

Arena

FREE FROM FEAR

**RESPECT FOR
SHOPWORKERS WEEK
13-19 NOVEMBER**

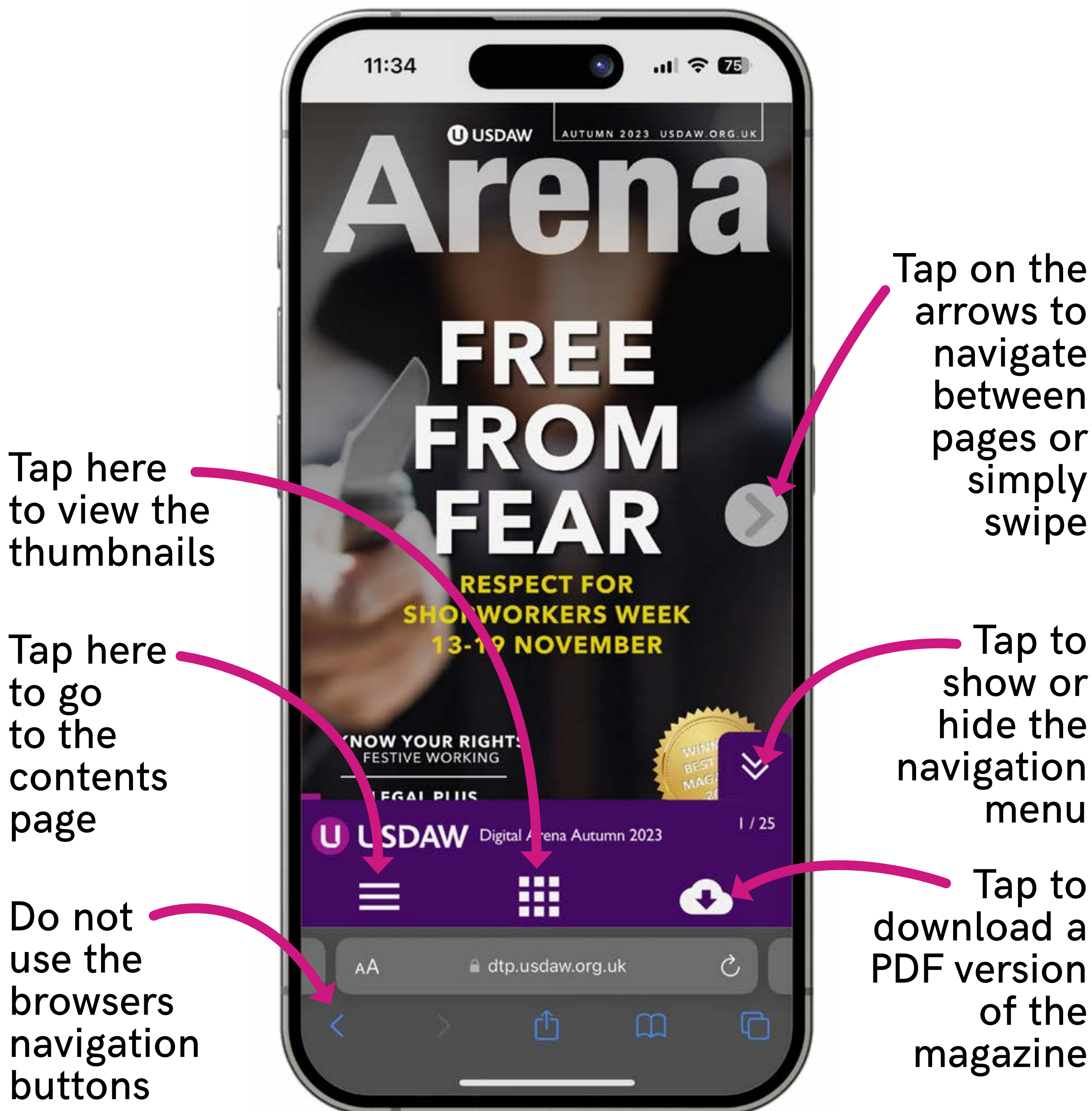
**KNOW YOUR RIGHTS
FESTIVE WORKING**

**LEGAL PLUS
ACCIDENT AT WORK**



How to use

Arena DIGITAL






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With purse strings tighter than ever, Usdaw have teamed up with trusted provider UsdawProtect to offer **two brand new membership benefits** to help members save money and find the right protection.

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[†]Price for an individual aged 45 without medical conditions for single trip standard cover, travelling to Spain. Prices accurate as of 17th August 2023

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As part of Usdaw's digital transformation, I am pleased to announce the launch of our first digital *Arena* magazine.

Technology has changed every aspect of our lives from how we work, how we connect with one another, to how we consume and share information. It has fundamentally re-shaped our society and our members have not been immune to this change. Over the last 10 years the way Usdaw reps and members access union information and engage with us has moved steadily towards digital communication via mobile phones.

The union already offers digital only communications with email newsletters, which are very popular with both reps and members. That's why now is the right time to switch from paper to digital with our member magazine.

I believe digital *Arena* will ultimately increase reader accessibility and convenience. Better analytics will help us target our content and the digital format will allow us to experiment with videos and audio to augment our stories. Removing the need to print and distribute two paper editions will also help reduce costs, as well as our impact on the environment.

However, to ensure we don't leave anyone behind, we will retain two paper editions of *Arena* for the time being.

Digital *Arena* is another step in Usdaw's journey of ensuring that the union is in the best place to respond to the challenges of an increasingly digital world.

Paddy Lillis, General Secretary

Saving you money this Christmas

- Loans from £50 to £15,000 at fair & competitive rates
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- Or start saving for next year with simple savings-only plans
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Take the financial stress out of the festive season and join your credit union. We're here for you.

