



# **BEIS SELECT COMMITTEE CALL FOR EVIDENCE**

## **THE IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS ON BUSINESSES AND WORKERS**

### **USDAW SUBMISSION**

## Summary

Usdaw is the UK's fifth largest Union, with more than 400,000 members. The majority of our members are employed in the Retail Sector, but we also have significant membership in road transport, warehousing, food manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, call centres and home shopping.

Usdaw has national agreements with four of the UK's biggest food retailers, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Morrisons and the Co-op, and we are also the recognised trade union for Asda stores in Northern Ireland. In the non-food sector we negotiate pay with Argos, Next Distribution and Poundland nationally, as well as Primark in Northern Ireland. We also hold a range of agreements covering food manufacturing and distribution sites at national and local level.

Many Usdaw members throughout the retail and pharmaceutical supply chains have been at the forefront of the response to the Coronavirus outbreak. Our members work in high risk jobs on the front line of ensuring that the country continues to be fed and have access to medical supplies. The extraordinary contributions of these key workers have been vital in ensuring that the country is able to respond to the issues created through the Coronavirus outbreak.

Usdaw recently ran an online survey on the impact of Coronavirus in the workplace. 7,357 workers took part in the survey. Many of those surveyed work in shops, distribution warehouses, road transport or work as delivery drivers.

The results of this survey provide an in-depth look at what is actually happening to key workers who are ensuring food supplies are maintained at this time of crisis. Some of the findings are shocking and should act a wake-up call to everyone, but especially to Government.

Given food retail's essential role, fewer Usdaw members have been 'furloughed' than across the population. This is a survey of essential key workers on the frontline of making sure food is available in the supermarkets.

One of the most shocking findings is that abuse against retail workers has doubled since the start of the crisis. Shopworkers have faced abuse while trying to enforce social distancing in shops. At the extreme end of the abuse, out of 5,000 shopworkers who responded to our survey, 196 have been physically assaulted. This is a scandal.

Workers in retail are very worried and concerned over the health risks resulting from the increased social contact in shops. 70% of those surveyed reported that they have raised issues with their employer around concerns over the Coronavirus.

This crisis has shone a light on the low pay of key workers keeping essential services going. Workers in retail are running higher risks of sickness and yet many will only qualify for Statutory Sick Pay of £95.85 per week if they fall ill. This is simply not enough to survive on. And workers earning below £118 per week are currently not entitled to any SSP.

One in every ten workers surveyed (12%) have been 'furloughed' or laid off. Many who have been furloughed are facing pay cuts and are only getting 80% of their normal pay. For low paid workers this is real hardship and leading to stress and anxiety.

Many workers who have seen changes in their incomes have applied for Universal Credit. This is a bureaucratic process, with our survey showing that 94% of those attempting to claim Universal Credit have had difficulty with the claims process. The five week wait to receive the first payment is causing severe financial problems.

The survey shows that many workers involved in essential work have been undervalued and underpaid for too long. We need a new deal for workers:

- A minimum wage that is a real living wage rate. The national minimum wage should be immediately increased to £10 per hour.
- Guarantees over working hours. A minimum 16 hours per week for everyone who wants it. Contracts should be based on the normal hours worked. An end to Zero Hours Contracts.
- Freedom From Fear and Respect for Shopworkers through 'Protection of Workers' legislation that will tackle abuse against workers dealing with the public.
- More support for low paid workers through improved sick pay and a proper social security system instead of the current Universal Credit mess.
- Job Security – greater protection from redundancy, proper consultation over the introduction of new technologies/automation and investment in skills.
- Fair treatment and equality for all workers - women workers need equal pay and they need decent pay. We need new family friendly rights that give parents and carers real choices to support juggling work and family life.
- A real voice at work with trade unions being recognised in the workplace.

The Usdaw survey has shown us that many key workers working to keep our society going in this pandemic are low paid with insecure hours and few employment rights. The workers who are carrying out these essential roles deserve a new deal.

## Violence and Abuse Against Shop Staff

Usdaw is clear that all workers should be able to go to work, free from the fear of threats, abuse and violence. Unfortunately, the recent outbreak of Coronavirus has led to a significant increase in abuse against shop staff and other public facing workers. Usdaw's long-standing Freedom From Fear campaign has been highlighting the issues shopworkers face as a result of abusive customers. Between 2015 and the start of the crisis, our research found that the number of workers experiencing verbal abuse has increased from just over half to around two-thirds.

Our latest survey shows that, since the beginning of the outbreak, the average shopworker has been assaulted, threatened or abused every 6.5 days, more than double the rate of incidents compared to 2019.

