

NETWORK

THE BIMONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR USDAW ACTIVISTS – JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021

USDAW MEMBERS KEEPING THE COUNTRY GOING

USDAW CALLS ON THE
GOVERNMENT TO PRIORITISE
THE SAFETY OF ITS MEMBERS

vaccinespacefacecoveringsPPErespect

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Course 5: **Representing Members Part 2**

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dtp.usdaw.co.uk/repshb1

Reps' Handbook: Organising and Recruitment
dtp.usdaw.co.uk/repshb2

Reps' Handbook: Representing Members
dtp.usdaw.co.uk/repshb3



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MEMBER SAFETY IS TOP PRIORITY

The new year started with a new national lockdown. For many of our members this was nothing new as they had been on the frontline of the pandemic since March last year. Shopworkers, drivers, members in distribution, manufacturing and in funeral services have continued to work tirelessly to ensure that shelves remained stocked, medicine was available, deliveries were made and other essential tasks were carried out.

Usdaw has been working hard to represent our members' concerns to Government and employers, and the general public through local and national media outlets.

The new highly infectious strain of Covid-19 is causing immense anxiety and our priority is the safety of our members. We are working hard to ensure that employers revert back to the stringent safety measures that were applied during the first lockdown last year.

From our conversations with employers, we are aware that the retail sector is currently suffering from incredibly high sickness absence rates as a result of Covid-19 therefore we are calling on the Government to prioritise retail workers for testing and vaccinations and for customers to adhere to guidelines including wearing masks and keeping a two-metre distance.

Thanks to the fantastic work of our reps, Usdaw's



Freedom From Fear petition to protect Retail Workers from abuse, threats and violence has reached over 104,000 signatures which means that it will now be considered for a debate in Parliament. We will be doing everything we can to keep the pressure on the Government to deliver the legislation our members need.

I want to thank our reps for the amazing work they continue to do during these unprecedented times. Whether its representing members, negotiating safety measures or helping out in their local communities, our reps have shown that the most difficult situations can bring out the very best in people.

Usdaw General Secretary

Paddy Bellis

PUZZLED BY PENSIONS?

HOW MUCH HAS BEEN LOST TO PENSION SCAMMERS?

Pensions

The truth is no one really knows...but it could now be in the billions

There are six common tactics used by the scammers – make sure you know them.



Contact out of the blue...

Pension cold calling is banned in the UK. If you receive an unsolicited approach by phone, email or on social media – reject any offers you receive.



False Authority...

Scammers often provide you with communications displaying fake regulatory credentials.



Time constraints...

Scammers will put you under pressure to sign up to a deal straight away.



Flattery...

Scammers can be over friendly and talk in your language but they have one message – they want your money!



Fake reviews...

Scammers post fake reviews to gain your trust.

Remember not every adviser you speak to is out to rip you off, but there is no shame in taking a few minutes to check out who you are dealing with. If you are an Usdaw member and in any doubt call us on 0161 224 2804 or email us at pensions@usdaw.org.uk



Unrealistic returns...

Scammers consistently try to convince you of high guaranteed returns on your investments if you transfer your money.



**BE SMART
BE SURE
BE SAFE**



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You can also contact your Usdaw rep or call our Helpline **0800 030 80 30**

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Usdaw
Union of Shop, Distributive
and Allied Workers



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VACCINE PRIORITY FOR KEY STAFF

Usdaw continues to call for key workers in essential retail to be prioritised for vaccination against Covid-19 after the Government indicated they are looking at priority for the second phase and the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) accepted that occupation is a factor. The union has made similar calls on the Scottish and Welsh Governments, along with the Northern Ireland Executive.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock told the House of Commons: "We'll be looking very carefully at those professions that will need to be prioritised in phase two of the prioritisation programme. We'll look at, of course, teachers and police and others, but also we will look at shopworkers and we will make those decisions based on the data".

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: "It is understandable to prioritise those at highest risk of serious illness or death during the first phase of rollout, along with frontline health workers including our



members in the funeral industry. There is an urgent need to prioritise other occupations at greatest risk of infection during the second phase of the rollout.

"According to the Government's own research, retail is an occupation with an elevated Covid-19 related death rate. Close proximity to the public as well as the indoor working environment are factors.

"Retail workers, including grocery delivery drivers, have played a key role in ensuring the country is able to get through the current crisis. These critical workers have played a vital role in our communities


ensuring that food remains on the shelves. From our conversations with employers, we are aware that the sector is currently suffering from incredibly high sickness absence rates as a result of Covid-19.

"So the second phase of the vaccine rollout must reflect the risks linked to occupation. Given the risks involved in their public-facing roles, retail workers should be one of the groups prioritised, so they are able to continue to support their communities throughout the rest of the pandemic.


"We also want other key workers in essential industries like food manufacturing

and pharmaceutical distribution to be on the list of prioritisation. They cannot work from home and are at higher risk of infection because of the essential work they do, which should be acknowledged as part of the rollout programme.

"We welcome the early indications that high risk occupations may be prioritised and look forward to entering into discussions with the Government on this issue of great concern."

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STAFF CONCERN OVER RULE BREAKING CUSTOMERS

CALL TO REINSTATE FULL LOCKDOWN SAFETY

Usdaw has made an urgent call on supermarkets and food retailers to immediately revert to the stringent safety measures in stores that were applied during the first lockdown. The union has been inundated with complaints from members deeply concerned about their safety as customers blatantly flout the rules.

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: "Retail staff are working with the public every day and not only suffer increased abuse but are deeply worried about catching Covid-19. The strict safety measures that we agreed with employers in the first lockdown must now be immediately reinstated in every workplace to ensure that staff are working in the safest conditions possible. Where safety measures are agreed, retailers need to make sure that they are being followed consistently, in every store.

"We are also very concerned by reports that too many customers are not following necessary safety measures like social distancing, wearing a face covering and only shopping for essential items. Usdaw is urging the shopping public to strictly follow the rules to help make



shops safer and limit the spread of Covid-19."

Usdaw is calling for the following safety measures to be implemented:

- Customer numbers limited, with a 'one in one out' policy and proper queuing systems.
- Clear signage telling customers to wear face coverings.
- Strictly observed two-metre social distancing, with markers and one-way systems where possible.
- Incidents of violence and abuse must not be tolerated. Employers must back up their staff when

dealing with abusive customers and those who refuse to follow social distancing measures.

- Enhanced cleaning on the shop floor and in back areas.
- PPE, hand sanitiser and cleaning products available for all staff.
- Doorstep-only delivery with procedures in place to protect drivers.
- Staff who are sick or need to self-isolate for Covid-related absence to receive full pay and not subject to disciplinary absence procedures.

SUPPORTING MEMBERS' HEALTH

LET'S GET EVERYONE TALKING

Usdaw will again be marking national Time to Talk Day which this year is being held on Thursday 4 February.

The union wants to focus on supporting members' mental health and the theme is how even a small conversation about mental health can make a big difference.

This issue of *Network* includes a 'bingo card' which will help reps think of small things they can do to look

after their mental health.

Time to Talk Day is a chance for all of us to talk about mental health, to listen, to change lives. Usdaw reps continue to do an amazing job at helping members with mental health problems so they get the support they need at work and beyond.

www.usdaw.org.uk/Campaigns/Mental-Health
www.usdaw.org.uk

Time to Talk Day 2021
Mental Health Awareness
'Bingo Card'

It's good to talk
#ItsGoodToTalk

The last six months have been incredibly tough, the coronavirus pandemic continues to be a mental as well as a physical health crisis.
So this year on Time to Talk Day, Usdaw wants to focus on supporting our members' mental health. Here to talk, by this year is on Thursday, 4 February and the theme is the power of small - even a small conversation about mental health has the power to make a big difference. We hope that this bingo card will help you to think of small things you can do to look after your mental health.

1. Ask a colleague how they are (before you've got time to listen to the answer!) www.usdaw.org.uk/mhc	2. Find out more about Usdaw's 'It's Good to Talk' Campaign. www.usdaw.org.uk/mhc	3. Have a conversation with a friend, even a small conversation has the power to make a big difference.
4. Share the Time to Change post on social media. www.time-to-change.org.uk	5. Think of one person you can talk to about how you're feeling.	6. Do one thing today that helps you to unwind and relax.
7. Run the Usdaw Mental Health survey in your workplace. www.usdaw.org.uk/WhatsingOn	8. Think of something that makes you laugh.	9. Try Usdaw's 5 minute mental health course 'Mind your Head'. www.usdaw.org.uk/MindYourHead

www.usdaw.org.uk/equality

GROUND-BREAKING £10 PER HOUR RATE AGREED

USDAW ‘NEW DEAL’ FOR MORRISONS STAFF

Usdaw has negotiated a £10 per hour basic rate for Morrisons shopworkers in a ground-breaking pay deal. The offer, which will go out to ballot and is recommended by Usdaw, is a major step forward for the union’s New Deal for Workers campaign that called for £10 and is 50p an hour above the voluntary Living Wage Foundation rate.

Usdaw national officer Joanne McGuinness said: “For some time we have been talking to Morrisons about taking retail staff to £10 an hour, as we call for in our New Deal for Workers campaign. So I am delighted that we have agreed a rise that achieves that goal and takes staff well beyond the real living wage.



“The new consolidated hourly rate is now the leading rate of the major supermarkets, which is paid every hour and removes the uncertainty of a bonus payment.

“It is a big step forward and shows that the company are prepared to invest in the staff to help grow the business and I hope that the deal is supported by our members in the

ballot.

“It’s been a tough time for food retail staff who have worked throughout the pandemic in difficult circumstances. They provide the essential service of keeping the nation fed and deserve our support, respect and appreciation. Most of all they deserve decent pay and this offer is a welcome boost.”

ESSENTIAL SERVICE REWARDED

B&M BONUS FOR HARDWORKING EMPLOYEES

Usdaw has welcomed B&M agreeing to pay an extra week’s wages in recognition of the hard work of their staff through the exceptional challenges of the pandemic.

Usdaw national officer Dave Gill said: “It’s been a tough time for retail staff, so we are pleased

to have secured this bonus for our members in B&M. They are providing an essential service, that we all rely on, and they deserve our support, respect and appreciation.

“We continue to call on the company to revisit the support provided for extremely vulnerable

colleagues and are always working to improve health and safety. Retail staff are dealing with the public every day and are not only suffering increased abuse but are also deeply worried about catching Covid-19.”

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Due to the current situation with Covid 19, the voucher will be despatched as soon as possible after the draw has taken place.

IN BRIEF

RETAIL FOOTFALL

UK retail destinations witnessed a footfall decline of 10.9 per cent in the week to 16 January.

RETAIL SALES

According to the British Retail Consortium, retailers suffered their worst annual sales performance on record in 2020, driven by a slump in demand for fashion and homeware products. Food sales growth rose 5.4 per cent on 2019, non-food fell about 5 per cent.

PRIMARK

Primark says it has no plans to sell its clothes online despite warnings that lockdown store closures could cost it more than £1bn in lost sales.

BONMARCHE

Bonmarche has collapsed into administration for the second time in a year, putting 1,500 jobs at risk. Retail tycoon Philip Day completed a takeover of Bonmarche early this year after an administration process in October 2019 but he has failed to revive the company's fortunes. Bonmarche issued a series of profit warnings in 2018 and 2019 after being hit by rising costs from business rates as well as a shift to online shopping.

FRASER GROUP

The group has unveiled plans to open a multi-brand flagship store in Birmingham city centre.

ANNUAL DELEGATE MEETING 2021

GO AHEAD FOR ONLINE ADM

Usdaw's executive council has endorsed the general secretary's recommendation to have the Annual Delegate Meeting in April this year and for this to be an online event.