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USDAW

inside

AUTUMN 2023

[USDAW.ORG.UK](https://www.usdaw.org.uk)

Know Your Rights

- **Festive Arena** answers frequently asked questions on Christmas working.
- **Learn about** the 10 rights of employees in the workplace.

Health and Safety

- **Arena answers** your questions on sleep apnoea, epilepsy and cleaning chemicals.

Special Features

- **Member Stories** Shirley King raises awareness of rip off caravan parks.
- **Wear Red Day** Find out how you can support the UK's leading anti-racism charity.
- **Pensions** Pay your pension some attention.
- **Union Heroes** The amazing achievements of trade unionist Margaret Bondfield.
- **Lifelong Learning** Two members share how union learning changed their lives.

Regulars

- **News** Tesco improves its flexible working policy and Usdaw secures a new agreement with Bestway.
- **Legal Plus** Usdaw secures £8,000 for a former retail worker.
- **Member Offers** Discounts and special offers on insurance and dental plans.
- **Publications Update** The latest leaflets, posters and online courses.



Tesco becomes the first major supermarket to offer flexible working from day one

Following discussions with Usdaw, Tesco has improved its flexible working policy to allow staff to make flexible working request from day one of employment. Under current rules, employees must wait six months before they can make a request.

The change comes almost a year ahead of a new law that will require employers to consider and discuss any requests made by workers. Under the new law, employees will have the right to two requests a year, with waiting times for a decision reduced from three months to two.

This day one right represents a significant improvement on statutory provisions and will give Tesco's 300,000-strong workforce greater choice and flexibility in their working patterns.



Ushaw and Bestway Wholesale sign new national agreement

Ushaw and one of the UK's largest wholesalers, Bestway, signed a new partnership agreement to improve trade union representation for hourly paid staff working across both Bestway and Batleys sites. The union has a well-established agreement in place with Well Pharmacy, which forms part of the Bestway Group, and this agreement builds on that positive working relationship.

The new partnership agreement was signed by Ushaw National Officer Mark Todd and Bestway Wholesale Operations Director Ashar Rehman. The agreement gives Ushaw a collective bargaining structure, a national JCC structure, access to inductions, and reps time off for training and stand down.

Ushaw national officer Mark Todd said: "Following a lot of background work, Ushaw is pleased to enter into this modern recognition agreement with Bestway Wholesale. Delivering this agreement for our members has only been possible due to the longstanding, positive and collaborative relationship between the union and the company. We are now looking forward to building on our existing membership to ensure workers get the best deal possible".



President and National Executive Council Elections 2024

The elections for Ushaw's president and national executive council (the union's ruling body) are now underway.

Nomination forms were sent out to branches on Monday, 2 October, with a deadline for return of Monday, 13 November 2023.

Postal ballot papers and election addresses will be sent to all members from Monday, 22 January and these have to be returned by Friday, 16 February 2024.

These elections will be conducted by Civica Election Services acting as independent Scrutineer and Returning Officer.

Update Your Details

Any member who has changed address recently should notify the union's records section at head office as soon as possible to ensure they receive their ballot papers.

Email: records@usdaw.org.uk

Phone: 0161 413 0913

Online: www.usdaw.org.uk/update

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Sponsored by UshawProtect. www.usdaw.org.uk/usdawprotect Closing Date 8 December 2023. Terms apply.



Respect for shopworkers

This year the union's Respect for Shopworkers Week will take place from 13-19 November and Usdaw wants everyone to get involved and show their support.

Udaw has been running its Freedom From Fear Campaign since 2002 and each year holds a Respect for Shopworkers Week in the run-up to the busy Christmas shopping period. Unfortunately, there's been a troubling increase in violence and abuse against retail workers in recent years. Usdaw's latest annual Freedom From Fear survey found that 7 out of 10 retail workers suffered abuse from customers, with nearly half experiencing threats of violence and 8 per cent experiencing physical violence. Theft from shops was the trigger for nearly a third of these incidents last year and almost a third of shopworkers were thinking of quitting because of violence, threats and abuse.

In the run-up to Christmas, a lack of stock, queuing and theft are likely to be triggers for abuse against retail workers. That is why during the week we will be encouraging shoppers to keep their cool and to remind them that abuse is not part of the job.

Standalone Offence

Our campaign has had some successes, such as the introduction of the ground-breaking Protection of Workers Bill in Scotland. Ahead of the upcoming general election, the union will continue to campaign for this legislation to apply across the rest of the UK and so during the week we will be engaging with MPs from all parties and getting as many of them into stores as possible to hear about the issue first-hand.

Joined up approach

In order to properly protect retail workers, Usdaw wants to see better reporting procedures in workplaces, the police taking abuse, threats and violence against retail workers seriously and greater coordination between the police and employers.

Listen to Michelle's story

Convenience worker Michelle Whitehead talks about abusive customers...

Tap here to watch the video

“ Usdaw's latest annual Freedom From Fear survey found that 7 out of 10 retail workers suffered abuse from customers, with nearly half experiencing threats of violence and 8 per cent experiencing physical violence.

What you can do to help...

Report It. Sort It! The importance of reporting incidents

Udaw is encouraging all staff to report all incidents of threats, abuse and violence. Whilst any new legislation is welcome, it will rely on cases making it to court and people being prosecuted. Unreported retail crime means that individuals do not get the justice they deserve and skews the picture of retail crime.

Fill in Usdaw's Freedom From Fear survey

Surveys provide the union with data that inform its campaigns as well as providing hard evidence that can be presented to employers and policy makers when calling for change.