With 1 in 6 workers facing abuse on every shift they work, this issue cannot be seen as just some isolated incidents. Out of nearly 5,000 shopworkers who responded to our survey, 196 have been physically assaulted since the start of the outbreak. This needs a serious response from Government and employers.

Whilst the vast majority of the public value the essential work of our members, low paid shopworkers are being harassed by a small but significant minority. Usdaw is clear that abuse is never acceptable and should never be seen as 'just part of the job'.

### Flashpoints for Abuse and Violence

Age related sales restrictions, such as those for alcohol, have always been a common flashpoint for abuse. Despite the legal obligations on shopworkers to uphold the law, requesting ID often triggers incidents. Our 2019 survey found that over two-thirds of incidents (67%) were linked to age-related sales, shoplifting or refusing alcohol sales.

Shop workers have a legal duty to enforce the law on age-restricted products and refuse alcohol sales in certain instances. The law is necessary for public protection and for health and welfare of young people. But the fear of abuse or even physical violence when a worker has to challenge someone who looks like they may be too young makes it very stressful for workers – especially when they are isolated in a small store or are standing alongside a customer at a self-service till. Usdaw has always been clear that shopworkers require additional protection when enforcing the law.

In just over 1 calendar month, out of nearly 5,000 shopworkers



## **Flashpoints for Abuse and Violence – Coronavirus**

The results from our Coronavirus survey confirm that many new flashpoints are emerging due to the coronavirus crisis' impact on the retail sector.

Due to the significant changes to the shopping experience during the outbreak, a range of new responsibilities have been placed on shopworkers, such as:

- The enforcement of social distancing, including limiting the numbers of customers entering stores;
- Ensuring customers do not exceed product restrictions and;
- The increased focus on restocking to cope with surging demand.

Usdaw has received many reports of our members being abused whilst carrying out their new responsibilities, as some customers refuse to follow government guidelines or act responsibly. Out of just under 5,000 retail workers surveyed:

- 1,009 mentioned social distancing as a cause of flashpoints.
- 780 mentioned product limits.
- 665 mentioned a lack of stock.
- 391 mentioned queuing.

## **The Urgent Need for New Legislation**

Shopworkers' experiences during the Coronavirus crisis make it clear that current legislation does not offer sufficient protection. The rise in abuse of shop staff over recent years had already highlighted the need for the Government to create a stand-alone offence of abusing, threatening or assaulting a public facing worker. Such an offence must include stiff penalties for those who abuse shop staff, something which could be easily understood by shopworkers and the general public.

It is now almost a year since a Government Call for Evidence on violence and abuse toward shop staff closed. Whilst we understand the pressures on Government created as a result of the Coronavirus outbreak, the Government's delay in fully responding to the Call for Evidence has led to a situation where the very people who the nation has relied on to ensure we remain fed throughout the outbreak have been entirely let down by policy makers.

## Sick Leave

According to the latest figures from the Office for National Statistics, the average worker had 4.4 days sickness absence in 2018. This is a historically low figure, falling from 7.2 days lost per employee in 1995.

In part, this decline may be attributed to a growing trend of 'presenteeism', meaning people are going into work even when they are unwell. Those in lower paid jobs, such as retail workers, are often more likely to go into work despite feeling sick as often they cannot afford to have time off.

### Covid-19

However, the high risk nature of public-facing shops or large factories and warehouses cannot be underestimated. Many respondents reported feeling concerned about their health.

Working on the front line inevitably means an increased exposure to the virus and a greater chance of contracting it, even with additional health and safety measures being put in place. 29% of respondents reported that they have had to take sick leave or self-isolate as a result of coronavirus. According to our figures, the rate of sickness absence has been nearly five times higher since the start of the outbreak.