The conference will be a two-day event held on Sunday 25 and Monday 26 April 2021, and will be video-streamed to delegates with a secure online voting system, operated by an independent external organisation, running concurrently with conference proceedings.

A circular containing the full details of the conference including revised programme of dates was sent to branches earlier in the month.

Outlined below are some of the main points covered in the circular:

Standing Orders

A revised temporary code of Standing Orders will be drafted. These will be used for this year only and are not a permanent change to the Standing Orders.

Delegate Attendance

Delegate attendance will remain in line with normal practice as set out in Rule 8, Section 3(a).

Ordinary Propositions

Due to restrictions on time, branches will not formally move their own propositions. Ordinary Propositions will be formally moved and seconded by the president. They will not be debated during the conference but they will be voted on. Any branch that strongly wishes to speak on their proposition will have the option to withdraw it and bring it back to ADM in 2022.

A Final Agenda will be distributed to delegates in advance of the



conference. Branches will then have an opportunity to meet and discuss how they wish to cast their vote during the virtual conference.

Voting

Voting will be undertaken in blocks at the end of each session, for example after a morning session Propositions 1-20 will be voted on and so on throughout the day until all propositions have been voted on.

UNION ELECTIONS

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

Postal ballot papers and election addresses were sent to all members from 18 January 2021 to be returned by Friday 12 February 2021.

These elections will be conducted by the Independent Civica Election Services (previously known as Electoral Reform Services).

ANOTHER LOCKDOWN LEAVES MANY WORKERS STRUGGLING

Usdaw calls for retail staff to be made a priority group for vaccination and Covid testing, while social distancing rules need to be reinforced to keep workers safe

On 4 January 2021, the Prime Minister announced a new National Lockdown for England. Similar announcements have been made by the devolved administrations for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The new restrictions mean that people should stay at home unless they have a reasonable excuse.

Schools in England, Scotland and Wales are closed with remote learning until February half term.

The new restrictions also mean that non-food retail will close.

When you can leave home

You must not leave or be outside of your home except where you have a 'reasonable excuse'.

A reasonable excuse covers a range of essential activities such as shopping, exercise and visiting people in your support bubble.

It can also include going to work where it is not possible to work from home.

Schools – children of critical/key workers

Schools will continue to provide places for children of key workers.

Colleges, primary (reception onwards) and secondary schools will remain open for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers. Wraparound care can also remain open for these children. Early Years settings (eg nurseries) can remain open.

The full list of sectors where workers are defined as critical

workers can be found at: [www.gov.uk search critical workers children coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/search/critical-workers-children-coronavirus)

Clinically extremely vulnerable

If you are clinically extremely vulnerable you should not attend work, school, college or university, and limit the time you spend outside the home. You should only go out for medical appointments, exercise or if it is essential.

If you have received a letter to say that you are clinically extremely vulnerable, you should advise your manager and not attend work. If you have any queries about this, speak to your union rep or local official.

Workplaces that are closed

The Job Retention Scheme has been extended to April 2021. This means furlough pay will be available for those who need it, for instance for those whose stores are closed or those who are shielding.

Breaches of the new national lockdown

The rules of the new national lockdown have been enacted in law. Breaches of the rules can result in a Fixed Penalty Notice of £200 for the first offence, doubling for further offences up to a maximum of £6,400.

Usdaw's response

Ahead of the announcement Usdaw wrote to the Government calling for frontline retail staff to be made a priority group for vaccination

and Covid testing. The letter also called for social distancing rules in shops to be reinforced to help keep supermarket workers and delivery drivers safe as the pandemic escalates.

A new deal for workers

Usdaw has been making the case for the Government to act to ensure that the right financial support is in place to support workers through the crisis:

Financial support to isolate


Test and Trace is a key part of the Government strategy to tackle the spread of the virus but asking people to self-isolate on statutory sick pay of £95.85 per week is unfair and impractical. Usdaw is calling for workers who are sick or need to self-isolate for Covid-related absence to receive full pay.

Universal credit

At the start of the crisis the Government gave universal credit claims a £20 per week uplift, until March 2021. We need the uplift to continue.

Job retention scheme pay cuts

In the second lockdown most employers paid just 80 per cent of wages to furloughed workers. Usdaw believes that no worker should be receiving a reduction in wages to below the National Minimum Wage rate of £8.72 for the hours that they would usually work.

A portrait of a middle-aged man with grey hair, wearing a dark blue pinstriped suit jacket, a white shirt, and a red tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a blurred green and purple floral pattern.

£10 per hour for all workers

The TUC estimates that 9.36 million workers, one-third of the UK's total workforce, are paid less than £10 per hour. The time has come for better pay and a real living wage for all workers.

Crisis in the retail sector – immediate rescue measures needed

This new lockdown and the closure of non-essential retail shops will add to the growing crisis on the retail high street. Throughout the Covid crisis Usdaw has been making the case for a Retail Recovery Plan that would address issues such as business rates and the need for a level playing field between 'bricks and mortar' and online retail. The union is also lobbying Government for immediate measures to help rescue the sector such as a business rates holiday and rent relief for shops.

Further information

www.usdaw.org.uk/Help-Advice/Coronavirus-Update/Advice-for-Usdaw-Members

BUILDING A UNION FOR THE FUTURE

Network gives reps a guide to the single contribution rate proposal that will be discussed at ADM in April

The executive council is proposing to the union's Annual Delegate Meeting that the union moves to a single membership contribution rate for new members from July 2021.

The union is in a strong position but is facing some big challenges:

- In the turbulent last 12 months, Usdaw's total membership has fallen by 8,000. This is not a one-off. In 2019, the total number of members fell by 20,000. The union is recruiting lots of new members – 57,000 new members joined in the last year and 84,000 new members joined in 2019 – but total membership fell as we saw huge job losses across the economy especially in the retail sector.
- Over recent years the union has seen a greater proportion of new members joining on the lower Scale C rate. In the longer term this is a problem as the lower Scale C contribution rate does not cover the full cost of providing a full union service to those members.
- The union is increasingly organising workers who work less than traditional full-time hours. Many workers are working hours that change from week to week relying on additional hours to make ends meet. The part-time/full-time membership subs split no longer reflects the reality of today's workforce. All Usdaw members, whatever hours they work, get the same first rate service from the union.

THE GROWTH OF SCALE C MEMBERSHIP

In 1999, just 34 per cent of Usdaw members were on the lower Scale C rate. This has now increased to 53 per cent. Scale C members get exactly the same service in terms of advice and representation as those on Scale A, the only difference is in the level of cash benefits they can claim.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

If this trend continues, the union could see reduced income and higher costs leading inevitably to decisions that would impact on the support provided for reps and members such as training, conferences or important campaigning work.

WHAT HAPPENS IF WE DO NOTHING?

Many unions who did not take prompt action have been forced to merge and lose their identity in order to survive. Others have faced financial crisis and been forced to take drastic cost-cutting measures.

We need to act now, so that we can avoid crisis and cost cutting tomorrow. If all new members joined on Scale A, then the union finances can remain healthy.

THE PROPOSAL

The proposal is to move to a single contribution rate for new members from July 2021. The single contribution rate would be Scale A. Existing Scale C members would continue on Scale C.



Usdaw recognises that members are under financial pressure but the Scale A rate of £2.48 a week offers good value for money. Going forward, the union will be reviewing the current package of benefits to make it even better value for money. There are proposals to increase significantly some of the membership benefits and grants including increases to maternity/paternity/adoption benefits, sickness grants, dispute benefits, funeral and industrial accident payments and permanent



**A NEW DEAL
FOR WORKERS**



disablement grants.
A single contribution rate will help keep the union finances healthy in the long-term. Usdaw can continue to build a stronger union and keep improving the service offered to members and reps.

FUTURE PROOFING OUR UNION
Usdaw has a duty to its members, and the members of the future, to build a stronger union and protect it for the long term. Acting now means the union will be acting from a position of strength to ensure

the union isn't forced into making decisions that will have a detrimental impact for the future.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?
The proposition for a single contribution rate will be discussed at this year's ADM.

ADM UPDATE
Usdaw's executive council has endorsed the plan to have the Annual Delegate Meeting in April this year and for this to be an online event.

The conference will be a two-day event held on Sunday 25 and Monday 26 April 2021, and will be video-streamed to delegates with a secure online voting system, operated by an independent external organisation, running concurrently with conference proceedings.

A circular containing the full details of the conference, including a revised programme of dates has been sent to branches earlier in the month.
www.usdaw.org.uk/adm2021

PROTECT SHOPWORKERS

Following the shocking rise of abuse during the coronavirus pandemic, Usdaw ramps up its campaign for better protection in law for shopworkers

Over the past few years the union has seen an alarming increase in the levels of abuse and violence towards shopworkers. More recently, shocking results from an Usdaw survey carried out at the height of the coronavirus pandemic reveal just how bad the situation has become in the past six months.

Throughout the outbreak, retail workers have been spat at, threatened with being infected with coronavirus and physically assaulted by customers while they have been providing an essential service in very difficult circumstances.

Since the start of the outbreak, the average retail worker has been assaulted, threatened or abused every 6.5 days, more than double the rate of incidents compared to 2019. The evidence is clear. Shopworkers are vulnerable and the current law doesn't go far enough to offer them the protection they need.

In 2003, Usdaw introduced its Freedom From Fear campaign in response to members' concerns about violence and abuse in retail. Since then the union has worked with the public, employers, the police, politicians and with the Government to achieve safety and security improvements in stores, raise the issues of neighbourhood policing, retail crime and underage sales.

The union continues to lobby the Government to improve legislation to protect shopworkers and those working in public-facing roles, including stiffer penalties for those who assault workers. But the current situation shows that the need for the union's campaign is more pressing than ever

Petition for change

In light of the continued increase in violence and abuse towards shopworkers and the appalling situation they've faced leading up to and throughout the pandemic, Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis launched a House of Commons petition to lobby the Government to protect retail staff. The union is calling on the Government to create a specific offence of abusing, threatening or assaulting a retail worker with a penalty that acts as a deterrent and makes clear that abuse of retail workers is unacceptable.

The petition gained widespread media attention in national and regional news outlets when it was launched in August 2020 with Usdaw officials and reps making over 80 appearances on TV and radio.

Thanks to the hard work of Usdaw's fantastic reps, activists and members, the petition has already been signed by over 104,000 people which will now trigger a debate in Parliament.

The petition is backed by 23 major retailers and the industry's leading trade bodies, with research by the Co-op showing its aims have public support as well.

Last October Usdaw, the British Retail Consortium, the Association of Convenience Stores and the Federation of Independent Retailers jointly wrote to the chair of the home affairs select committee, Yvette Cooper MP, to call for an inquiry into the growing problem of violence and abuse against shopworkers.

This inquiry was announced in December and was welcomed by Usdaw.

General Secretary Paddy Lillis

"We were delighted to secure the necessary signatures on our petition to trigger a parliamentary debate," said Paddy. "This new select committee inquiry, which we called for, is a very welcome opportunity to evidence the need for a 'protection of shopworkers' law."

"It has been a terrible year for our members, with incidents of abuse doubling during the pandemic. Retail workers, their friends, family and loved ones, are saying loud and clear that enough is enough, abuse should never be just a part of the job."

"We were deeply disappointed by the Government's initial response to the petition, offering little more than sympathy. Unfortunately, they also objected to the Alex Norris' protection of shopworkers bill in the House of Commons. So we are now looking for MPs to get behind retail staff, who are key workers providing essential services, and help turn around the Government's opposition."

"Usdaw has responded to this 'call for evidence' and encourage our members on the frontline of retail to participate in this year's survey. Shopworkers have a crucial role in our communities and that role must be valued and respected, they deserve the protection of the law."