Click here to find out more.

Share your story

Udaw is always looking for case studies. If you have experienced abuse or violence at work and want to share your story, get in touch arena@usdaw.org.uk

Day of Action on Mental Health 10 October

Usdaw held its first coordinated Day of Action on Mental Health last October to coincide with World Mental Health Day.

The day was a huge success with over 700 workplaces taking part, as well as positive engagement by reps and members on social media.

Although Usdaw's 'It's Good to Talk' mental health workplace campaign had been running for several years, the Day of Action was the first time the union had tried to coordinate activity on a single day.

This year, the union will be coordinating another Day of Action on 10th October. The Day of Action gives the union the opportunity to highlight the fact that mental health is a workplace issue. The Action Day helps to tackle the ongoing stigma that still surrounds an issue that affects us all and keeps the conversation about mental health going throughout the year.



“ I still leave leaflets out in the staff room for people to read. I found the Reps Guide very welcome and because of that I manage to help others.

Usdaw members may not realise that they can talk to the union about these issues. If work is impacting your mental health, or your mental health might be affecting you at work (for example attendance or performance), then Usdaw can help. Although the union can only help with problems at work, reps can signpost members to independent support organisations where their mental health is affecting their life outside of work.

Speak to your rep to find out if your workplace is taking part in the Day of Action. The contact details of reps can be found on the Usdaw noticeboard.



Know your festive rights

The run-up to Christmas is busy and stressful for everyone working in retail, and in connected jobs like warehouse and distribution too.

When Christmas comes, far too often retail workers don't get a decent break, with a late finish on Christmas Eve and then back to work early on Boxing Day morning. This means they spend too little time at Christmas with their loved ones.

That's why Usdaw's Christmas is not Working campaign continues its call:

- For shops to close by 4pm on Christmas Eve.
- To stay closed on Christmas Day and Boxing Day.
- To ensure that workers don't lose out on pay when shops are closed.

Workers' rights to a decent break over Christmas, and premium payments for working bank holidays, depend largely on their contracts of employment and agreements reached between their employer and trade union.

Arena answers some of the most frequently asked questions on festive rights.

Will all shops be closed on Christmas Day?

The Christmas Day (Trading) Act prevents shops, except for small convenience stores, from trading on 25 December. You should check your trading hours to see whether or not your store will be open.



My store is closed on Christmas Day. Will I have to make up the hours?

Some employers require staff to make up lost hours, use holiday entitlement or take unpaid leave for the hours when stores are closed.

Is working on a public holiday voluntary?

The position on whether working on a public holiday is voluntary is usually explained in your contract, the staff handbook or outlined in agreements between the employer and the union.

Does working on a public holiday attract premium payments?

There is no automatic right to enhanced pay if you work on a public/bank holiday. The pay rate for working these days depends on your contract of employment and any union/company agreements. Further information can usually be found in your staff handbook.

Am I entitled to a paid day off on a public holiday?

There is no automatic legal right to paid time off on a public holiday. Your position in relation to working/time off on a public holiday will depend on your terms and conditions of employment.

Are Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve normal working days?

As Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve fall on a Sunday, these days are normal working days.

Every Christmas and New Year the business puts pressure on staff to work extra hours, often at short notice. Do I have to do it?

Unless your contract states otherwise, working overtime is voluntary and should be agreed mutually between you and your manager.

My store is very cold over Christmas. What can I do?

We receive many queries about cold workplaces in the winter months. Our [guide to working in cold weather](#) contains useful advice on what you and your employer can do.

Over Christmas customers get very stressed and take their frustrations out on us. Is there anything we can do to prevent this?

Ushaw runs the [Freedom From Fear](#) campaign every year. As part of this campaign, the union holds a [Respect for Shopworkers Week](#) in November to promote the message that 'abuse is not part of the job.' We would advise anyone who experiences threats, violence or abuse to report it. Only by reporting it will we be able to tackle the problem.

If you are still unsure of your rights to time off over Christmas, you should speak to the Ushaw rep in store, or contact your local union official on 0800 030 80 30.



10 employee rights you should know

Do you know what rights you have as an employee? Read this article to learn about the 10 rights of employees in the workplace.

Employment rights are the basic rights every employee is legally entitled to. These rights are covered in legislation and are called statutory rights. They form the basis of fair treatment in the workplace and range from how much time off you have to how you're treated in the workplace.

1. Receive a written statement of particulars of employment

All employees and workers are entitled to a written statement of particulars of employment within two months of starting work. It should include the names of the employer and employee (or worker), the date when employment begins, the rate of pay and when this will be paid, details of hours of work, holiday entitlement, notice periods including during any probationary period, training and pension information.

2. Receive an itemised payslip

Employees must receive an itemised payslip that provides a detailed breakdown of their pay and any deductions. The statement should include details of the gross salary, any deductions and the net salary. Employers cannot make illegal deductions from their employees' wages.

3. Entitled to rest breaks and reasonable working hours

Under health and safety laws, employees have a right to daily and weekly rest breaks. This includes getting a daily rest period of at least 20 minutes if the working day exceeds 6 hours, and at least one full day-off every 7 days.

Employees cannot be forced to work more than an average of 48 hours a week unless they agree to this and confirm it in writing.

4. Paid Annual Leave

Full-time employees are entitled to at least 5.6 weeks paid leave per year, and part-time workers receive pro-rata entitlement.

5. Right to be accompanied to a disciplinary or grievance hearing

Where an employee or worker is invited to attend a disciplinary or grievance hearing, they have a right to be accompanied at the hearing by one companion who is either a trade union representative or a colleague.