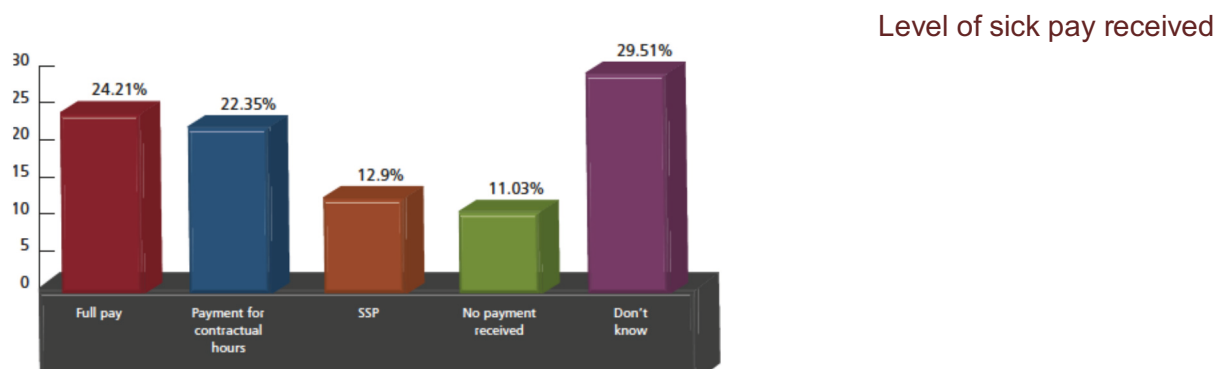
### Statutory Sick Pay

Due to the nature of virus transmission, many retail and delivery workers have been left worrying not only for their own health, but also how they will cope financially if they have to take time off work. It is concerning that nearly one in three respondents did not know what sick pay they would receive whilst off work. Thanks to Usdaw's negotiations, over half of respondents, and two-thirds of those who were aware of their sick pay entitlements, receive sick pay above the statutory level.

For those who were reliant on Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), survey respondents reported worrying they could not afford to live on £95.85 per week. There is a real danger that staff who should be staying at home will continue to work, putting themselves and the public at risk, because they cannot afford to put food on the table on the basic SSP rate.

*"I have been affected by the coronavirus and I'm only due SSP. I've had to self-isolate for two weeks. It's not great for the company to offer this. There are other workers who will not take the time off needed now because of loss of earnings and can't afford to be off who will then make others unwell!"*

Douglas, Warehouse sector



## **Need for Changes**

Usdaw is calling on the Government to improve SSP. With bills to pay and families to feed, £95.85 per week this is simply not enough for our members.

Additionally, workers earning below the lower earnings limit of £118 per week are currently not entitled to any SSP. Many shopworkers therefore do not qualify and are left without any sick pay. This is indefensible, particularly during this ongoing crisis. Usdaw is therefore also calling on the Government to extend SSP entitlement to all workers in recognition of their essential role in helping communities to get through this difficult time.

This pandemic has highlighted the importance of key workers, including retail staff, who are vital to keep the country running. Once we have overcome this virus, workers must continue to be supported and protected through long term improvements in SSP and with SSP continuing to be available from day one of sickness absence, as it is in this crisis.

## Furlough

The survey found that that one in every ten workers surveyed (12%) have been 'furloughed' or laid off. This is less than the average across the UK workforce. This is not a surprising result as it confirms that many Usdaw members and those surveyed are on the frontline keeping the essential food retail sector open for business.

However, most non-food retailers and other non-essential businesses have closed following Government guidance and Public Health advice. As a result, significant numbers of retail workers have been laid off or placed on the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

Distribution workers have also been affected by the crisis, with demand for certain goods down and not all companies having online operations. Whilst the Job Retention Scheme has partly mitigated the impact of Coronavirus on workers, members who have been furloughed have raised a number of concerns about being furloughed.

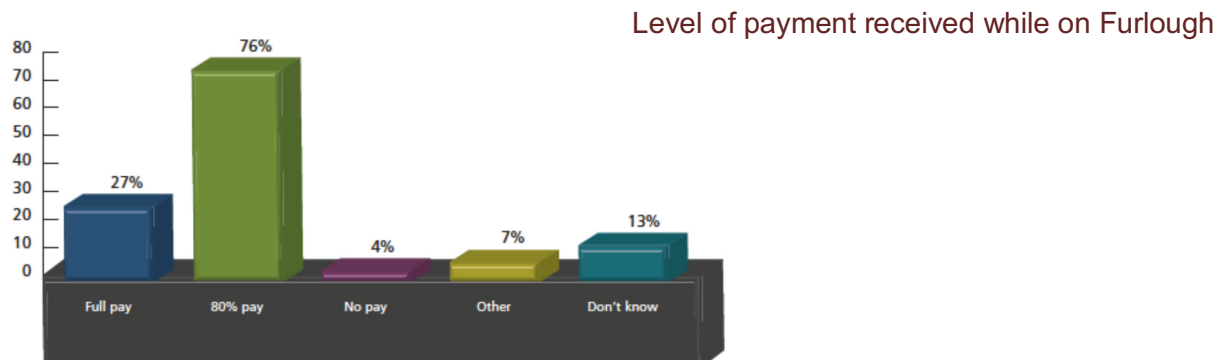
### Furloughed Workers' Rights

Our survey results show that one in ten workers who have been furloughed do not know what they are being paid. The figure highlights that some workers are not being fully informed of their rights when being placed on the scheme. Companies should be communicating clearly to workers what they will be paid before asking employees to agree to being furloughed. This is particularly important within the retail sector, where many workers' hours and income vary each week.