Freedom from Fear Survey

Complete this year's survey and encourage your colleagues to do the same. The experiences and views of retail workers show the extent of the problem and help the union make a compelling case.

www.usdaw.org.uk/respectsurvey

GROUND BREAKING VICTORY

As *Network* went to print Usdaw won protection for Scottish shopworkers in a new ground-breaking law. Usdaw's Freedom From Fear campaign has been calling for this change for many years.

The union is delighted that the Scottish Parliament unanimously voted to pass legislation – The Protection of Workers (Retail and Age-restricted Goods and Services) (Scotland) Bill – that would tackle growing violence, threats and abuse against retail staff.

Udaw's Scottish divisional officer Stewart Forrest said: "We are grateful for the support of MSPs and congratulate Daniel Johnson MSP on securing ground-breaking legislation to protect shopworkers from violence, threats and abuse. We hope the UK Government will now follow suit to protect shopworkers in the rest of the UK.

"Retail staff have been on the frontline throughout the coronavirus crisis, helping to keep our communities fed, despite the risks of contracting the virus. The final results of our 2020 survey showed that nine in 10 shopworkers had been abused last year. This new law firmly backs up Usdaw's clear message that abuse is not part of the job.

"We are now looking to work with the Scottish Government, police and retailers to promote the new law. We want criminals to understand that assaulting and abusing shopworkers is unacceptable and will land them with a stiffer sentence. Our hope is that this new legislation will result in retail staff getting the respect they deserve."

Udaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: "The Scottish Parliament is leading the way on protection of shopworkers by passing this Bill. It is a great result for our members in Scotland, who will now have the protection of the law that they deserve. We are grateful to Daniel Johnson for steering this important legislation through the Parliament.

"We have been deeply disappointed with the UK Government's response to our campaign, offering little more than sympathy and their objecting to protection of shopworkers legislation. So we are looking for MPs to support key workers across the retail sector and help turn around the UK Government's opposition."





WHY WE NEED TO SAVE THE UNION LEARNING FUND

Government plans to scrap funding for union learning at a time when jobs and industries are under threat from the coronavirus crisis and upskilling and retraining is more crucial than ever.

Last year the Government announced that it will be withdrawing all funding from the Union Learning Fund (ULF) from March 2021. This decision only affects the ULF in England. In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, where devolved governments have responsibility for the ULF, funding will continue.

What is the Union Learning Fund?

The Union Learning Fund (ULF) was set up in 1998 to support workers in accessing learning and training in workplaces.

The fund is worth £11 million per year and around 200,000 workers enter into learning or training with union support through the ULF and the TUC. These learners undertake

all sorts of job-relevant learning and training, including basic literacy and numeracy, ICT skills, apprenticeships and traineeships, vocational training, continuing professional development and many other informal and formal courses.

The positive effects of the Union Learning Fund

The Union Learning Fund delivers an estimated net contribution to the economy of more than £1.4 billion as a result of boosting jobs, wages and productivity.

The benefits to individual learners, many of whom may not have had the best experience of primary and secondary education, are overwhelmingly positive and include:

- Over two-thirds (68 per cent) of learners with no previous qualifications got a qualification.
- Four in five (80 per cent) said they had developed skills that they could transfer to a new job.
- Two in three (62 per cent) said

their new skills made them more effective in their current job.

In addition, the money provided by the Government to support learners and projects through the ULF is more than matched by funding from other sources. In 2019/2020 £9.6 million was generated by Usdaw, employers and from partner providers/agencies.

The ULF and Usdaw

Government funding through the Union Learning Fund is vital in supporting Usdaw's Lifelong Learning initiatives, such as workplace learning centres, mobile union learning reps and promotional activity such as Usdaw's 'Checkout Learning' campaign.

In the last financial year, Usdaw engaged over 17,500 members in some form of learning.

For many of Usdaw's members, this will have been their first engagement with any form of learning since leaving school.

HELP US SAVE THE FUND BY:

SIGNING THE TUC PETITION

Sign the petition and ask everyone in your workplace to sign it and share it on social media using the hashtag **#SaveUnionLearning**.
www.megaphone.org.uk/petitions/uk-gov-don-t-cut-union-learning

EMAILING YOUR MP

Email your MP and encourage others to do the same by using the template at the link below. Direct correspondence to MPs has proved to be an incredibly effective tool on previous campaigns and we hope that as many members as possible engage with the campaign.
www.usdaw.org.uk/Campaigns/Union-Learning-Fund/ULF-email-your-MP

GETTING SUPPORT FROM EMPLOYERS

Employers see significant benefits from their employees who are undertaking lifelong learning

opportunities. Upskilling workers can be directly linked to gains in productivity. Ask your employer to write to the secretary of state for education Gavin Williamson or local MPs to talk about the benefits.

SPEAK TO YOUR AREA ORGANISER

Contact your area organiser to see how you can help.

TELL US YOUR STORIES

Usdaw wants to know how trade union learning opportunities have benefited you. Email network@usdaw.org.uk to tell your story.

RAISE AWARENESS

Talk to your colleagues, family and friends about the Union Learning Fund. Talk about it on social media, write to your local newspaper or ring into a local radio station.

Usdaw and Employers

Usdaw works collaboratively with over 20 major employers to promote workplace learning across retail, distribution and food manufacturing. Many of those employers have been long term supporters of the Union Learning Fund agenda and have committed to learning agreements with Usdaw including Tesco, Next, DHL, Müller Wisemans, Argos/Sainsbury's, McVities and CRL.

RETRAINING IS VITAL

The Union Learning Fund is an extremely effective tool for reaching learners who are unable to access Government supported training and learning opportunities.

Considering the current economic climate, retraining and reskilling projects supported by the ULF will be even more critical in the near future.

MICHAEL DUFFY TALKS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ULF

Michael Duffy, a senior rep at Sainsbury's Haydock has been working tirelessly to save the Union Learning Fund. He has been encouraging members to sign the petition and has written to his MP Lisa Nandy.

I am 51 years old now and I consider myself to be reasonably intelligent, however I recognise that I wasted opportunities as a young adult. I was raised in a family that expected us to find work after leaving school, further education was seen as something only wealthy families did. Even now, it is sad to see young adults taking up positions at my place of work whose upbringing is very similar to mine. Some don't understand their payslips and cannot calculate how much they have earned or they miss opportunities because they cannot read the notice boards. Some older colleagues haven't seen their wage slips in over a year since the company payslips went digital.

The Government must realise that it isn't just the individual who is going to miss out, it affects their families also. Education in English, maths and digital inclusion must be made a Government priority.

Sainsbury's, with the support of the union learning fund, has been brilliant in authorising paid release in work's time to help colleagues take up learning opportunities.

I truly fear that cuts to the Union Learning Fund will disproportionately affect working class people like me.

Please support our campaign.

PROTECTING THE HEART OF OUR TOWNS AND CITIES

Usdaw is calling for a new deal for all workers based around a £10 minimum wage, guaranteed hours, better sick pay, job security and a voice at work

The end of the last year was a devastating month for the high street as Debenhams went into liquidation and Arcadia went into administration putting thousands more jobs at risk.

During the summer when Debenhams went into administration the administrators refused to engage with Usdaw and redundancies were made by conference call, with no meaningful consultation or proper notice period, as required by law.

As Arcadia went into administration Usdaw called on the administrators to engage with the union to save jobs and to ensure that staff were treated fairly.

Following the collapse of Arcadia, which could potentially result in 25,000 job losses, leader of the Labour Party Keir Starmer quizzed the Prime Minister Boris Johnson on the desperate state of the retail industry.

Unfortunately, the Prime Minister offered no roadmap or additional

help to the struggling industry.

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: "We welcome the support of Keir Starmer for our call for the Government to work with retail employers and trade unions to develop a recovery plan for an industry that was already struggling before this appalling pandemic wreaked havoc on our high streets.

"Over 200,000 retail job losses and 20,000 store closures in the last year are absolutely devastating and lay bare the scale of the challenge



that the industry faces.

“Each one of those job losses is a personal tragedy for the individual worker and store closures are scarring our high streets and communities.

“What retail needs is a joined-up strategy of unions, employers and Government working together to develop a recovery plan.

“Usdaw has long called for an industrial strategy for retail, as part of our ‘Save our Shops’ campaign, to help a sector that was already struggling before the coronavirus emergency.

“We desperately need issues like rents, rates and taxation, to create a level playing field between high streets and online retail to be addressed.

“With a further 6-week national lockdown starting in January, which includes the closure of non-food retail in all parts of England, the need for a retail recovery plan becomes even more urgent.

“Retail is crucial to our town

and city centres. The Government must take this seriously; we need a recovery plan to get the industry back on its feet.”

RETAIL RECOVERY PLAN

Usdaw calls for a recovery plan to be developed with trade unions and retail employers that includes:

- Fundamental reform of business rates. The Government committed to a review of business rates earlier this year, but assurance is needed that this will not be delayed further.
- An immediate and comprehensive review of rental values and lease arrangements. In the short term, the moratorium on evictions for shop rent arrears needs to be extended and retail businesses that are struggling should receive Government support to help with paying the rents which will become liable when the moratorium comes to an end. In the medium term, a rebalancing of the relationship between

landlords and tenants is required.

- Reform of UK tax law to ensure that companies pay their fair share of tax through tackling tax avoidance and the use of offshore havens, with the aim of creating a level playing field between online and high street retailers.
 - Funding for local authorities so they can invest in their local economy, transport networks and high streets. We cannot revive our high streets if core services continue to be undermined.
 - Investment in skills for retail workers, including through union learning and high-quality apprenticeships. This should include an in-depth assessment of emerging trends and potential skills shortages/gaps within the sector.
 - A new deal for retail, distribution and home delivery workers based around a real living wage and guaranteed hours.
- For more information visit:
www.usdaw.org.uk/sos



EXCEPTIONAL ACTIVISTS

Celebrating the reps who continue to protect workers' rights and raise spirits in the midst of a pandemic

Incredible activists across the country have spent the last 12 months giving their all to support their members, colleagues, neighbours and those struggling during the pandemic. In this issue we celebrate two more of Usdaw's amazing activists.

TREVOR DOWNES

Active rep Trevor has continued to support and represent members over the past 12 months and promote the union, despite coronavirus. If a member needs representing in his patch, Trevor will be there anytime night or day.

"I've always been passionate about trade unions and protecting workers' rights so when I was asked to become a rep in 2018, I jumped at the chance," said Trevor, 55, who has worked at Sainsbury's in Godalming for the past four years. "I completed Academy1 in 2019 and started Academy2 in 2020 but unfortunately it was cancelled because of the pandemic. It was such a shame. I met some great people and I was really excited to get stuck in. Hopefully we can pick up where we left off at some point in the future.

"I have managed to do some stand-down between lockdowns. I limited myself to four stores and picked up all the new starters as they came through, I even managed to sign up a few new reps in stores that didn't have them.

"Back in my own store I've attended all the inductions, socially distanced of course. My manager is very supportive and values the

union so is more than happy for me to get involved and recruit.

"I'm also health and safety rep but Sainsbury's have been pretty good at making the store safe for staff and customers, so I've not really had to intervene. Occasionally the store can feel quite busy and if staff feel at risk we just step off the shop floor if we can.

"Unfortunately, I have noticed a rise in mental health problems among staff during the pandemic. Staff are struggling, whether it's because they can't see their families or they're anxious about the situation. It's very difficult. Luckily management are very understanding so I hope staff feel like they have that support if they need it. Hopefully soon we'll be able to get some campaigns off the ground to raise awareness around issues like mental health. This would've been a good year for a Freedom From Fear campaign. All we can do right now is keep supporting members and hope the vaccine works out.