6. Right to payments and leave (family and pregnancy)

Employees have a right to receive various payments including statutory maternity pay, statutory paternity pay, statutory adoption pay, shared parental pay, parental pay and statutory parental bereavement pay.

7. Entitled to a safe working environment

Health and safety laws state that employers have a statutory duty to take care of the health and safety of their employees by providing: a clean environment to work in, first aid equipment, protective clothing, drinking water and washing facilities, and ensuring all machinery is safe.

8. Must not be discriminated against

Under the Equality Act, employees have a right to not be treated less favourably because of their: sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race, age, disability, religion/belief, marriage/civil partnership or pregnancy/maternity.

9. Minimum notice period

An employer is required to give employees a minimum period of notice. If you are employed for:

- One month but less than two years, you must be given at least a week's notice.
- Between two and twelve years, you must be given at least one week's notice for each year of continuous employment.
- Twelve years or more, you must be given at least twelve weeks' notice.

10. Unfair dismissal

An employee must have been working for the employer for a minimum of two years in order to be legally protected against unfair dismissal. In order to terminate a contract, employers need to give a lawful reason to do so such as conduct, ability to do the job, redundancy, can no longer legally do their job, or some other substantial reason.

If you are still unsure of your rights, you should speak to the Usdaw rep in store, or contact your local union official on 0800 030 80 30.

Rip off Caravan Parks

Usdaw member Shirley King spent her inheritance on buying a static caravan, but her dream turned into a nightmare when the park was taken over by new company who started relying on little known clauses to squeeze money out of caravan owners. *Arena* caught up with Shirley to talk about her experience and why she's raising awareness about this issue.

"Caravan parks sell you a dream, a fairy tale about how a static caravan is a wonderful investment in your family's future and a great holiday experience," said Shirley, 60. "And, like thousands of people, I fell for it.

"We'd been holidaying at this site in Skegness for 15 years. We used to stay in a flat but decided to buy a static caravan when I inherited £10,000 after my dad passed away. At that time, the site was owned by two brothers, and it was brilliant. We never had an issue and spent most of our spare time there."

In 2018, Shirley and her husband decided to sell their van so that they could upgrade to a bigger van. They found they had to give the new owners of the park first refusal and were offered a derisory £317, which they reluctantly accepted on the basis that the caravan was quite old. "Two days later, I saw our caravan was being sold for a staggering £14,995," said Shirley.

“ Caravan parks have gotten so greedy. It's all about making as much money as possible. They don't care about you or how long you've been on the site. That's why we need a regulatory body.

Understandably the couple was angry and upset at being ripped off like this. But due to the lack of a regulatory body they were unable to challenge this. Instead, they focused on buying a new caravan from a private seller in the park.

"A few weeks later we received an invoice for our site fees which also included an additional £500 per year, non-loyalty fee," said Shirley. "When I queried the fee, I was told that because we bought the new caravan privately, rather than through the park, we had to pay a non-loyalty fee. This was the straw that broke the camel's back. After much agonising, we decided to sell the van, we'd had enough. Once again, we had to give the park first refusal. They offered us £14,000 for a caravan that we only just bought for £25,000. We refused the offer and sold it privately."

During the selling process, the couple found that no matter which way they turned, they would be hammered with charges. If they sold their caravan to the park, they would be offered a pittance. If they sold it to someone else, the park would take a 15 per cent cut. If they wanted to take it to another site, the park would charge £500 disconnection fee, £500 for towing it from their plot to the main gate and £5,000 to move it to another site. Eventually, the couple decided to take the 15 per cent hit and sell their caravan.

"The whole thing has been terribly upsetting. Caravan parks have gotten so greedy. It's all about making as much money as possible. That's why we need a regulatory body. I would also strongly urge anyone thinking of a buying static caravan to do their research and read the small print. Otherwise, you could end up losing thousands of pounds."

If you have a story you'd like to share, you can speak to the Usdaw rep in store, or contact your local union official on 0800 030 80 30.



Show
RACISM
the **RED**
CARD

Wear
Red Day
Friday 20
October
2023

Usdaw is proudly supporting Show Racism the Red Card's Wear Red Day again this year.

Last year, hundreds of Usdaw reps and members were amongst the 440,000 people in the UK who got involved by wearing red and making a £1 donation to raise vital funds for Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC).

Show Racism the Red Card was established in 1996 and is the UK's leading anti-racism educational charity.

The organisation uses the high-profile status of football and football players to help tackle racism in society using education. They deliver high-quality training and education to young people and adults in their schools, their workplaces and at events held in football stadiums.

Usdaw works closely with SRtRC, who have supported a number of anti-racism campaigns in Usdaw workplaces and regularly attend Usdaw events and conferences.

[Click here](#) to find out more.

**Tap here to watch
the video**

Taking Part

Usdaw is keenly aware that members are at the sharp end of the current cost of living crisis, which is why the suggested donation is £1.

To take part wherever you are, Wear Red and donate £1. Encourage members and non-members in your workplace to do the same.

If your workplace has a uniform, colleagues can still take part by wearing something subtle like red socks, a red hair clip, or selling red cakes. In the past, some members have gone the extra mile by dyeing their hair and beards red!

[Click here](#) to find out more.

Fundraising Pack

If you're interested in taking part, register for a fundraising pack on SRtRC's website. It only takes a moment. They will send you what's needed to get a bit of a buzz going in your workplace. [Click here](#) for more info.

Share what you do

It would be great if you are able to take part this year. You could share your selfie on social media with #Usdaw and #WRD23 - don't forget to tag @Usdawunion.