Issues are also arising around eligibility for the scheme, with both workers and employers unclear as to which types of businesses and categories of workers can apply. Usdaw has been working with Government and the TUC to get clarity on the scheme. We are also calling for improved and clearer Guidance on the scheme to be published.

### Impact on Mental Health

Responses from our survey indicate that being furloughed is having an impact on some workers' mental health. One of the key causes of this is the reduction in pay to 80% that many furloughed workers experience, unless their employer steps in to guarantee full pay. For the lowest paid workers, who typically spend a higher proportion of their income on essentials, a drop in wages of 20% can result in real financial hardship, such as not being able to pay their bills or rent. Usdaw firmly believes that employers should ensure that furloughed workers are paid 100% of their wages.





Workers are also concerned about what will happen to their jobs once the scheme ends, and they are worried that they may be made redundant or asked to work fewer hours in future. High street non-food retail was already facing significant challenges before the Coronavirus outbreak, and workers in the sector are concerned that the pandemic will have a long term negative impact on the businesses they work for. It is clear that many workers on the scheme are anxious about their income moving forward. For this reason, we need decisive intervention from Government to kick-start the economy at the end of the outbreak.

Furthermore, we need Government to work with relevant stakeholders such as the British Retail Consortium and Usdaw to design an industrial strategy for the retail sector which tackles the uneven playing field between online and traditional bricks and mortar retailers whilst also delivering high quality, productive jobs across the sector.

*"I am very concerned that after the furlough period is over I may still be made redundant if the company is struggling and I have a mortgage and bills to pay so I have to work full time."*

Retail Worker, Scotland

*"My only concern is that I am in the high risk categories as I am a diabetic and high blood pressure, I cannot afford to self-isolate myself and go off work for 3 months on the 80% furloughed as that would only just about pay my rent and no other bills, so I feel that I have no choice but go to work."*

Retail Worker, South West

## The Impact of Universal Credit

### Five Week Wait

Since the start of the outbreak, over 1.4 million people have applied for Universal Credit (UC). When other income has frequently dried up, those who successfully manage to make a claim have to wait for five weeks to receive their first payment. This unnecessary waiting period is pushing people further and further into debt.

Usdaw is calling for the five week wait to be scrapped and for the system as a whole to be overhauled.

### Complex System

94% of respondents attempting to claim Universal Credit since the start of the outbreak have had difficulty with the claims process. Issues such as phones being constantly engaged and five hour waits on hold have led to a significant number of respondents ultimately 'giving up' on their claim. As a result, UC is entirely failing to provide a safety net for people in financial difficulty.

*"It took us about 4 days in a queue online, had to restart 3 times. Once we did the online application we had to just wait for a telephone interview which was straight forward. We now just have to wait for payment, we don't know how long."*

Kim, Llanelli

*"I have decided not to continue with the claim as it is too difficult to claim."*

Angela, Derby

### Tax Credits

Many Usdaw members still receive Working Tax Credits or Child Tax Credit rather than Universal Credit. Due to fundamental problems with Universal Credit, Tax Credits generally provide higher levels of payments and give a more regular and reliable monthly income.

The Government is slowly moving people from Tax Credits onto Universal Credit under a process called 'managed migration'. Under this process, the amount of payment people receive is protected meaning they should not lose out as a result of migrating.

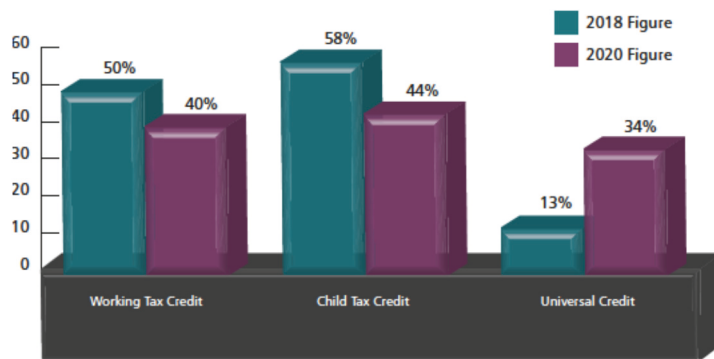
However, Tax Credit claims may be stopped if an individual has a 'change of circumstance' such as a significant drop in wages or a change in employment status. The individual then has to submit a new claim for Universal Credit, known as 'natural migration'. Under the new claim, any higher payments are not protected and claimants often see a fall in their benefits.