"I did actually contract Covid-19 in late 2020. Me, my son and my daughter had it, so we had to isolate with my wife, although she never had any symptoms. I felt rough for three or four days and suffered from headaches, shivers and chest pains. It was very scary. Thankfully we all recovered and are all doing well."

MARK PALMER

It's been a busy time for Mark and the team at Tesco Ballymena in Northern Ireland who have



Trevor Downes

stepped up to support management throughout the pandemic to ensure staff and customers are safe.

Mark, who has only been a rep for a year, has proved instrumental, continuing to represent members and recruiting nearly 60 members in just one week during a recruitment campaign.

"We have a really good working relationship with management which works well for all parties involved," said Mark, 46, who has been a dotcom driver at Tesco for seven years. "Even before Covid-19, we would meet weekly with management and they would tell us about changes in policy and anything that we needed to know to better support the staff. They have always been transparent and worked with us for the wellbeing of the staff. It's been the same throughout the pandemic. Management are open and honest with us about any information and updates that are being fed down



Mark Palmer

from head office so that we are prepared and have the knowledge to support members in the best way we can. We work together.

“At the start of the pandemic it was all hands on deck. As the demand for online deliveries increased so did our workforce. We went from having 60 to 104 dotcom staff overnight because we were so busy. The managers relied heavily on the reps to help them roll out and regulate new health and safety procedures to ensure the staff were safe. For example, if the store got too busy we would report back and they would limit the number of customers. There was never any argument about it. We also made sure that staff were clear on new Government measures that were being implemented and how the company were responding.

“We’ve also continued to take a zero-tolerance approach to violence and abuse in store. Customers have definitely become

more aggressive towards retail workers who are just trying to keep the country fed during the pandemic. If staff feel threatened they know to speak to the nearest manager or Usdaw rep for support.

“As a team of reps we’re still very much involved in Covid-related business in store, particularly as we’re now in another national lockdown. It’s an ongoing challenge to respond to new Government guidance and ensure we’re adhering to all the rules.

“I’ve been busy outside of work too. I’m on the board of governors at the local primary school so that takes up a lot of my time and I also play a very active role in the community. As you can imagine that’s been non-stop too.

“It’s been a testing 12 months but I think staff, management and the reps have really worked together and done a great job in making sure Tesco Ballymena is as safe as possible.”

HELPING YOU IN YOUR ROLE AS REP

Where to find information

Usdaw website and news

For everything you need including sections on legal advice, workers’ rights, health and safety, news, training opportunities, upcoming events and campaigns. You can also download informative leaflets and posters for your noticeboard and sign up for email updates to hear the latest news from the union.

Visit www.usdaw.org.uk

Social media

As an Usdaw rep we recommend that you follow UsdawUnion on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Flickr. It’s a great way to keep up to date with news, campaigns, events, rights at work, competitions and offers exclusive to Usdaw members. You can also share pictures of your campaigns and events with the union.

Local office

If you need support or guidance in your role as rep, whether you’re not sure how to handle a problem, or you need advice on how to run a campaign, then don’t hesitate to contact your local Usdaw office where the union’s staff will be happy to help.

We want to hear from you

Here at *Network* magazine we love hearing about what reps and members have been up to in and out of their workplaces. If you’ve got pictures to share even better! We want to hear about campaigns and events, wins for your members, your top tips, reps and members who are going the extra mile to support local causes, anything that you think would make a good story and that Usdaw members would like to read about. So please get in touch.

Email network@usdaw.org.uk



HELP WITH YOUR FINANCES

Network guides reps through the basics of universal credit and outlines where they can signpost members who might be having money worries

Last year when the pandemic struck, millions of families were forced on to universal credit.

As the country endures a third national lockdown, reps may have members approaching them for advice and support. *Network* guides reps through what universal credit is and how to claim it.

Please be aware that the rules governing entitlement to benefits including universal credit are complex and subject to frequent change.

What is universal credit?

Universal credit (UC) is a means-tested benefit for people of working age. It has replaced the following benefits:

- Income Support.
- Income-based Job Seeker's Allowance.
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance.
- Housing Benefit.
- Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit.

These benefits have become known as 'legacy benefits'. If you are currently receiving a legacy benefit you can continue to do so until you claim or are transferred to UC. You may be worse off on UC than on a 'legacy benefit', particularly if you are disabled or have a disabled child because UC doesn't include extra amounts specifically for disabled adults and the amount for a disabled child is lower.

Who gets it?

Universal credit is a benefit for both single people and couples on a low income to provide financial support

for living costs. It can be paid to people in or out of work.

You can claim if you are:

- Aged 18 or over (although there are exceptions for some 16 and 17-year-olds).
- Under the qualifying age for pension credit. If you are a couple and only one of you is over pension credit age, then you will have to claim universal credit.
- In Great Britain.
- Not in education.
- Accept a 'claimant commitment'.

What is a 'claimant commitment'?

This may include requirements about what you will do to look for work or increase the number of hours you work. If you are doing some work, you will normally be expected to search for work for at least 35 hours a week (less if you are a parent or carer).

How much will I get?

When calculating how much universal credit people will get a basic rate called the 'standard allowance' is included and extra amounts for people in different circumstances are paid on top.

Does it include housing costs?

Universal credit can include a housing costs element if you are renting, are an owner occupier or if you pay service charges. If you are a private tenant or you are in the socially rented sector and your home has more bedrooms than the rules allow, your rent is either restricted or your housing costs reduced by a percentage.

Can I get help with my mortgage?

You cannot get any help with your mortgage payments if you (or your partner) have any earned income, no matter how low your earnings are.

How do I claim?

In most cases, claims for universal credit must be made online at www.gov.uk/universalcredit If you do not have access to the internet you can claim via the telephone service. The helpline number is 0800 328 5644.

How will I be paid?

If you live in England and Wales

Your award is assessed over an assessment period of one calendar month beginning from the date of your claim. Universal credit should normally be paid directly into your account within seven days of the last day of the monthly assessment period.

If you live in Scotland

You have the option of twice-monthly payments instead of once a month. You can also ask for the housing costs element to be paid directly to your landlord instead of you.

If you live in Northern Ireland

Things are slightly different in Northern Ireland as, unlike the rest of the UK, unless you ask to be paid your universal credit monthly, you will get two payments a month instead of one.

Do I have to work a minimum number of hours?

There are no minimum hours of work to claim universal credit, (as opposed to the tax credits system), however you are expected to try to

earn at least the equivalent of 35 hours a week at the minimum wage (unless you are the primary carer for a child aged under five, a disabled worker or a carer).

My earnings vary each month, what happens to my universal credit payment?

Employers report all earnings directly to HMRC where your universal credit will be calculated, based on your household's wages in the previous month. If your income varies each month, your next universal credit payment will increase if your earnings drop or reduce if your wages increase.

When will I get my first payment?

When you start to claim universal credit, there is at least a five-week waiting period when you will receive no support. If you are experiencing hardship because of having to wait

for your payment, you can apply for a short-term advance, although it will have to be paid back later through your UC payments.

See the following article from the Money Advice Service:

www.moneyadvice.org.uk/en/articles/universal-credit-advance-payments-and-other-help

I am paid four-weekly, will this affect my payment?

Universal credit is assessed on your income received during each month. If you are paid four-weekly, you receive 13 pay packets in a year, and in one monthly assessment period, two of your pay packets may be assessed, rather than just one – meaning your universal credit payment that month will be considerably reduced.

Following a successful legal challenge by the campaigning organisation, Child Poverty Action

Group, new rules came into effect in November 2020 that enable the DWP to reallocate a 'double payment' of monthly earnings to two different assessment periods however this won't happen automatically. You will need to let the DWP know, in advance if at all possible, of any four-weekly period in which you are likely to receive two sets of earnings.

Although the DWP has said they will automatically reassess universal credit entitlement in the assessment period after the one in which a claimant loses all entitlement due to a double payment of earnings and will re-enroll claimants in this position, it is a good idea to inform the UC office that you are re-claiming UC from the following month if you are not able to raise the problem with them in advance.

www.usdaw.org.uk/Help-Advice/Money-Benefits



FURTHER ADVICE AND INFORMATION

- Citizens Advice Bureau: www.citizensadvice.org.uk
- Gov UK - Information on government services, including money, tax, benefits, disability, employment and carers. Visit: www.entitledto.co.uk
- Money Advice Service: 0800 138 7777 www.moneyadvice.org.uk
- National Debtline: 0808 808 4000 www.nationaldebtline.org

SCHOOLS CLOSED

A guide for parents juggling work and looking after children due to nationwide school closures

Since 4 January 2021, England, Scotland and Wales have been in lockdown.

The new restrictions meant that schools closed to most pupils with remote learning until February half term.

This article explains what support is available to parents with children at home during the current lockdown.

At present the only children who can attend school or college are children of 'critical workers' and vulnerable children and young people.

Vulnerable children and young people is a broad category and includes those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study). A full explanation of which children and young people fall into this category can be found here.

www.gov.uk search **critical workers children coronavirus**

Who can send their children to school/college?

'Critical workers' ie parents whose work is critical to the coronavirus response can continue to send their child or children to school and college.

Who is classed as a 'critical worker'?

A 'critical worker' is defined by law as someone who is in food production, processing, distribution, sale and delivery. It also includes workers whose work is essential to the provision of other key goods (for example hygienic and veterinary medicines). Members working in

non-food may also therefore be classed as 'critical workers'. Those providing essential services such as funeral care are also classed as 'critical workers'.

Are the rules different in the four nations?

Yes. England, Wales and Northern Ireland have taken the same approach namely that if one parent is a key worker, then their child can continue going to school only if it is not possible for the other parent to care for them at home.

Do both parents have to be 'critical workers' in order to send their children to school/college?

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland Government guidance is clear that children with at least one parent or carer who is a 'critical worker' can go to school or college if required. It is not necessary for both parents to be 'critical workers' to be eligible for a place at school during lockdown.

What are the rules for Scotland?

Scotland has taken a slightly different approach to this issue and introduced a 'tiered' system meaning that 'critical workers' in health and social care get a place, if they need it, first.

Decisions about other 'critical workers' like members who are working in food retail, food processing, warehousing and distribution and whether childcare places will be allocated to them are taken locally.

In Scotland, do both parents have to be 'critical workers' in order to



send their children to school/college?

Udsway is calling on the Scottish Government for greater certainty for members who are 'critical workers' however as it stands it is unlikely that they will be offered a place where only one person in a couple household is a 'critical worker'.

Why can't I get a place when I'm classed as a 'critical worker' and/or my child is classed as vulnerable?

In some parts of the country particularly larger towns and cities where there are higher numbers of 'vulnerable' and 'critical worker' children, schools are in the incredibly difficult position of trying to work out who they can make an offer of an on-site school place to. Unfortunately, this will mean that not all 'critical workers' or parents of 'vulnerable children' will be offered a place.



I can't get a place for my child in school despite being a key worker. Am I entitled to be furloughed?

No, unfortunately employees do not have a right to be furloughed. It is up to employers to decide whether to place an employee on furlough or not. You might want to speak to your manager to find out whether this is an option in your workplace but you cannot insist upon it.

What can I do if I can't send my child to school/college?

Not all Usdaw members will want to or be able to send their child to school or college. This may be because they are not classed as a 'critical worker'. It may also be because their child has a health condition that means they fall into the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) and high risk Clinically Vulnerable (CV) category, and they have been advised to stay at home.

There may be other circumstances where parents do not feel able to send a child to school or college even where they do not fall into either of these categories. Young people with anxiety conditions and behavioural difficulties may be unable to deal with being in school right now in an environment which is very different from normal and where daily and familiar routines have been lost.