If you have any questions about the day, please contact the equalities section at Usdaw's head office by calling **0161 224 2804** or emailing equalitymatters@usdaw.org.uk

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Register now at theredcard.org/wear-red-day/

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CHANGE LIVES.

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Retail worker compensated for staircase fall

The accident happened in September 2020, after several near misses had been reported to the company. Despite this, the company failed to take any measures to improve safety.

"The store I worked in was an old store with four levels and had a spiral staircase that led down to the warehouse," said Nicola, 54. "At one end, the stairs were extremely narrow. I was going up the stairs and a colleague, carrying a box, was coming down. I moved to let her pass, because the stairs were so narrow, I couldn't get my footing and I fell onto the concrete floor.

"I hit my head and landed on my ankle. It took me a while to gather myself before I could move. There was no sympathy from my manager and I had to finish my shift (four hours) on the checkout before I could go home.

“Once it was documented, I called Usdaw’s FirstCall service. I can’t fault the solicitors, they were fantastic. They bent over backwards to make sure I could see a specialist in Inverness.”

"The next morning my shoulders were in agony. I took the day off as holiday to go and see my doctor. The doctor put me on 'light duties' but there's no such thing as 'light duties' in retail. Despite the pain, I went into work the next day, otherwise I wouldn't get paid.

"As a rep, I knew it was important to make sure the accident was documented as in many workplaces reporting accidents is actively discouraged. Once it was documented, I called Usdaw's FirstCall service. I can't fault the solicitors, they were fantastic. They bent over backwards to make sure I could see a specialist in Inverness."

The specialist diagnosed Nicola with tissue damage and said if she had received extensive physiotherapy at the time, she would have recovered a lot sooner. Nicola was unfortunate that she got injured during the pandemic and found it difficult to see a specialist. She spent 18 months on painkillers and anti-inflammatories before she was properly diagnosed.

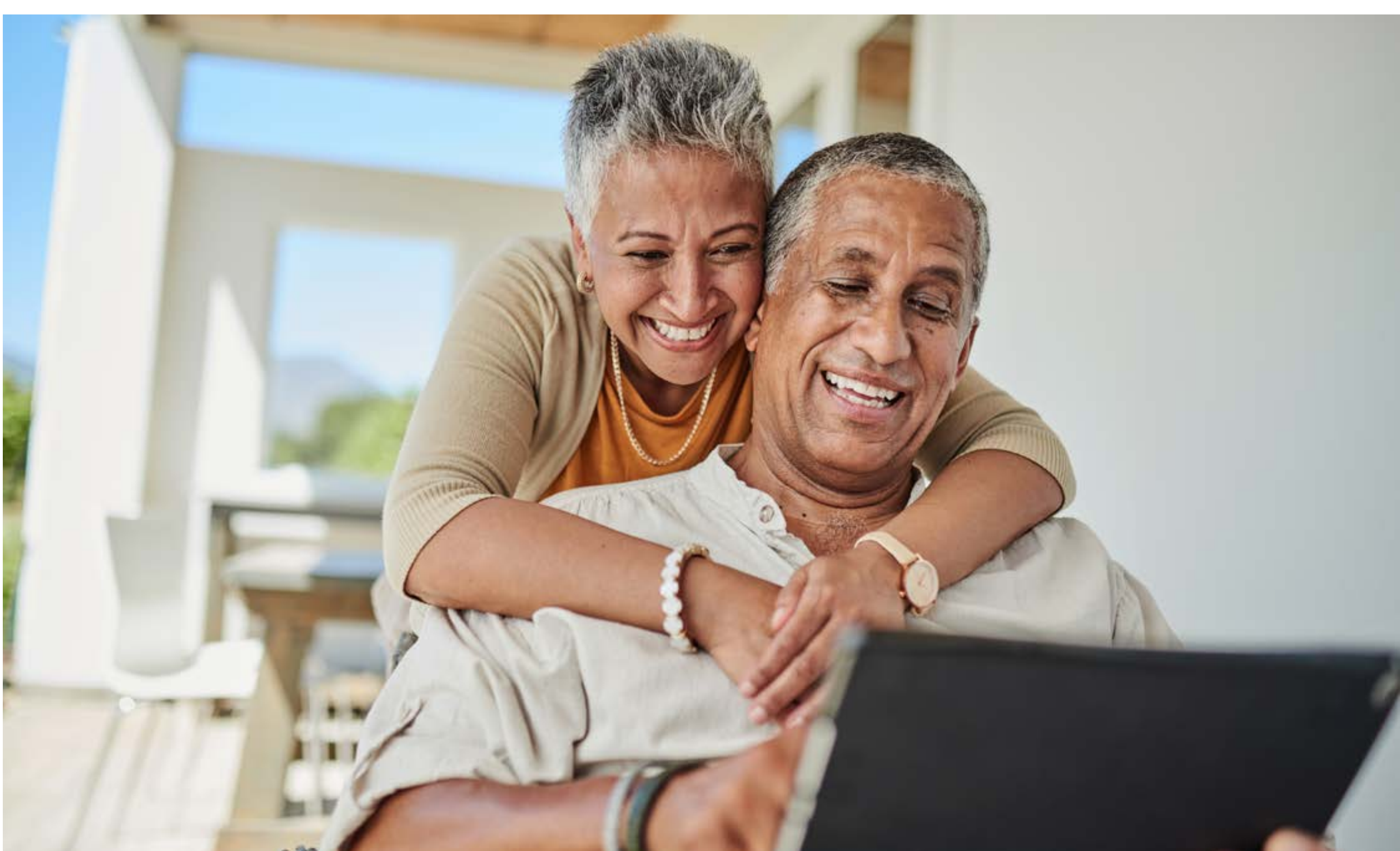
"I received £8,000 and I was happy with what I got," said Nicola. "FirstCall is a brilliant service. The solicitors took care of everything and kept me informed every step of the way. I can't stress how important it is to be in the union, it's your insurance at work."