Usdaw's evidence shows that, since 2018, a significant proportion of our members have transferred from Tax Credits to Universal Credit. Due to the slow roll-out of the managed migration process, this is likely to have been done without the protection of managed migration.

The original intention was that nearly all claimants would be transferred under the managed migration process. However, due to Government delays in the programme, these workers are now missing out on this protection.

The natural migration programme should be scrapped and no-one should be placed onto Universal Credit unless they are making an entirely new claim for a benefit.

## Change in make-up of benefit payments from 2018



Universal Credit is completely flawed as a social security system. Workers who through no fault of their own have been hit by a sudden drop in income deserve better.

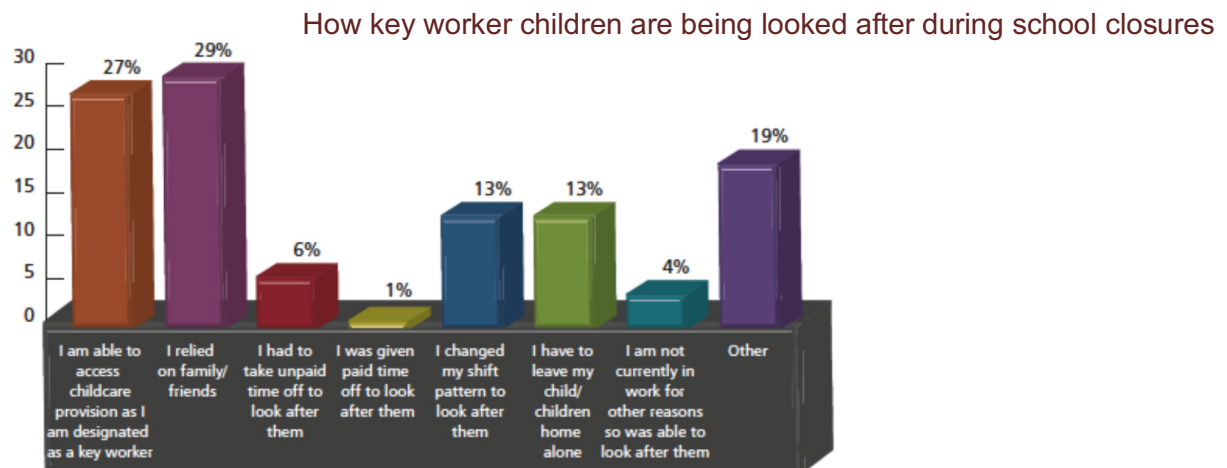
The current Universal Credit system needs to be replaced by a social security system that supports low paid workers and those workers who are going through a sudden change in income.

## The Impact of School Closures

Due to the availability of part-time and flexible working hours across retail, the sector attracts a high proportion of workers who are parents and carers. As school closures were announced, many retail workers were quite rightly deemed 'key workers' and therefore, their children continued to be eligible for school places.

However, with shift patterns in retail no longer typically fitting in with school hours and parents feeling anxious about the risk of sending their children to school, many parents are not able to use their places in schools and are losing out on pay. This was reflected in our survey results where only around one in four key workers have been able to use schools or other formal childcare providers to look after their children while they are at work.

For those who were not classified as a key worker, nearly one in ten have had to take unpaid leave to cope with childcare arrangements. With only around 1% of parents being able to access additional paid leave to deal with childcare responsibilities, it is clear that the costs of school closures has unfairly fallen on the lowest paid.



*"I'm having to use holidays for childcare and unpaid leave, even though I care for a vulnerable person. It's not good and will leave us financially impacted."*

Samantha - Glasgow

## Worried and Anxious over Risks of Illness

From increased abuse in shops, higher rates of illness, greater levels of job insecurity, issues with the benefits system to childcare issues, the Coronavirus pandemic is putting immense pressure on workers. The concerns around Coronavirus led to 5,046 out of 7,220 of those surveyed reporting that they have raised issues with their employer around concerns over the Coronavirus. With 70% of workers raising issues, it is clear the level of anxiety has been rising across the sector.

### Social Distancing

Respondents reported struggling with working long hours in busy stores whilst trying to implement new health and safety regulations. Many members expressed concerns that some customers were not complying with social distancing measures, which in turn meant shopworkers were left trying to enforce the rules for their own safety and that of other customers.

*"I feel like we've been given a huge responsibility and I know that some of my colleagues have had to deal with abuse. It seems like we've taken on the additional roles of security guards. As a PTSD sufferer, I find going into work a little stressful, especially as I've been taken off the department I usually work on and have had to learn other roles/skills in the shop very quickly."*

Anonymous, Retail

Working on the frontline inevitably means that there is a higher risk of exposure to the virus. A number of respondents reported feeling anxious about potentially being infected with Coronavirus, as well as passing it on to other members of their household.

