colleagues is the very best recruitment tool we have.

Becoming a rep is a very big and important decision. We need to ensure that all new reps have positive experiences.

We need to ensure that you get the support that you need to represent members and successfully organise your workplace – the support to develop into an experienced rep who will stay with the Union for years to come.

Usdaw reps make a real difference in the workplace. They are the power behind the Union – winning for our members.

This Handbook comes in three parts. *Getting Started – The Role of the Rep*, is the first part and is a guide for all new reps. It does not cover every aspect of your role but provides some practical assistance for getting started.

I hope this Handbook will assist you in carrying out your role. May I take this opportunity to thank you for becoming an Usdaw rep and wish you well in your new role.

Very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Paddy Lillis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paddy Lillis
General Secretary

Contents

Welcome to Your New Role	1
Contents	2
Introduction to This Handbook	3
Chapter 1 - Role of the Rep	5
Chapter 2 - Facilities	9
Chapter 3 - Support	11
Chapter 4 - Information Gathering	12
Chapter 5 - What Next?	15
Jargon Buster	17

Introduction to This Handbook

In this Handbook, you will find information about:

- How we will help and support you in your role.
- Training opportunities.
- What we are asking you to do.
- Where to go for help and advice.

Do not try to remember everything at once but refer to the Handbook as and when you need it.

There is also a jargon buster at the back of this Handbook that explains the key words used.

Remember, you will always get help and advice from other reps and your Area Organiser. The Union will also provide you with some basic training as soon as possible after you have become a rep.

Things to do...

Make a note of the name of your Area Organiser, the Usdaw office where they are based and a phone number and email address where you can contact them:

Ushaw Area Organiser:

Local Ushaw Office:

Tel No:

email:





Chapter 1

Role of the Rep

As an Usdaw rep, you play a vital role in the Union. You are the face of the Union for the members you represent and the employer that you deal with.

Why Are Usdaw Reps Important?

Udaw is a large and influential organisation with hundreds of thousands of members in workplaces all over the country. It is impossible for every single member to have a direct say in all the decisions and activities of the Union. Therefore, it is necessary for members to elect reps like you to speak and act for them at all levels of the Union. Reps have a duty to find out members' views and report back to them on Usdaw's activities.

Workplace reps are the backbone of Usdaw. Without reps, there would be no one there to act as the link between members and the Union and to organise and support people in the workplace.

Reps are elected by the group of members that they represent. Reps engage in different levels of activity depending on their experience, skills and the time they are able to commit.

If you would like to know more about rep elections, how the Union works, and Democracy in Usdaw, a Home Study Booklet is available – speak to your Area Organiser or Training Officer for further information or visit our website at:

www.usdaw.org.uk/homestudy



Many workers become reps for very different reasons. There are different types of reps in the workplace:

- **Union reps** – also known as Shop Stewards – organise, represent, listen and talk to members on issues in the workplace.
- **Health and Safety Reps** – organise, represent, listen and talk to members on health, safety or welfare issues.
- **Union Learning Reps** – organise, listen and talk to members. They help members to get access to learning opportunities and enable them to brush up on or learn new skills.

Things to do...

Have a go at answering the following questions and, if possible, try to speak to another rep and ask them the same questions too.

1. Why did you become an Usdaw member and rep?
Record your answers below.

I became an Usdaw member because:

I became an Usdaw rep because:

2. Ask another rep why they became an Usdaw member and rep?

They became an Usdaw member because:

They became an Usdaw rep because:

What Does an Usdaw Rep Do?

In different workplaces, there can be big differences in what reps do, how much time they need and the facilities that have been negotiated.

As an Usdaw rep you should seek to be the **first** and **main** point of contact with the Union for members. **You are the most important link between the Union and the members.**

Workplace reps play a number of roles:

- They listen to, talk to, recruit and organise members around workplace issues.
- They give members information about the Union and promote Usdaw's benefits, including:
 - FirstCall Accident Claim Line
 - Legal Plus Scheme.
- Reps keep members informed about and involved in local and national negotiations.
- They are advisers and sounding boards, talking to members about workplace issues and giving advice on how to deal with these.
- Alternatively, they may arrange for the member to get advice or assistance from elsewhere in the Union, or work with them to get the information they need.
- They are representatives and spokespersons for members in their workplace.
- They represent members and speak on behalf of members in meetings.
- Reps are problem solvers and assist members in raising issues with managers. These can be at formal or informal meetings.
- They build good working relationships with managers.
- They build links with other reps in the workplace and seek advice and support from them.
- Reps attend branch meetings alongside members. Branch meetings enable reps not only to keep themselves informed of what is happening in the Union at local, regional and national level, they also keep the branch informed of what is happening in their workplaces.
- Reps also have an important role in ensuring that the views of the members within the workplace are represented to the wider Union.