Take the pain out of personal injury and keep 100% of your compensation with our FREE accident claim cover 0800 055 6333.

Time to pay your pension some attention!

Nearly all working people (eight in ten employees) in the UK now have a workplace pension, yet many say they don't know anything about their retirement savings.

The Pension Attention campaign has been launched for a second year and aims to encourage us to take some simple steps to help us understand where our savings are, the different types of pensions we might have and how we can take some simple actions to protect what we have.



“The pension provider will generally start moving your investments into less riskier assets as you approach your chosen retirement date to lock in the growth your pot has accumulated over the years.”

For instance do you know:

- If you are currently in a pension?
- What type of pensions you might have?
- Where all your pension pots are?
- Who will benefit from your pension if you die?
- When you want to access your pension?

If you'd like us to help you find answers to these questions please click on the link below which will take you to our **[pension website](#)**

If you have any general questions about your pensions contact Usdaw's pension team on **0161 224 2804** or ask us a question **[here](#)**

MemberOffers

Usdaw members are entitled to great offers and savings from a variety of companies.

www.usdaw.org.uk/offers

USDAWPROTECT

New Home Insurance Comparison Site

UsdawProtect has a new comparison site to help members find home insurance. Using a comparison service could save you time and money. ***Click here** to see how much you could save or call **01608 544 639**.

USDAWPROTECT

Travel Insurance

UsdawProtect Travel Insurance provides flexible, quality cover at an affordable price. ***Click here** to see how the price and cover compares against other leading providers.

SHEPHERDS FRIENDLY

Open a savings plan and get a shopping voucher worth up to £55.

Our endorsed savings partner, Shepherds Friendly, is offering a Love2shop voucher worth up to £55* when you open a savings plan with them, if you are a member of Usdaw. The friendly society offers savings plans for the whole family, ranging from Stocks and Shares ISAs for yourself to Junior ISAs for your child, and more.

***Click here** to find out more.

*Please remember, when investing your capital is at risk.

DENTAL PLAN

Do you have an NHS dentist?

Get up to £500 of NHS cover with this simple and straightforward member benefit exclusively available to Usdaw members.

It costs £12.50 per month, and you get money back each time you visit your NHS dentist, meaning no more costly treatment bills, plus you're covered immediately as soon as you join the plan.

You can also enter our free prize draw to win £250 in shopping vouchers.

***Click here** to find out more.

*Terms and conditions apply to all benefits. See website for details. Offers subject to change without notice and correct at time of print. Usdaw Discounts & Offers is managed and run on behalf of Usdaw by Parliament Hill Ltd. Further benefits are organised directly by Usdaw Membership Services. See website for details. Neither Usdaw nor Parliament Hill are part of the same group as the providers.

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Recruit a friend

Union membership is your insurance at work
In these uncertain times, it's more important than ever to join a union.

Union members get better pay, safer workplaces, representation in grievances and disciplinaries, access to a variety of learning opportunities, free legal and accident cover, discounts and offers and much more.

Make sure your family, friends and colleagues are also protected at work by encouraging them to join Usdaw. [Click here](#) for more.



The undercover shop girl who became a cabinet minister

It's one hundred years since Margaret Bondfield was elected the first woman president of the Trade Union Congress (TUC). *Arena* celebrates the achievements of this trailblazing trade unionist, who dedicated her life to improving the living and working conditions of the working class. An ardent advocate of women's rights, Margaret was a member of NAUSAWC, which went on to form Usdaw in 1947, and served as Britain's first female cabinet minister for the Labour Party.


Born in 1873, Margaret started work at 14, when she began an apprenticeship learning needlework near her hometown of Chard. Like thousands of other young women, she moved to London to work as a live-in shop assistant. It was a wake-up call for the 21-year-old, who found the industry was blighted by long hours, low wages, poor diet and terrible living conditions.

No vocation for wifehood or motherhood, but an urge to serve the union.

Growing up in a household with a strong sense of social justice, Margaret joined the newly-formed National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks a risky move since employers would sack union members on the spot.

In 1896, she risked her livelihood to go undercover for the union. Writing under the pen name 'Grace Dare', her articles exposed the maltreatment of young girls by unscrupulous shopkeepers. Within a few years, Margaret became the leading authority on shopworkers and her campaigning put pressure on parliament to regulate the industry. In 1904, the Shops Act was passed which allowed local councils to limit retail trading hours.

Margaret spent her life campaigning for universal suffrage, improved working conditions, and gender equality. She died in 1953, at the age of 80. Clement Atlee, leader of the Labour Party and former prime minister, gave the address.



Learning changes lives

Did you know Usdaw offers members a range of learning opportunities to improve their skills and knowledge, as well as their career prospects?

Subjects range from English, Maths, and IT to sign language and photography. Whether you're stuck in a rut at work or want to improve your maths skills, there'll be a course for you.

Arena spoke to Usdaw members Susan Forrester and Fallon McCrea about how learning gave them the confidence they needed to improve their working lives.

Susan Forrester

Susan Forrester tells *Arena* how she ended up changing careers after taking up union learning.

"I graduated in my early twenties and got a job at a supermarket. Before I knew it, 15 years had passed," said Susan, 39. "Although my employer was brilliant, I struggled to get the flexibility I needed after having a baby. I knew I wanted to change careers but felt stuck and didn't know where to begin.

"After receiving an email from Usdaw outlining the free courses that were available, I hesitantly signed up for Managing Change. Much to my surprise, I not only finished the course but I also passed."