Talk to your employer

In these circumstances working parents should talk to their manager and in many companies the union has agreed how working parents will be supported during lockdown.

Speak to your Usdaw Rep

If you need help raising this issue with your manager, talk to an Usdaw rep first. Contact details of the Usdaw rep can be found on the Usdaw noticeboard. Alternatively,

you can ring your local Usdaw office. Their contact details can be found at www.usdaw.org.uk/Contact-Us/Usdaw-Offices

Support Bubble

You may also want to think about forming a childcare or extended household bubble to help. The rules differ depending on where you live in the UK. www.usdaw.org.uk/Help-Advice/Coronavirus-Update/Help-for-Working-Parents

FURTHER INFORMATION

Links to who is classed as a critical worker can be found below:

- England, Wales and Northern Ireland:
www.gov.uk
- Scotland:
www.gov.scot



LET'S START TALKING ABOUT PENSIONS

Usdaw believes that all members have the right to a decent standard of living in retirement. For this, a fair pensions system where both state and company pensions play a part is needed.

To achieve good workplace pensions Usdaw needs activists who understand how pensions work so that the union can get pensions onto the bargaining agenda and encourage other members to take advantage of their employer's scheme.

Usdaw's aim is to encourage more reps and members to start talking about pensions. A better understanding of pensions means they can start to make plans for the

future and their retirements.

The more Usdaw members talk about this important issue, the better they will understand what pensions are about.

There are some common misconceptions about pensions and that's why the union needs its reps to help engage with members and dismiss these myths.

Lots of people are turned off by pensions because they seem so complicated. Many believe pensions are something to think about tomorrow and not today and some members say they simply cannot afford to pay into a pension scheme.

The Pension Awareness Campaign remains one of Usdaw's core

campaigns simply because pensions affect each and every one of us. Everyone needs an income when they stop working and retire, so the more people understand about this the better it will be when they come to make a decision about their retirement.

Usdaw wants to encourage as many reps as possible to consider carrying out a campaign in their workplace. Don't worry if you have not been involved in a campaign before because Usdaw can help. The new Rep's Pension Toolkit has recently been updated and contains a Rep's Briefing which provides a step-by-step guide to running a campaign. The Rep's Briefing will



help you to:

- Fully understand how Usdaw's pension section can support reps.
- Find out more about your employer's pension scheme.
- Carry out surveys in your workplace to help find out about people's attitudes to pensions.
- Direct members to the Usdaw pension section on more complex issues.
- Help colleagues to find out how much their state pension will be.
- Encourage members to sign up to Usdaw's online pension home study course.
- Stop colleagues from being scammed.
- Direct members to Usdaw's

chosen advisers should anyone need independent financial advice.

- Refresh your union noticeboard on a regular basis.

Ushaw can supply reps with posters to advertise the campaign and advise on how to approach your employer to request information about your own workplace pension scheme.

There are also specific fact sheets for some company schemes which reps can request ahead of the event or you can download directly from the Usdaw website.

www.usdaw.org.uk/Help-Advice/Pensions

If reps need ideas on how to "break the ice" with colleagues and potential new members there are surveys they can hand out.

The union also has a selection of multiple choice quizzes and even a pension crossword puzzle to make things more relaxed and fun.

There are also a number of pension guides, leaflets on specific issues like salary sacrifice, what happens when you leave a scheme and maternity rights.

Some reps have understandably not been in a position to hold a campaign in the traditional sense lately because of the impact of Covid-19 and social distancing so Usdaw has been considering other ways in which the union can support them.

If it helps, Usdaw can provide reps with a supply of the new environmentally-friendly paper carrier bags so reps can bundle up pension guides and merchandise for colleagues to take away, or if reps are responsible for a number of stores then they can drop these pension packs off.

Some reps have been refreshing their union noticeboards on a more regular basis throughout the pandemic and have featured Usdaw's different campaigns over the course of the year. Usdaw's refreshed scammers posters and leaflets would be ideal for this.

FURTHER INFORMATION

USDRAW WEBSITE

Throughout Covid-19 Usdaw has been developing the pensions information on the Usdaw website to keep up-to-date on how the coronavirus pandemic is affecting members' savings and other topical issues.

www.usdaw.org.uk/pensions

PENSIONS HOME STUDY

The Pension website also has links to the Pension Home Study course which is an online course. The course consists of four short separate modules which individuals can pick and choose depending on what they are interested in.

www.usdaw.org.uk/PensionsHomeStudy

SOCIAL MEDIA

If reps are on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter they can add links from the pensions section on the Usdaw website on topics that might interest their colleagues.

PENSIONS AWARENESS

The Pensions Awareness Campaign aims to stop members feeling intimidated by the subject of pensions and to understand the importance of saving for their retirement.

If reps need help to run a campaign then they can contact Usdaw's pensions section.

USDRAW MAGAZINES

If reps have suggestions for future articles then please contact Usdaw's pensions section.

PENSIONS SECTION

Contact number: 0161 224 2804
pensions@usdaw.org.uk



ENSURING THE SAFETY OF PREGNANT WORKERS

For decades employers have been under clear legal duties to protect pregnant women and new mothers from any work related risks. As the coronavirus pandemic continues it is more important than ever that pregnant women understand their health and safety rights at work and are able to exercise them.

The steps an employer must take to ensure the health and safety of pregnant women and new mothers at work are clearly set out in the law and are outlined below.

There has also recently been a significant new development that strengthens protection for women who are in week 28 or beyond of their pregnancy and women at any stage of their pregnancy who have certain underlying health conditions.

The rights outlined in this article apply to all pregnant women from day one of their employment regardless of how many hours they work, whether they are on a temporary or a permanent contract or whether they are directly

employed or work for an agency.

It is advisable for women to let their employer know of their pregnancy, in writing, as soon as she feels able to.

There are important new guidelines published by Government affecting two groups of pregnant women workers.

Guidance issued by Government in conjunction with the Health & Safety Executive, the Royal College of Midwives and the Royal Society of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians published on 23 December 2020 advised that pregnant women should not go into work until further notice, unless they can work from home, if:

- They are in week 28 or beyond of their pregnancy; or
- at any stage of pregnancy with an underlying health condition that puts them at a greater risk of severe illness from coronavirus (ie pregnant women who fall into the Extremely Clinically Vulnerable group).

This applies to all parts of the UK.

If a pregnant woman falls into one of the two groups above and cannot work from home she has the right to remain at home on full pay for as long as coronavirus poses a risk. This is known as maternity suspension.

Reps can find the new guidance at: [www.gov.uk search advice for pregnant employees](https://www.gov.uk/search/advice/for-pregnant-employees).

For all other pregnant women employers must follow the steps outlined below:

STEP ONE

All employers should have done a general risk assessment to identify any risks that might affect women who become pregnant.

When a woman tells her employer that she is pregnant in writing they should do a specific risk assessment for her. This is called an individual risk assessment. It may be necessary to review the individual risk assessment as the woman's pregnancy develops or as circumstances in the workplace change and each time Government



and public health advice about the coronavirus situation is updated.

The right to an individual risk assessment applies to all pregnant women, regardless of their employment status or what stage of pregnancy they are in, once she has informed her employer of her pregnancy in writing.

It doesn't have to be a letter, an email is fine.

The risk assessment should take into account the risks posed by:

- Her job duties and the workplace.

See Usdaw's leaflet *Pregnancy Risk Assessments* for more information about common workplace hazards: www.usdaw.org.uk/342

- Any pre-existing health conditions she might have and any previous complications she may have had during pregnancy.

- Her journey to and from work.

- How far it is possible to maintain two-metre social distance and minimise social contact.

Where a risk is identified, including the risk of exposure to coronavirus, employers must take reasonable

action such as altering working conditions or hours of work if this will avoid exposure to the risk or reduce it to an 'acceptable' level.

STEP TWO

If it is not reasonable to alter working conditions or hours of work, or if it would not avoid the risk (ie the risk of exposure to coronavirus) she is entitled to be offered suitable alternative work. It must be both suitable and appropriate for her to do in the circumstances and it must be on similar terms and conditions. Any alternative role must take into account her use of public transport and social distancing guidance on minimising social contact and maintaining a distance of two metres.

STEP THREE

If a suitable, and safe, alternative role can't be found then the employer is required to suspend her from work on full pay for as long as necessary to avoid the risk. This provision is set out in the

Employment Rights Act 1996. Three important things to remember:

- Women who are in week 28 of their pregnancy, or at any stage of their pregnancy and have a health condition that places them in the clinically extremely vulnerable group and who cannot work from home, should be placed on maternity suspension (see above) on full pay.

- Women are entitled to an individual pregnancy risk assessment once they have informed their employer in writing of their pregnancy. This risk assessment needs to take into account amongst other things risk of exposure to the coronavirus.

- Risks may change as pregnancy progresses or as the situation concerning the coronavirus changes. Women should be advised to speak to their manager, their rep or their full time official if they are concerned at any stage of their pregnancy about their or their baby's health or safety.

REPS AT THE READY... SUMMER SCHOOL IS BACK

Members and reps looking to boost their confidence, network with other activists and learn more about the union are invited to apply for Summer School 2021

Usdaw's First and Second Series Summer Schools will take place this year in September. Applications are now being received for the popular residential training courses. The schools will be organised in line with the Government's coronavirus guidelines at the time of the event and the union will ensure all necessary precautions are taken.

What is Summer School?

Summer School 1 is a six-day residential training course that looks at the role and function of trade unions, organising in the workplace, presentation skills and equality. The week is run in a supportive friendly and informal manner and reps work in small groups and liaise closely with their tutor.

Summer School 2 is also a six-day residential course and is open to more experienced reps who have already attended Summer School 1. Reps choose one of four subjects from; politics and organising, women and organising, trade unions and organising and health and safety and organising.

During both Summer Schools there is the opportunity to take part in some campaigning on the streets of a local town.

When and where does it take place?

Summer School takes place every year in September. This year, Summer School 1 is taking place from 5-10 September and Summer

School 2 from 19-24 September. All classes, activities, accommodation and meals are at Wortley Hall, an 18th century workers' stately home set in 26 acres of gardens and woodlands in Yorkshire. Have a look at www.wortleyhall.org.uk

Who can apply?

Summer School 1 is open to all members, but priority is given to those who have undertaken training, are keen to play a more active part in the union or who can demonstrate a degree of commitment to the union.

Summer School 2 is intended for experienced and active members who play a leading role in union activities at their branch and workplace.

Summer School 2 is open only to members who have attended Summer School 1, or Summer School 2 in 2017 or earlier. Members who attended Summer School 2 in 2018 or 2019 are ineligible to attend Summer School 2 this year.

What does it cost?

Board and accommodation, travelling fares and appropriate allowances for members successfully granted a place at Summer School will be paid for by the union. Most employers will also provide paid release.

How do I apply?

The executive council has authorised each branch to nominate up to two members for each Summer School. Application forms

are sent to branches in early January and can also be requested from the education department by calling 0161 224 2804.

Application forms must be signed by yourself, your branch and received by your divisional officer no later than Thursday 25 March.

Nominations will be presented to the executive council in June. Applicants who have been awarded a place will be informed shortly after. There is also a reserve list and further places are offered to members if vacancies arise.

Summer School students campaigning in 2019



FIRST SERIES SUMMER SCHOOL IN FOCUS

Usdaw's head of education and training Claire Simpson told *Network* more about the Summer School 1.

"The main purpose of the week is for students to get an understanding of the organising agenda and to give them more knowledge of what the union does, what it can do, and how activists can develop their participation further," said Claire.