*"I feel frightened when I go to work in case I catch something and take it home to my elderly mother, I don't look forward to going to work at the moment."*

Female retail worker

### Mental Health

Working on the frontline during these difficult and uncertain times can be overwhelming for many workers. Usdaw's survey shows that an alarming number of members feel that the Coronavirus pandemic has had a negative impact on their mental health. Many respondents commented that they felt increasingly stressed and anxious, and expressed concerns about the long term impact on their mental health.

*"Work has become mentally draining in a way I have never experienced before. Every shift feels like a constant fight. My colleagues and I are exhausted and feel so deflated. We notice that customers will distance from each other but not from us, which makes us feel like we're not even human. It has been demoralising."*

Retail worker, Grimsby

*"As a worker who suffers with mental health issues I am finding it extremely hard to cope in the work place with the added anxiety that Coronavirus has brought."*

Retail worker, Edinburgh

The health and wellbeing of workers is paramount. Usdaw will continue to work with employers to make sure there are effective measures in place to protect staff, but this survey clearly shows there is a lot more still to be done to ensure employees feel as safe as possible throughout this pandemic.

Employers need to listen to the views of retail workers by having a real and meaningful dialogue with their workforce. Too many employers refuse to engage with trade unions when we need to be working together to get through this crisis. By allowing and respecting retail workers' voice, shops will become safer places for both workers and customers.

## Low Pay and Insecure Work

In industries across the economy, the people who have responded to the Coronavirus outbreak have frequently been those on the lowest rates of pay and those on insecure employment contracts. Where businesses have experienced a fall in demand, insecure contracts have meant that hours were simply taken away from staff and, all too often, it was those on the lowest rates of pay whose wages were cut first.

Once we are past the crisis, we cannot continue with a situation where key workers are suffering poor mental health as a result of financial worries. We must also ensure that all workers are given the contracts they need to be able to afford everyday costs of living. Usdaw's Time for Better Pay Campaign, launched in 2018, has been highlighting the issues that many workers face as a result of low pay and insecure employment contracts.

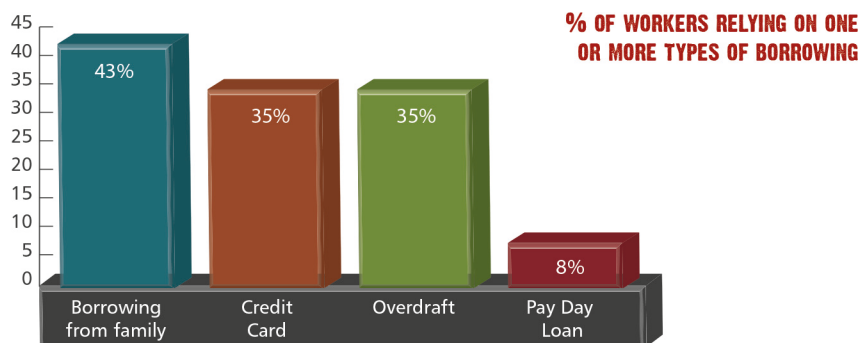
### Low Pay

In 2018, Usdaw surveyed over 10,500 low paid workers across retail and related industries, 55% of respondents to the survey earned at or close to the National Minimum Wage. This survey showed that:

- three quarters were having to rely on unsecured borrowing to pay everyday bills.
- half were having to miss meals in order to pay bills.
- and that 73% had struggled to pay their gas and electricity bills.

*"Even when my pay goes up, I'm still worse off. Rent and bills just keep getting more expensive. It's just impossible to pay for everything on the wage we get. I've borrowed from family, but they're struggling too, and I can't afford to pay them back."*