This was a turning point for Susan, who re-discovered her love of learning and was so inspired that she enrolled to do a degree with the Open University in data science in 2021.

"It's a part-time course which means I can fit it around my work and my four-year-old son," said Susan. "I completed my first and second year, and it was hard but the sense of achievement I got was amazing. It gave me the confidence I needed to apply for a job I wanted rather than a job I fell into.

"I'm pleased to say that I've been working as an officer for HMRC for the last 18 months. Learning has allowed me to start a career that I love. I would encourage everyone to give union learning a go."

“ I’m not being dramatic when I say that what I have learnt from these courses completely changed my life. I have regained my confidence at work and enjoy my job.

Fallon McCrea

Tesco service team manager Fallon McCrea shares her learning journey and how union training helped her become a better manager and find a work/life balance.

Fallon has worked at Tesco for 21 years and been a manager for 16. During a performance review in 2020, it was brought to her attention that although she was working hard, she wasn't excelling in her role. It didn't come as a surprise to the 38-year-old, who knew she was struggling at work and finding it difficult to switch off at home.

During the pandemic, when Fallon was shielding, she signed up for Tesco's training sessions for managers on Teams.

"I got so much out of these that I wanted to do more," said Fallon. "Although I'd been an Usdaw member for over 20 years, I didn't realise they offered such a variety of training and development courses.

"I was incredibly nervous about going back to education as it had been so long since I left university. But the tutor was so welcoming that she made returning to education feel easy.

"I completed Team Leading level 1 and felt my confidence returning. Since then, I have completed several courses. I'm not being dramatic when I say what I have learnt from these courses completely changed my life. I have regained my confidence at work and enjoy my job. At my last performance review, I was rated as 'outstanding'. But the biggest change has been in my work-life balance. I'm no longer stressed. I can switch off at home and enjoy the time I have with my fiancé and daughter.

"After my positive experience with union learning, I decided to become a union learning rep and share the amazing benefits of learning."

Your questions answered...

CLICK HERE
TO SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO ARENA'S HEALTH EXPERTS

Sleepy driver

Q I have started to nod off at the wheel. My mate has said it could be something called 'sleep apnoea' and if it is, I will be stopped from driving, is this true?

The most common medical condition that causes daytime sleepiness is Obstructive Sleep Apnoea (OSA).

OSA stops your breathing while you are asleep. Fortunately, the brain briefly wakes you enough to re-start breathing, but the process can become a continuous cycle that can go on hundreds of times a night.

This chronic sleep deprivation results in daytime sleepiness, slow reflexes, poor concentration, and an increased risk of accidents. OSA can also increase the risk of serious health problems over time such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke.

Drivers who are concerned should see a doctor for a diagnosis. If you are diagnosed with OSA which affects your ability to drive, then you must tell the DVLA. The DVLA are not concerned with OSA, more the tiredness that goes with it so you will not lose your license for seeking medical treatment.

Please see Usdaw's leaflet on sleep apnoea [here](#).

Epilepsy

Q I have been diagnosed with epilepsy. My boss says he will have to lay me off because it could be a health and safety risk if I had a fit in the shop. Can he sack me like this?

It is likely that your epilepsy would mean that you are disabled. Under the Equalities Act 2010, employers have a duty not to discriminate against disabled people and to make reasonable adjustments to enable them to carry on working.

There are some jobs, such as work with dangerous machinery, that someone with epilepsy may not be able to do, but other jobs, such as a general assistant in a shop, are unlikely to be a problem.

Your employer should work with you to see if there are any reasonable adjustments, such as changes in working hours, which may enable you to control your epilepsy and reduce the risk of attacks.

The TUC Epilepsy guide explains how unions can help members who have epilepsy to overcome discrimination and prejudice. [Click here...](#)

Supermarket refit

Q Last week contractors turned up to replace tiles in the aisle. There was a lot of noise and dust. I suffered with coughs and irritable eyes, and had an asthma attack the next day. When I asked if the dust was harmful, the manager just told us to get on with our work. Is this right?

It is unlikely that you will have suffered any long-term damage to health from one-off exposure to dust. However, your employer should have checked with the contractor to make sure a risk assessment was done to control the dust produced before the tiles were removed.

Your health and safety rep should be entitled to see a copy of the risk assessment for the programme of work and should be able to confirm that no long-term damage has been done. It is not surprising that you were concerned about the health effects if you were given no warning about the work. It would have been better if management had checked in advance whether there was anyone with breathing problems who might be affected by the dust and moved you to some safer work while the tiles were removed.

Cleaning chemicals

Q Recently the chemicals we use for cleaning down the machines in our factory were replaced. The new chemicals make my eyes water and make it difficult to breathe. Are they safe to use?

Your employer should have done a risk assessment under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations using information from the suppliers' safety data sheets. They should share that information and the COSHH risk assessment with the union safety reps.

The risk assessment should identify the precautions that are needed. These may include making sure chemicals are diluted to the correct strength before use, avoiding mixing of certain types of chemicals, providing face protection where there is a risk of splashing in the eyes, etc. If there is a risk of inhaling chemical fumes or spray, that might include respiratory protective equipment.

COMPETITION

WIN

£50 shopping vouchers



Seasonal Snaps!

Send us your autumnal themed photos and the best will win a £50 shopping voucher.

Email to: arena@usdaw.org.uk with the title **Autumn**

Don't forget your name and address!

Recipe for success!