They are the workplace rep in Usdaw – an essential part of a large and powerful national organisation.



What Rights Do I Get as an Usdaw Rep?

Reps have rights to reasonable paid time off to carry out their work.

These include:

- Speaking to workers about the benefits of joining the Union.
- Meetings with members and management.
- Preparing and speaking to members when representing them in grievance, disciplinary or sickness absence meetings.
- Keeping members informed of what is going on in the workplace and the Union.

Do I Get Any Training?

Reps in workplaces where Usdaw is recognised by the employer have rights to time off for training.

It is vital that all new reps attend Usdaw training courses. Union training can give you the support and confidence to know that you are doing a good job for your members.

Usdaw courses are friendly and informal and there are no exams. You will also meet other reps from different workplaces and share experiences around your role as a rep.

You will receive information on training courses from your Area Organiser.

Usdaw courses run in your region. Each region has an Usdaw Training Officer.

Things to do...

Find out who your Training Officer is and when the next Shop Stewards' Introductory Course is taking place. You will find this information by asking your Area Organiser.

Usdaw Training Officer:

Date of next Shop Stewards' Introductory Course

Chapter 2

Facilities

What Facilities Do I Get to Carry Out My Role?

Reps working for employers that recognise Usdaw have the right to reasonable paid time off for meetings with members and managers and to carry out their role.

A Union noticeboard should be made available for reps in the workplace.

They have use of employers' telephones to contact their Area Organiser or the local Usdaw office for advice.

Reps are also allowed access to an office or somewhere private where they can talk to members in confidence and lockable facilities in the workplace to store any union information. Some companies allow the use of email and internal mail, but check your Agreement first.

Look at your Company/Usdaw Agreement included in your rep's pack - what facilities are you entitled to? Tick the boxes if you have access to these facilities. Don't worry if you aren't sure, ask your Area Organiser to talk through your facilities in your workplace.

Union noticeboard

☐

Access to a company telephone

☐

Somewhere private to talk to your member(s)

☐

A lockable cabinet

☐

Time-off for union training

☐

Access to email

☐

Access to a photocopier

☐

Data Protection

As a rep you will regularly come across personal data and information about your members. Data Protection is therefore an important aspect of the rep's role and you will need to deal with personal data fairly, securely and confidentially. The Union has produced a booklet and an online short course that provides guidance for you to follow. For more details go to www.usdaw.org.uk/gdprguide



Things to do...

Some Company/Union Agreements allow reps to have regular meetings. Check your Agreement and find out if rep meetings take place in your workplace and when the next meeting is. Record your answers below:

1. Do rep meetings take place in your workplace?

Yes

☐

No

☐

2. If you ticked yes to question 1, what is the date of your next rep meeting?

Date: _____

If your Agreement doesn't allow you time off for rep meetings, then ask your Area Organiser about other ways in which you can either get together or keep in touch with other reps in your workplace.

3. Obtain a copy of your Staff Handbook. You will need to bring this with you when you attend your first Usdaw training course.



Will I Have to Negotiate with My Employer?

A rep will give the workforce a stronger voice when it comes to dialogue with management.

It helps if reps go to meetings with employers – it is usually the best way to talk to them! However, you won't be forced to do anything you don't want to do. We will give you the training, support and guidance to help you build good working relationships with your employer.

Some reps may be involved in local negotiations (for example pay negotiations) with training and support from the Union.

Chapter 3

Support

Who Can I Go to For Support and Advice?

- More experienced reps in your workplace.
- Your branch.
- Your local Usdaw office.
- Your Area Organiser (contact the local Usdaw office).
- **Network** – Union magazine for reps.
- Usdaw's website – www.usdaw.org.uk

What If I Am Worried That I Can't Do Everything?

Different reps get involved in different activities depending on experience, skills and time available.

Usdaw aims to have at least one rep in each workplace. We usually have teams of reps in larger workplaces with many departments and where members work different shifts. This way, reps can help and support each other and share the workload.

Usdaw provides strong and effective organisation for all our members and their reps.



Things to do...

Find out the name of your branch and where it meets. Your reps, Project Worker, Area Organiser or local Usdaw office may be able to help you.

Name of the branch:

Where the branch meets:

Chapter 4

Information Gathering

Things to do...

Identify the Usdaw reps in your workplace, where they work and the kind of rep they are, ie union rep, Health and Safety Rep, Union Learning Rep (if you are the only rep then place your name in the space provided).