Warehouse worker, London area

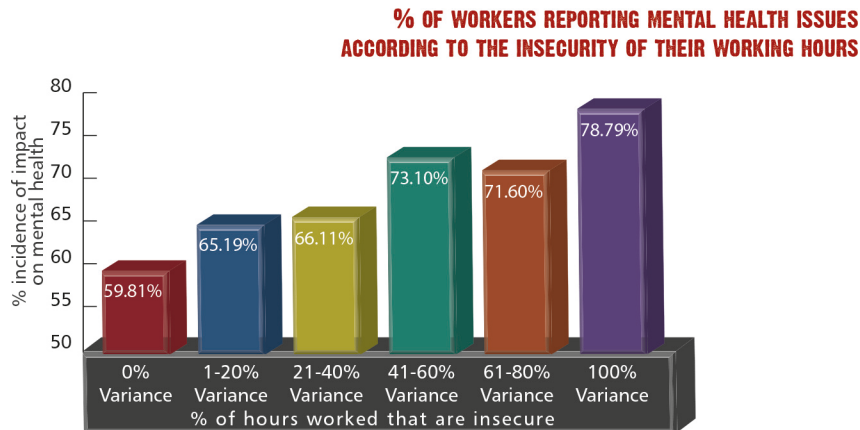


### Insecure Work

As well as low pay, insecure contracts are prevalent across the retail sector. Usdaw's evidence shows that insecure, zero and short-hours contracts are prevalent in low paying jobs. Our 2018, survey showed that 80% of workers who are contracted to 16 hours or less per week earn £8.50 or under.

Short-hours contracts can enable workers to fit their jobs around their lifestyles, childcare and caring commitments; however, we know many workers on these types of contracts want to work more hours but are unable to increase hours with their employer. Usdaw's 2017 survey into insecure work found one in three workers wanted to work longer hours but were not able to increase their contract with their employer. As a result, 28% of members either had or were looking for a second job.

As a result of short-hours contracts, low paid workers are reliant on insecure 'overtime' hours for their regular earnings. For nearly four in every ten low paid workers, at least 20% of their wages is made up of insecure hours. This job insecurity leads to significant mental health issues with workers unsure that their income will be able to pay the bills next month and constant fears that shifts can be taken away at a moment's notice.



Usdaw is clear that the issues of insecure work can be best overcome through the introductions of a minimum 16 hour per week contract and a right to switch to a contract based on an individual's normal working hours. Contract of fewer than 16 hours should only be utilised with the express permission of the individual.

Following the Taylor Review into Modern Employment Practices, in 2018, the Low Pay Commission was asked by Government to conduct a review into one-sided flexibility. As part of the review, the Commission recommended that Government should introduce a right for employees to switch to a contract based on their normal working hours. This recommendation was subsequently adopted by the Living Wage Foundation as part of their Living Hours Campaign who also promoted the need for minimum 16 hour contracts.

The Government should accept the views of these independent experts and adopt, as quickly as possible, minimum 16 hour contracts and a right to a contract based on normal working hours.

*"In my store, you have to check the rota constantly throughout the week to make sure your shifts haven't been cancelled. So you're always worrying about whether you'll be able to get enough hours to make ends meet."*

Retail worker, Northern Ireland



## **The Response So Far**

Usdaw has been working with a range of employers to negotiate agreements that protect the workforce. We have also been raising issues with Government to ensure that they stick to their promise of 'standing behind working people'.

### **Social Distancing**

In Usdaw organised workplaces, in particular retail stores, health and safety/social distancing has been a huge issue. The Union has made progress in getting tight rules introduced which can be seen in supermarkets including:

- Perspex screens installed at store checkouts to protect checkout staff.
- Limiting the number of customers allowed in stores at any one time.
- Introducing queueing systems outside stores with people spaced two metres apart.
- Reducing the number of checkouts open in stores.
- Regular cleaning and sanitising of the store and wipes to clean devices and till points.
- Encouraging customers to pay by card.
- Reminding customers to keep a safe distance from colleagues and other customers.
- PA announcements to urge customers to respect staff.
- Increased security measures.
- Ensuring that staff are backed up and feel confident when having to remind customers of social distancing measures.

Government advice is that online retail can operate as normal. Usdaw is clear that our members' health should not be put at risk as a result of this guidance. Within Next's online operation, the Union and the business worked together to temporarily close down the operation whilst adequate safeguards were put in place. This was done in full consultation with Usdaw Health and Safety Reps who signed off the additional measures prior to the business re-opening.

Usdaw is now preparing to work with other employers to re-open sections of the economy. We are clear that the safety of the workforce will remain paramount during these discussions and workplaces should only open once they are deemed safe.

### **Sick Pay**

The start of the crisis further highlighted the weaknesses of the Statutory Sick Pay Scheme and the need for employers to do more to protect their workforce. Following significant Government lobbying, the scheme was extended to provide sick pay from day one of absence.

Usdaw has also reached agreements with a range of employers to enhance their sick pay policies; two-thirds of survey respondents who are aware of their sick pay entitlement have received greater than the statutory provision. It is also important to ensure that workers are not punished for taking sick leave at this time. Therefore, Usdaw has reached agreements across the sector so that any Coronavirus related sickness absence will not be counted in sickness absence management processes.