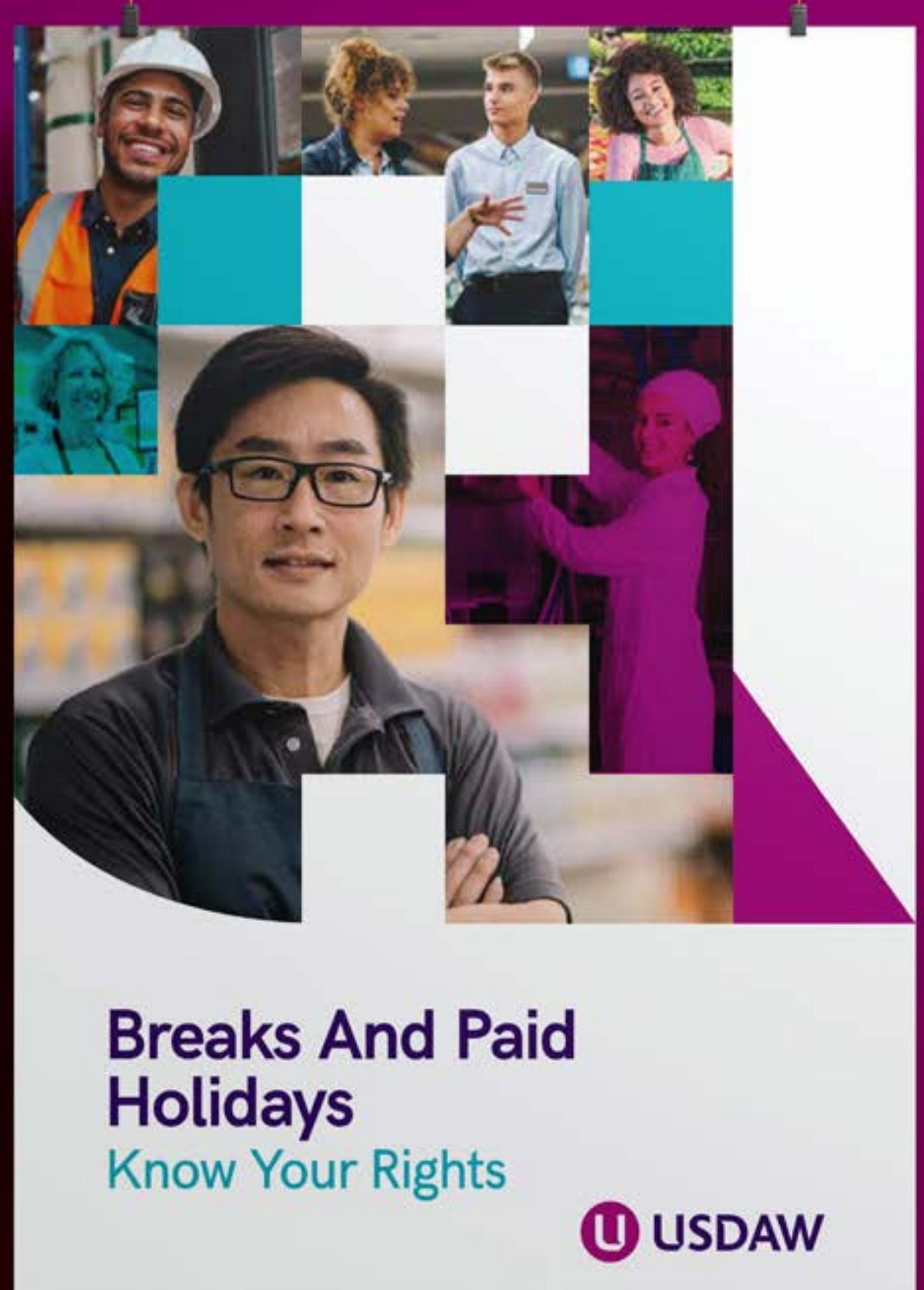
Share your favourite recipe to inspire fellow readers and the best will win a £50 shopping voucher.

Email to: arena@usdaw.org.uk with the title **Recipe**

Don't forget your name and address!



Breaks and paid holidays – know your rights



Many retail workers will have been asked to work through their lunch break, or finish late and start early the next morning. Every worker has statutory entitlements to breaks and paid holidays, and it's important to know what your rights are.

Our newly-updated advice leaflet is a must read for all Usdaw members. It's a comprehensive guide to the legal rights around breaks, rest time, shift work and holidays. Whether you're part-time or full-time, permanent or agency, and whatever shift patterns you work, you'll find useful information here.

Remember that the statutory rights detailed in this leaflet are the legal minimum and Usdaw may well have negotiated improvements at your workplace – if you've a question not answered in this leaflet, check your contract or speak to your Usdaw rep.

[Click here](#) to read the leaflet online.

■ Leaflets

- **[Join Sata Today](#)** (Leaflet 137)
- **[Workers' Rights - A Guide for Full-Time and Part-Time Workers](#)** (Leaflet 211)
- **[Ten Good Reasons to Join Usdaw](#)** (Leaflet 261)
- **[Join Usdaw Today](#)** (Leaflet 299)
- **[Time Off for Family Emergencies - Know Your Rights](#)** (Leaflet 349)
- **[Your Rights to Breaks and Paid Holidays](#)** (Leaflet 352)
- **[Worried About Money? Know Your Rights](#)** (Leaflet 385)
- **[Supporting Young Workers - Your Rights At Work](#)** (Leaflet 396)
- **[Member Offers](#)** (Leaflet 398)
- **[Agency Workers](#)** A5 (Leaflet 407)
- **[Men's Mental Health - It's OK to Ask for Help](#)**
- **[A Plan For The Future Of Retail Work: Ensuring Retail Jobs Are Better Jobs](#)**
- **[Cost Of Living Survey Results July 2023](#)**



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