"We focus on communication skills in particular, how to talk to people, preparation, how to conduct a meeting and reps practise speaking in front of their group. We also look at how to make the most of the Annual Delegate Meeting (ADM), its procedures, how to write a proposition, speech writing and public speaking. "Experience isn't essential because everyone brings something to the table, we all have life experiences and we can all learn from each other."

A student's perspective

Network spoke to Graham Menzies and Monica Barnett, who both graduated from Summer School 1 in 2019.

Graham Menzies

"Summer School was a great experience and I would highly recommend it to anyone thinking about applying.

"The tutors were all excellent. I've previously completed Academy1 but even so I still learned a lot.

"Being away from home for a week was hard to begin

with but everyone there was friendly and a lot of fun to be around, I think I have definitely made friends for life! The fact that it was a residential course helped us all to interact with each other and have new experiences. The location helped too as there wasn't much phone signal so social interaction was key and it helped everyone to get to know each other. The night classes were very good too and doing a large street campaign for Save Our Shops in Barnsley was amazing to see and be a part of!"

Monica Barnett

"We were looked after from the minute we stepped off the train. Transport was provided for us and we were made to feel very welcome when we arrived. Everything was put in place to assist us.

"The course was quite intense and we had homework to do every night, but we all worked as part of a group and helped each other. There was lots of comradery, laughter and sometimes tears of frustration because we all wanted to do well.

I am so very glad that I took part and I'm looking forward to doing Summer School 2 when I get the chance. Thank you Usdaw for the opportunity to participate. I loved every moment."

For more information visit:

www.usdaw.org.uk/summerschool



REPS RAISE THEIR SUPPORT AS PANDEMIC CONTINUES

When most of his rep colleagues were forced to shield back in March last year, delivery driver Terry knew the only option to protect his members was to step up

Like most reps across the country, Usdaw activist Terry Monksfield and the team at the Tesco customer fulfilment centre in Enfield have had a very busy and challenging 12 months.

At the height of the pandemic, the team was severely impacted when a lot of the reps had to shield. As a result, it was all hands on deck for the remaining reps on site. Delivery driver Terry stepped into the role of health and safety rep, alongside his

normal roles as rep and learning rep, to help look after the wellbeing of the 1,200 staff.

“We’ve usually got about 12 health and safety reps but over the last year there’s only been about five that have remained active,” said Terry who has worked at the site since 2015. “It’s definitely been a learning curve. Deliveries have tripled, there’s been a big turnover of staff and lots of new starters. Colleagues are very worried about

Covid-19 – getting ill, the impact on their jobs, their caring and parental responsibilities and mental wellbeing – so we’ve needed to do what we can to ensure they’re safe at work and supported in their home lives.

Health and safety

“In the warehouse one-way systems and hand sanitiser stations have been implemented and colleagues are encouraged to wash their hands frequently. Managing social distancing and mandatory face masks have been the main challenges. Everyone knows the rules but you still see people not wearing face masks or wearing them incorrectly. It’s mainly about encouraging management to take a firmer stance.

“For the delivery drivers the rules are straightforward, deliver it to the door and step two metres back. You never have to go into anyone’s house and if someone lives in a block of flats you can just deliver it to the main door of the building. Drivers are potentially at a bigger risk doing their jobs, it’s important they minimise the risk for themselves and the customers.

Recruitment

“The increase in demand for home deliveries during the pandemic has resulted in Tesco recruiting a lot of new staff. As Enfield is such a big warehouse it’s often used for the training and inductions of new starters for other Tesco stores. So as you can imagine we’ve had a lot of



new staff through the building which has presented an ideal opportunity for recruitment.

“My presence on site has definitely increased, the staff are getting to know me better. They are continuing to see a union presence which is what they need right now.

Lifelong learning

“Sadly lifelong learning has taken a bit of a back seat during the pandemic and unfortunately online learning isn't a convenient option for members at our depot. We have a lot of staff who are working two, even three jobs. Particularly the pickers who are under constant pressure. They're working long hours and rushing from one job to another. A lot of them don't have many qualifications and some don't even know how to use a computer.

“Before the pandemic I was visiting other stores as a mobile union learning rep and helping them to get learning opportunities off the ground and that was all going really well.

“When the reps are back up to full capacity, lifelong learning will be my priority again.

Teamwork

“It's been important for the reps to do as much as they can the past year. It's not ideal but until Covid-19 passes, this is the world that we live in and we've got to play our part.

“The rep team that we've built up are very tight, I'd never be able to do this without them. We're now back in a national lockdown and a lot of the reps are shielding again. So it could continue to be difficult for a time.”

Membership for week ended 9 January 2021

South Wales & Western	46,473
Eastern	57,144
Midlands	53,930
North Eastern	58,011
Scottish	41,558
Southern	58,658
North West	86,436
Total	402,210

ORGANISING AND RECRUITMENT TIPS

Make contact with new starters

All workers should have the opportunity to join Usdaw so it's vital that reps ensure that conversations take place with new starters. Ask your manager to notify you of new starters and give you time to speak to them. Ensure distance is maintained. New starters can join online, and you can encourage colleagues to use their phone to register while talking to them.

Talk to existing staff

In these uncertain times, it's more important that we reach out and strengthen our position as a voice for the workforce. There may be people in your workplace who haven't been approached about joining the union. Even if they have been approached and decided not to join before, they might be open to joining now.

Go digital

Encourage members to visit the Usdaw website for regular updates, emails and specialist advice covering a variety of topics as well as links to local offices for further support. Many employers also have their own online media platform/ website where colleagues can make their voices heard by the company. This can be used to share information with members and raise concerns.

Organise for a safer workplace

In order to continue to operate safely, employers must protect workers with protocols aligning to Government guidelines. Employers should be engaging with reps and committees on local health and safety issues and risk assessments in the workplace. Usdaw has guidance on health and safety measures that should be in place.

Know your stuff on rights at work

While coronavirus has impacted the way we work, most things have not changed. Members are still entitled to the terms set out in their contract regarding pay and hours and days of work. Contracted hours can only be changed with mutual agreement. Other rights still apply such as rights to rest breaks, rights to parental leave and pay and reasonable adjustments for disabled workers.

Check in with each other

Supporting others can sometimes mean it's hard to find time for yourself. This is even more difficult when regular union meetings have been postponed or are held remotely. Check in with other reps you know for support, ask how they are doing. Swap organising ideas, share stories and keep each other updated of developments.

The union is here for you. Area organisers are still at work representing and advising members and supporting reps.

ORGANISING AND INFLUENCE

Knowledge, understanding and communication are important skills for reps in the workplace

The first person that Usdaw members should turn to when they have an issue at work is their rep, so members need to know who you are and how to contact you. An important part of your role is to support members by helping them take their concerns to the employer. However, just as important is your skill to help members sort out their issues collectively.

INDIVIDUAL OR COLLECTIVE?

Most issues in the workplace will be individual such as disciplinary cases, discrimination or sickness absence. However, sometimes issues can affect more than one person, such as a health and safety issue. A rep needs to recognise when individual issues are part of a larger pattern that can be dealt with through collective action.

If a member has an issue, try to find out if other members are affected. Ask the member who has raised the complaint if anyone else is involved. Talk to other reps in your workplace to see if workers have the same issue and ask your area organiser if similar cases have been dealt with before.

If it's a collective issue:

- Bring members together to discuss the issue and form a plan to tackle it.
- Get help from other reps or your area organiser if you are unsure.
- Make sure that the member who raised the complaint is involved in any action the union takes.
- Don't sort the issue out on your own. Make sure you and your

members sort out the issue with management together. This will help build the skills and confidence of your members.

- If it's a collective grievance it will need to follow the grievance procedure.

Union reps, along with health and safety reps and learning reps, can work as a team to find solutions to issues. For example, are there health and safety aspects that strengthen the grievance? Or is training a possible solution?

Group issues often present an opportunity to organise and recruit any non-members. The case will seem stronger to the employer if you have the majority of the workforce in the union.

KNOW YOUR AGREEMENT

As the Usdaw rep you need to know and understand your company/ Usdaw agreement. If you don't have a copy then speak to your area organiser. Most agreements will contain information relating to grievance and disciplinary procedures. Do you know who deals with the first stage of a grievance? How long they have to get back to you? Who does it go to after that? How many appeal stages does your grievance procedure have? Having a copy of the staff handbook/ agreement and knowing the policies is vital to you being an effective rep.

COMMUNICATION

Usdaw communicates with reps in a number of ways. Look out for information from the national officer



or through your division about what has been agreed with your company and make sure it is being followed in your workplace. Sign up for email alerts, check the Usdaw website and read *arena* and *Network* magazines to stay up to date. Use your Usdaw noticeboard or agree a space that can be used to help keep members informed.

TOP TIPS FOR REPRESENTING MEMBERS

- Speak to your area organiser about training and development. Remember that shadowing experienced reps can also be useful.
- Get a copy of the staff handbook/



agreement and familiarise yourself with the grievance and disciplinary procedure as well as the relevant policy.

- If you are unsure about any policy, procedure or law then you should contact your area organiser or the relevant department at Usdaw.
- Find out as much as you can. The more time you spend gathering information the more prepared you will be.
- Take notes at meetings, they may be used at a later date. Your area organiser will certainly want to see notes from disciplinary meetings as they may be used during the appeal meeting and at an Employment Tribunal. Ensure that

all personal data and information is kept and dealt with securely and confidentially.

- You have the right to speak in these meetings and put your member's case forward.
- You are entitled to adjourn the meeting if you need to consult with your member or an Usdaw official.
- Make sure the company follows the timescales outlined in their staff handbook or grievance/ disciplinary policies.
- Stay in touch. Always keep members informed about what is happening and what you intend to do next.
- Be realistic. Do your best but

remember never to promise more than you can reasonably expect to deliver.

- If a member is demoted or dismissed, you should contact the area organiser straight away for advice on the next steps.
- When you have achieved a good outcome it is important to publicise your successes (always be mindful of data protection and ask permission from the member first). This will raise the profile of the union and will assist in recruiting new members.

For more information on recruitment and organising visit: www.usdaw.org.uk/ reps

ENHANCING LIVES THROUGH LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Like many union learning reps across the country, Shirley Smith is devoted to bringing education and learning opportunities to her colleagues in the workplace

Union learning rep Shirley Smith is passionate about education and devotes her time to ensuring her colleagues at Tesco in Thirsk take up the many invaluable learning opportunities on offer through the company and Usdaw. More recently, Shirley has been using her knowledge and experience to support colleagues completing the Tesco apprenticeship scheme. Her selfless commitment and dedication was recognised when she was awarded Union Learning Rep of the Year 2020 at the Unionlearn annual conference held virtually in November.

"Education is a fantastic thing," said Shirley, who is also a rep and branch secretary. "In my time at Tesco I've met a lot of staff who couldn't read or write. I wanted them to have the opportunity to learn basic English skills and that motivated me to become a rep and try and do something to help them.

"I was amazed at the diversity of the courses we were able to deliver. As well as basic English, maths and computer skills, we also had mental health awareness courses and even found a course on discrimination in religion.

"We've had about 60 learners so far out of 200-plus staff so that's a real achievement. Most of the courses are delivered through online and distance learning, which has been a real bonus this year."

SUPPORTING APPRENTICES

In her role as union learning rep, Shirley promotes the Tesco apprenticeship scheme and

supports colleagues who choose to undertake it. As a trainer and assessor for the old apprenticeship scheme in her previous role as manager, Shirley has seen first-hand the positive effect of the scheme on her colleagues' lives. "It gives people so much more confidence and for some you see a huge transformation," said Shirley. "There was one member who passed his apprenticeship in butchery and he now manages his own shop. Another member left school with no qualifications, she's now achieved her level 2 in Maths and English and completed a computer course."