Name:

Department:

What kind of rep are they?

Contact details:

Shift:

Name:

Department:

What kind of rep are they?

Contact details:

Shift:

Name:

Department:

What kind of rep are they?

Contact details:

Shift:

Name:

Department:

What kind of rep are they?

Contact details:

Shift:



Things to do...

Which Usdaw leaflets/posters are currently displayed on your noticeboard?
Record your answers in the spaces below:

Leaflet/poster names:

Is your noticeboard up-to-date?

Yes:

☐

No:

☐

You can get up-to-date resources for your noticeboard from the Post and Despatch Department at Usdaw Head Office.

You may also find our online Publications Catalogue useful: www.usdaw.org.uk/eCat. It features all the leaflets, booklets and posters available, and includes helpful short descriptions, cover thumbnails, and links to eBooks and downloadable PDFs for viewing/printing.

Things to do...

Speak to five workers in your workplace and identify the reasons why they joined Usdaw or, if they are not a member of Usdaw ask, them why they haven't joined. Record your answers in the spaces below:

Name: _____ Department: _____

MEMBER - Reasons for joining Usdaw:

NON-MEMBER - Reasons for not joining Usdaw:

Name: _____ Department: _____

MEMBER - Reasons for joining Usdaw:

NON-MEMBER - Reasons for not joining Usdaw:

Name: _____ Department: _____

MEMBER - Reasons for joining Usdaw:

NON-MEMBER - Reasons for not joining Usdaw:

Name: _____ Department: _____

MEMBER - Reasons for joining Usdaw:

NON-MEMBER - Reasons for not joining Usdaw:

Name: _____ Department: _____

MEMBER - Reasons for joining Usdaw:

NON-MEMBER - Reasons for not joining Usdaw:

Chapter 5

What Next?

Thank you for taking the time to read this Handbook. We hope you have found the information useful.

Have a go at the activities in this Handbook and bring it to your first training course.

You will receive the other two parts of this Reps' Handbook – *Organising and Recruitment* and *Representing Members* – when you attend your course.

Good luck in your new role.

Data Protection

As a rep you will regularly come across personal data and information about your members. Data Protection is therefore an important aspect of the rep's role and you will need to deal with personal data fairly, securely and confidentially.

The Union has produced a booklet and an online short course that provides guidance for you to follow.

For more details go to
www.usdaw.org.uk/gdprguide

Jargon Buster

Area Organiser (AO)

A full-time local Official of the Union responsible for providing service and advice to one or more branches and for recruiting new members.

Branch

Members are grouped geographically or by workplace into branches.

Company/Usdaw Agreement

An Agreement between a company and Usdaw – which outlines the working relationship between them. All reps should have access to this document.

Data Protection

The Data Protection Act 2018 (GDPR) governs the way Usdaw has to deal with personal data and information of our members.

Region

Usdaw is divided geographically into seven regions: South Wales and Western, Eastern, Midlands, North Eastern, Scottish, Southern and North West.

Facilities

Arrangements to allow union reps to fulfil their role – such as the right to reasonable time off, access to a union noticeboard etc.

Formal Meetings

A scheduled meeting between management and the individual. Formal notes should be taken and representation offered.

General Secretary

Full-time Usdaw Official elected by the whole membership. The most senior Official in the Union.

Health and Safety Rep

A person elected by Usdaw members to represent their views and concerns on all Health and Safety issues.

Informal Meeting

An informal discussion between management and the individual to try and resolve an issue at the earliest opportunity.

Noticeboard

Each workplace should have a noticeboard for union literature and information on reps.

Organising

Recruiting new members in the workplace, involving them in Usdaw and encouraging union activity in the workplace.

Rep Meetings

Usually a monthly meeting for reps to get together in their workplace to discuss members' issues and plan recruitment activity. Some Agreements do not have this facility.

Shop Steward

See Usdaw Rep.

Union Learning Rep (ULR)

A person elected by Usdaw members to help them get access to learning opportunities.

Udaw

Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers.

Udaw Rep

(also known as Shop Steward)

A person elected by Usdaw members who organises and recruits members in the workplace and represents views and concerns.

Udaw Branch

This is how the Union groups members. Branches can be single site or company specific. Individual union members and reps can become more involved in the work of the Union via their union branch. You should speak to your Area Organiser to find out more about your branch.





Head Office

Voyager Building
2 Furness Quay
Salford Quays
Manchester
M50 3XZ

T 0161 224 2804/249 2400

E enquiries@usdaw.org.uk