**Furlough Scheme**

Following the impact of the virus, it quickly became apparent that workers in some sectors would need additional financial protection from the risk redundancies or lay-offs. Usdaw, along with other Unions, successfully made the case for a comprehensive scheme based on an individual's normal earnings rather than the hours outlined in their contract. Many Usdaw members rely on regular overtime, which had to be included in the scheme. Following lobbying by Unions the Government took these comments on board.

**Bonus Payments**

Workers across retail and the supply chain have been working extraordinarily hard to ensure that the country remains fed. In light of these efforts, the Union has negotiated with employers for additional bonus payments for many staff. The individual bonus payments vary by employer and include a range of initiatives such as higher rates of pay, additional holidays and increased staff discounts. Usdaw's negotiated 10% bonus payments for members working in Tesco, Sainsbury's and Ocado. We have negotiated different ways of providing additional rewards in Co-op and Morrisons. Poundland has agreed to Usdaw's long-standing call for stores not to open on Boxing Day and New Year's Day this year, giving staff much needed time to spend with their families.

## What's Next?

For too long, the essential contribution of workers in retail, distribution, delivery, food manufacturing and the funeral industry has been undervalued and underpaid. After this crisis is over, we cannot return to the way things were before. This crisis has shown us all how many key workers carrying out essential work are low paid.

Too many of our key workers are trying to exist on low pay, facing abuse every day while trying to carry out their essential role and working under daily pressures that are not good for their mental health.

Usdaw wants a new deal for our key workers and for all workers based around:

- **A minimum wage rate of £10 per hour for all workers.**

As a result of the crisis, workers across many typically low paying industries, such as retail, distribution, food manufacturing and pharmaceuticals have been identified as key workers, essential to health of the nation and the economy. However, all too often, the pay rate these key workers receive bears little resemblance to the value they deliver to the economy.

A £10 per hour minimum wage for all workers will recognise this value and relieve the financial burden faced by low paid working people.

- **A minimum contract of 16 hours per week for everyone who wants it.**

Short-hours contracts are leaving many workers without the hours they want or need to get by. Usdaw wants to see an end to the use of short-hours contracts where they do not benefit the worker. A minimum 16 hour contract ensures that work is offered on a meaningful basis that can only be reduced through express agreement from the worker.

- **A contract based on an individual's normal hours of work.**

Where individuals are regularly working over their contracted hours, these additional hours should be guaranteed in the contract. A guaranteed income based on regular hours will enable workers to plan their lives without the stress of irregular hours and pay.

- **Protection of Workers legislation.**

No one should be required to go to work fearful of being abused, threatened or physically assaulted. The current legal protections are failing to protect retail staff and the Government must urgently introduce a new law which makes it a specific offence to abuse public facing workers. This offence must carry stiffer penalties.

- **Improved sick pay provisions.**

As a result of Usdaw's negotiations, many employers already offer sick pay above the statutory level. Companies can clearly afford improved sick pay rates and workers should not face a lottery, based on who they work for, to determine whether a period of sickness will leave them in significant debt. Usdaw is calling for Statutory Sick Pay to be paid from day one and reflect average earnings for all workers.

- **A proper Social Security system.**

Universal Credit has been besieged by problems ever since it was launched. Usdaw is calling for the five week wait to be scrapped and for the system as a whole to be overhauled. Furthermore, until the overhaul is complete and we get a Social Security system that works for low paid workers, no-one should be forced to move from legacy benefits, i.e. Tax Credits, onto Universal Credit.

- **A voice at work.**

Throughout the crisis, trade unions have worked positively with Government and employers to ensure the best outcomes for working people and the economy. We cannot go back to the old ways where employers refuse to recognise trade unions and Government sets up review bodies that do not include representatives of the workforce.

The Government needs to promote the positive role that trade unions have played in resolving issues throughout the crisis. This will include promoting trade union recognition, removing the current hurdles around statutory recognition and including trade union representatives on all business review bodies.

- **Job Security.**

Many people are facing real worry about their job security in this crisis. For retail workers, this is not a new worry. There has been constant restructuring for a number of years and the threat of job cuts is always just around the corner. It cannot be acceptable that the key workers who are doing so much now do not feel secure in their jobs going forward. We need stronger protections against redundancy and dismissal, from day one of employment. We also need proper consultation about new technology and investment in skills so that workers are able to keep up in a changing workplace.

- **Fair treatment and equality for all workers.**

Most of the underpaid frontline key workers are women. These essential roles have been undervalued and underpaid for too long. Women workers need equal pay and they need decent pay. School and nursery closures have put extra pressure on women workers who often have had to reduce hours or take unpaid leave to provide childcare. We need new family friendly rights that support parents and carers to juggle work and family life.

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