Under the old apprenticeship scheme students could choose to study different subjects such as basic retail and specialist subjects like butchery, but in the past few years the scheme has been streamlined into a standard customer service course. The apprenticeship can take up to a year to complete and is open to all Tesco staff that work over 20 hours. If staff don't have basic maths and English qualifications then there's a requirement to achieve those before they begin. The apprenticeships are completed through distance learning and students are supported by a trainer who is in regular contact.

"My role is to promote the scheme and to encourage staff to take part," said Shirley. "I speak to all the staff about the benefits of the scheme and how it works. Once I've signed someone up, I do the Usdaw skills check to see their level of maths and English, and then I'll support them in whatever way I can while they

complete the course. I'll have one-to-one meetings with them and help them with their coursework, I'm like mother hen, always there to see how they're getting on.

"This year I actually decided to complete the scheme myself to get an even better idea of what's involved. Colleagues were coming to me and asking technical questions that I couldn't answer, so next year I'll be in a better position to help them. It's fabulous."

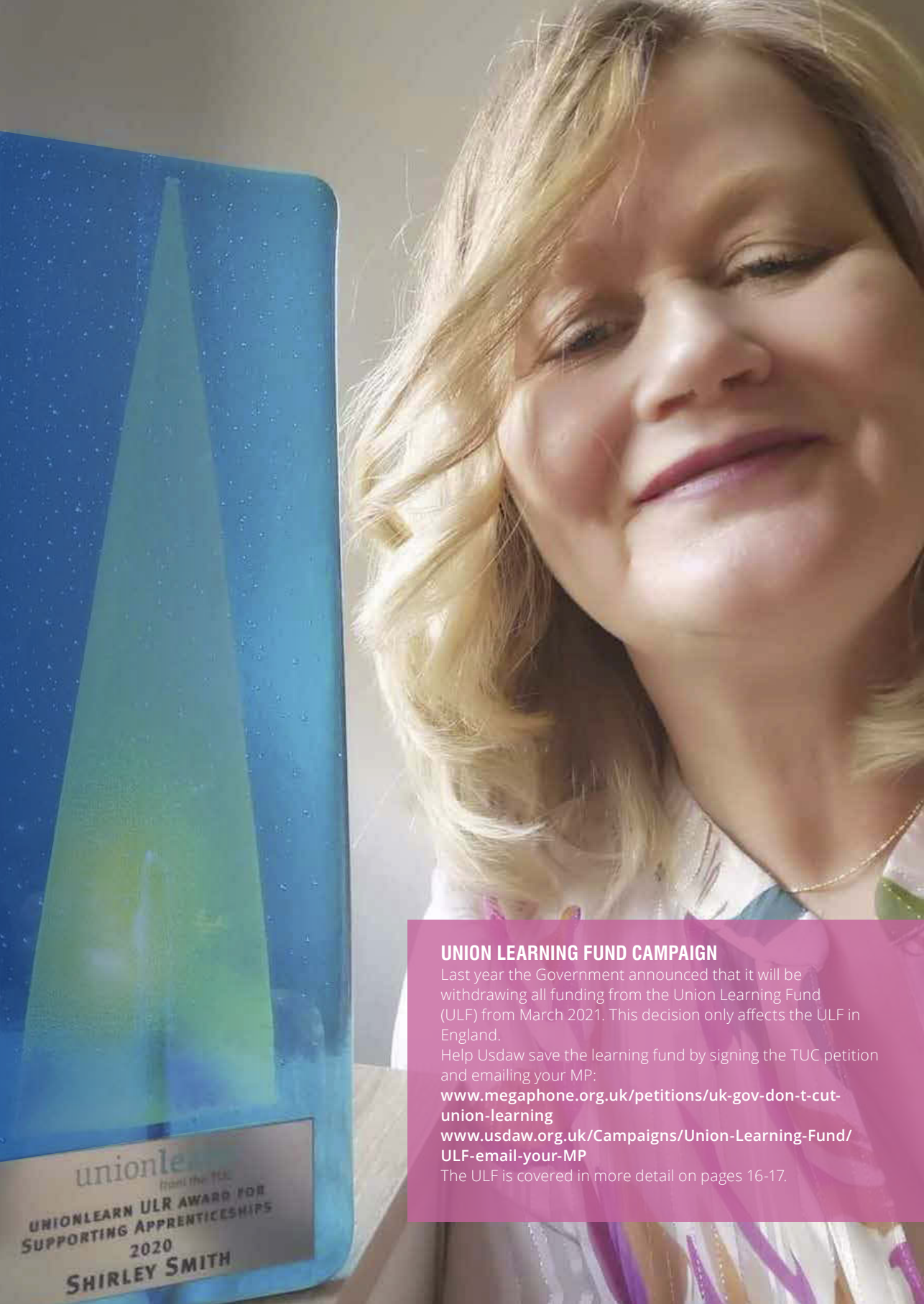
LEARNING REP OF THE YEAR

"My project worker Martyn Warwick phoned to tell me that I had won the award a week before it was announced. Last year he asked me to write down how I was making a success of the apprenticeship scheme so that reps in other stores could read about it and hopefully do the same. What I didn't realise is that they also submitted the write-up for the award! I was really shocked to win. I had a smile on my face all week but couldn't tell anyone. I was presented the award via Zoom because of Covid-19.

"I do believe that the role of the ULR is vital in the apprenticeship scheme. It's about having someone there to provide encouragement and support.

"My focus now is to carry on encouraging staff to apply for the apprenticeship and take up the many other learning opportunities on offer through the union too.

"I have always believed that knowledge is a wonderful thing and I'm honoured to help provide that opportunity to others."



UNION LEARNING FUND CAMPAIGN

Last year the Government announced that it will be withdrawing all funding from the Union Learning Fund (ULF) from March 2021. This decision only affects the ULF in England.

Help Usdaw save the learning fund by signing the TUC petition and emailing your MP:

www.megaphone.org.uk/petitions/uk-gov-don-t-cut-union-learning

www.usdaw.org.uk/Campaigns/Union-Learning-Fund/ULF-email-your-MP

The ULF is covered in more detail on pages 16-17.

unionleARN
from the TUC
UNIONLEARN ULR AWARD FOR
SUPPORTING APPRENTICESHIPS
2020
SHIRLEY SMITH

WILL VACCINATIONS AND MASS TESTING HELP?



Network guides health and safety reps through the issue of vaccinations, mass testing and Usdaw calling on the Government to prioritise frontline workers

In recent weeks three vaccines have been approved for use in the UK and the Government is rolling out a mass vaccination programme as fast as it can. Recently the Government also announced the intention to launch mass testing for Covid-19 using the lateral flow test kits.

Members may approach reps to get their/Usdaw's view on the rollout of vaccinations and frontline workers.

VACCINES

The vaccines are good news. The field trials for the vaccines that have been approved so far all showed very positive protection against the virus and no evidence of serious side effects.

Some people have raised concerns about the speed with

which they have been approved and say they are 'untested'. But this is not true. The technique for developing the Oxford virus has been used before. The fact that Covid-19 is caused by a coronavirus similar to the ones that caused the earlier SARS and MERS outbreaks means that research on the spike proteins that are a key part of the coronavirus is well established. Even the development of the mRNA Pfizer vaccine was based on work that had started several years ago. What was radical was the way in which resources were rapidly directed to developing vaccines and the international cooperation which shortened the development time.

The vaccines have been given to tens of thousands of volunteers during trials with no adverse effects and they are known to be effective

at giving immunity and limiting the severity of symptoms.

However, even if the vaccine programme is carried out as quickly as possible it will take several months to complete.

We also won't know how effective vaccination is at preventing the transmission of the virus. Nor will we know how long immunity will last and whether we will need future booster injections.

FRONTLINE WORKERS

As sufficient supplies of the vaccines become available the Government will need to decide on the priority groups that need to be treated.

Workers who provide essential services and are known to be at high risk of exposure to the virus need to be a priority so they can be protected and continue to provide

for the community. Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis has written to all the UK Governments calling for retail and food distribution workers to be treated as essential workers.

"Retail staff are working with the public every day and are not only suffering increased abuse but are also deeply worried about catching Covid-19," said Paddy. "That must be taken into account by the Government when assessing risk levels and priority for vaccines and testing.

"We are calling on the Government to ensure that retail workers and delivery drivers are given priority, because they provide the essential service of keeping the nation fed. We are also looking for support from the Government, retail employers and the shopping public to help make food stores and deliveries as safe as possible for customers and staff alike."

In the meantime, it is vitally important that people stick to the rules. As the new more infectious variant of the virus has spread quite widely it is more important than ever that people maintain social distancing, wear face coverings in public spaces and self-isolate if they have symptoms or are in close contact with someone who is infectious. Increased evidence on the significance of airborne transmission of the virus also means that it is important that as many people as possible do wear face coverings to trap the droplets they breathe out. In addition to shops and public transport it will help if face

coverings are worn in all crowded public areas and in workplaces where workers have to mix.

That is why Usdaw is calling for all retailers to bring back the strict

controls that were introduced in the first outbreak and which may have been relaxed in too many areas since then.

MASS TESTING

The Government's plan is to roll out mass testing using the lateral flow test kit which gives results in 20 to 30 minutes to areas of high infection and to key industries. The benefit of more widespread testing is that the test will detect people who may have little or no symptoms but who are infectious. Around a third of people who have the virus have no symptoms at all.

However, there are a number of concerns about widespread testing.

A test only gives a snapshot to show that you may be infectious at the time of the test. If you test negative, you could still be nursing an infection that may show up a few days late. In key industries that may mean regular testing every few days.

More worryingly, experience of mass testing in Liverpool suggests it may miss around a half to a third of people who are positive for Covid. That means, even if you do test negative, you must not assume you are Covid-free. You still need to take all the other precautions such as social distancing, wearing face coverings, avoiding close contact with others.

And identifying people who are Covid-positive only works if they can self-isolate for at least 10 days and any contacts are traced and also self-isolate. Self-isolation means staying at home. It is difficult for many people and requires proper financial support.

For all these reasons many experts argue that mass testing may have limited impact and certainly will not be the magic answer that allows people to return to 'normal'. If it's introduced into workplaces such as shops, distribution centres and food manufacturing, there will need to be a clear understanding of the risk of false negative results. It needs to be seen as an addition to existing controls and not a substitute and the employer needs to guarantee pay so that workers who do test positive can afford to self-isolate.



USDW ASSISTS COVID RESEARCH

Workers in essential services such as retail, distribution and food manufacturing have played a vital role in the pandemic. They have faced risks of workplace infection whether from contact with the public or because of prolonged and regular close contact with fellow workers in high-risk environments.

Several large research projects are now being set up to look at these sectors and understand better the risks that workers faced and the ways in which they might be controlled. Usdaw is co-operating with several of these research projects.

CONTACT

Health and safety officer

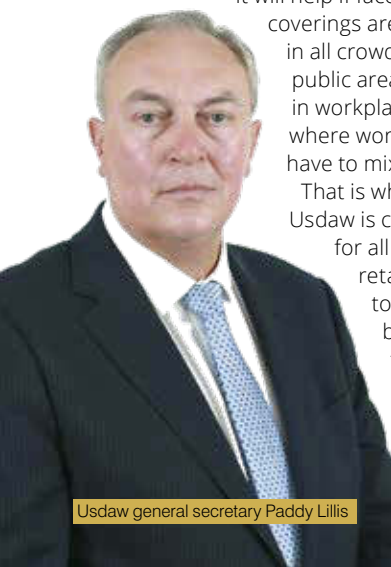
Doug Russell
0161 249 2441

Health and safety assistant

Tony Whelan
0161 249 2474

General health and safety enquiries email:

healthandsafety@usdaw.org.uk



Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis

CALL FOR COVID RULES UPDATE

The TUC has called on the Government to urgently update workplace safety rules.

They point out that the scientific view on how the virus spreads has changed since the rules were set in March 2020.

The TUC is calling on the Government to:

■ Reduce the number of people permitted in a space at any one time.

■ Require the wearing of face coverings in all indoor workplaces, except for those workers who are exempt.

■ Return to the 'gold standard' of two-metre social distancing wherever possible.

■ Require any work activity that can be completed safely outside to be conducted outside.

■ Set a safety threshold for ventilation of indoor workplaces with outside air.

■ Update guidance on workplace face coverings to the WHO standard of three protective layers.

■ Expand the number of jobs where workers should use FFP3 filter face masks.

www.tuc.org.uk/news/essential-workers-face-major-covid-19-risk-because-outdated-safety-rules

HEALTH RISK TO PROFESSIONAL DRIVERS

URBAN DRIVERS EXPOSED TO DIESEL ENGINE EXHAUST FUMES

New research from the Institution for Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) shows that professional drivers in urban locations can be exposed to high levels of diesel engine exhaust fumes.

The researchers from Imperial and Kings Colleges in London measured exposure to black carbon fumes from diesel exhaust in the cabs of 188 vehicles including taxis, buses, emergency vehicles and delivery vans. They found that fume exposure was nearly four times higher for drivers at work. Drivers who spend more time driving, such as taxi drivers, experienced higher exposures than drivers who drive intermittently.

Keeping windows closed and using the recirculating ventilation setting where possible reduced exposure.

Routes that avoided congested traffic and peak periods were also better. The DeMiSt survey is available at:

<https://iosh.com>

The reason for concern about exposure to diesel engine exhaust fumes is that they can cause serious health effects including cancer. As a result of the research IOSH have updated their advice in their campaign against occupational cancer called No Time To Lose.

The campaign resources on diesel engine exhaust explain the cancer risk and give guidance to employers and to drivers on ways to reduce exposure. IOSH No Time to Lose updated diesel pack can be found here:

www.notimetolose.org.uk/free-resources/diesel-pack-taster/

FANCY A LUNGFUL OF THIS?



REMEMBER THAT DIESEL FUMES CAN BE A KILLER.

- Use your local exhaust ventilation when you've got a diesel engine running
- Remember to warm up cold engines in a space with good ventilation – fumes are worse from a cold engine
- If the ventilation kit you're using is broken or faulty – report it.

If you breathe in poor quality diesel fumes, you could get lung cancer or bladder cancer. Thousands die every year from cancer caused by diesel fumes at work. Don't let diesel fumes be your death sentence.

NEW CO-OP MANIFESTO FOR NIGHT SHIFT WORKERS

1 IN 8
WORKERS WORK
AT NIGHT

54%
OF NIGHT SHIFT WORKERS
ARE KEY WORKERS

**£40
BILLION**
NEGATIVE IMPACT ON GDP
FROM LACK OF SLEEP
IN WORKFORCE

graphics courtesy of www.night-club.org/

LET'S TALK ABOUT NIGHT CLUB

The Co-op Group, working with the Wellcome Trust and Liminal Space, has launched a manifesto for night shift workers. It calls upon retailers and policy makers to address the deteriorating physical and mental health of the nation's growing army of night shift workers.

According to the Co-op, night shift workers are the forgotten or invisible workforce who are twice as likely to miss out on key family events.

One in three night shift workers gets less than five hours sleep a night compared to one in six daytime workers.

Figures show there are now seven million people working at night – 54 per cent of whom were identified as key workers at the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Co-op wants organisations to demonstrate a duty of care for night shift workers who are known to be at greater risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, cancer, gastrointestinal disorders, obesity and depression, all of which can be caused by chronic sleep disruption.

The manifesto follows an

award-winning sleep engagement programme called Night Club which the Co-op has delivered to its 8,000-strong logistics workforce.

The Night Club mobile unit was toured around the Co-op distribution centres. It brought together sleep researchers with workers during working time to raise awareness of the risks and to develop a healthier work experience.

The manifesto lays out the five 'Rs' which will help to address the wider health and social issues that are being created by the move towards a 24-hour society:

- Recognise and champion night workers as a coherent group.
- Respond to their needs and place night shift workers at the heart of any solution.
- Respect and understand that they face a specific set of challenges in a variety of working conditions.
- Research-led approach to implement evidence-based solutions.
- Raise their profile and mobilise a cross-industry response to mitigate these challenges.

Andy Perry, Co-op's Supply Chain and Logistics Director, said: "Sleep is something that unites us all – we all need it and we all know how terrible we can feel without enough of it. Yet while our round-the-clock culture is propped up by a growing number of people who work through the night, their contribution to society goes largely ignored.

"It is essential that we, as employers, do everything in our power to establish a recognised framework of best practice which places the interests of night shift workers at its heart and that policy is put in place to protect their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

"We are delighted to be launching this new manifesto and we hope that it forms the basis of a movement which will radically improve the lives of many people who are working in the UK night after night, year after year."

Find out more about the Night Club programme and download a copy of the Manifesto at:

www.the-liminal-space.com/all-projects/nightclub

MemberOffers

Some offers are temporarily unavailable due to the coronavirus pandemic but remind your members to keep checking the website for regular updates.

CARS & TRANSPORT

Car Hire
Car Leasing
Car Maintenance
Car Parking: Q-Park
Fiat
Startrescue
Vauxhall Cars

HEALTH & BEAUTY

Comfort Insoles
Gym Membership
My Active Discounts
Usdaw Health Plan
Usdaw Dental Plan
Vision Express

SHOPPING

Apple
Charles Tyrwhitt
Crown Decorating Centres
Discount Card
Domestic Appliances
Gift Card Savings
Magazine Subscriptions
T.M. Lewin
Usdaw Prepaid Cashback Card
UsdawRewards Cashback
Virgin Wines

INSURANCE

Accident Protection Cover
Car/Home/Travel Insurance
Life Insurance
Pet Insurance
50+ Personal Accident Cover
Free £5,000 Accidental
Death Cover

LEISURE & ENTERTAINMENT

Beer52
Cinema at home: Chili.com
Cinema at home: Rakuten TV
Cinema Tickets
Discount Card
English Heritage
Go Ape
Golf Membership
Magazine App: Readly
Magazine Subscriptions
National Trust Gift Cards
Online Ticket Store
SAA Art Membership
Theme Parks & Attractions
Virgin Experience Days



Don't forget about the Union's free legal services such as free will writing and Legal Plus.

www.usdaw.org.uk/legal

MONEY & FINANCE

Debt Advice
Financial Advice
Mortgage Advice
Pensions Advice
Pensions Annuity Service
Shepherds Friendly Savings
The Co-op Credit Union

HOLIDAYS

Airport Parking, Lounges & Hotels
Away Resorts
Cottage Breaks
DFDS Ferry Crossing
James Villa Holidays
Lost Luggage Protection
Parkdean Resorts
Pontins
Wightlink Ferries

MISCELLANEOUS

Funeral Planning
Gas and Electric
Mobile Phones
TOTUM Pro Card
International Student ID

COMING SOON...

Gadget Insurance

www.usdaw.org.uk/offers*

*Terms and Conditions for individual offers on the website.

Find out more
www.usdaw.org.uk/offers*

★ NEW YEAR HIGHLIGHTS ★ NEW YEAR HIGHLIGHTS ★



Grants for parents & carers working for clothing, homeware or fabric companies

The Fashion & Textile Children's Trust (FTCT) gives financial grants to parents and carers who work in the UK fashion and textile industry. Grants can ease the financial strain of redundancy, furlough or reduced working hours for parents, by covering the cost of essential items for children in the family. To find out more go to: www.usdaw.org.uk/offers*

Money worries?

StepChange offer free, confidential debt help and solutions. They have recently launched a Covid Payment Plan which is a simple way to pay back money you owe towards your credit commitments based on what you can afford. To find out more go to:

www.stepchange.org/start and answer a few quick questions to find out how to get the help you need.



TURN2US
FIGHTING UK POVERTY

Access to help

Turn2us is a national charity that helps people in financial hardship to gain access to welfare benefits, charitable grants and support services. Their online Benefits Calculator is designed to help people who are struggling financially find out what welfare benefits, tax credits and other support they may be entitled to based on their situation. Their website also provides a Grants Search, which allows people to look through 3,000 charitable funds across the country to find out if they might be eligible for support. To find out more go to: www.usdaw.org.uk/offers*

The Co-op Credit Union - make your money your New Year's resolution

The Co-op Credit Union, Usdaw's credit union partner, is available to all Usdaw members for secure savings accounts with competitive dividends and affordable loans for any purpose from £50 to £15,000. The credit union is owned by its customers – serving you is what we do!

To find out more go to: www.usdaw.org.uk/offers*

Get your finances back on track



STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS

Network pays tribute to well-respected area organiser Bipin Pitrola who died from coronavirus in January and former pensions officer Alan Boot who died last year

OBITUARY BIPIN PITROLA

Usdaw was deeply saddened to hear the news that South Wales and Western area organiser Bipin Pitrola died from Covid-19 in January. He was 56.

Bipin joined the union's staff as an area organiser at the Bristol Office in 1998. In 1999 he was appointed Eastern deputy divisional officer based at Enfield where he stayed for six years until he transferred back to the position of area organiser in 2005 at the Cardiff office.

Prior to joining the staff, Bipin had been a union member for 13 years and an activist for six while he worked as a Hygiene Controller for Safeway in Cardiff. He was an active member of the union's Race Relations Committee and was also the Labour party ethnic minority officer for his local constituency.

Bipin will be missed by his many friends, reps and colleagues throughout Usdaw. Members were always his top priority with his thoughtful and supportive approach, coupled with a strong determination for fairness.

In his 22 years as an organiser

his passion and leadership for equalities stands out including the pivotal role he played in ensuring the divisional equalities forum was such a huge success. His drive to help others extended beyond Usdaw where he volunteered for St Johns Ambulance and supported many charities through his involvement with the Army Reserves and local cadets. He was also a proud member of the Beadles.

South Wales and Western divisional officer Nick Ireland paid this tribute: "Losing Bipin to this cruel virus has been shocking and very sad for everyone who had the privilege of knowing and working with him. He will be missed by all our staff, but most of all, his reps, who he enjoyed mentoring, coaching and supporting over his time here in Cardiff. He was part of the Usdaw family and we will all miss him."

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis also paid tribute. "It is a tragedy that Bipin, like so many others, has lost his life to this devastating pandemic.

"Bipin made a huge impression



on so many people both within Usdaw and the wider community and his loss will be felt by many. I know he took a great deal of satisfaction in his work for the union and seeing the reps in his division progress. He was a great servant and ambassador for Usdaw, popular with his colleagues and an inspiration to the division's activists.

"Our deepest condolences go out to his family and the many friends he made over the years. He will be sadly and deeply missed."

OBITUARY ALAN BOOT

Former Usdaw pensions officer Alan Boot died in November last year. He was 82.

Alan started work at Central Office in the Benefits and Audit department in 1954 when he was just 16 years old. He then joined the legal department in 1968 where he handled the union's first unfair dismissal case in 1972. He also handled the first equal pay claim and the first sex discrimination case.

Alan was promoted to pensions officer in 1984, where he remained until his retirement in 1999, amalgamating an impressive 44 years of service.

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis paid tribute. "Alan was a very hardworking, committed and supportive member of staff who made a lasting mark on the union. He was highly valued by colleagues and members alike. Our condolences go out to Alan's family and friends at this very sad time."





ONLINE COURSES FOR NEW LEARNING REPS

Usdaw has developed a quick and convenient way for union learning reps to begin their training

Usdaw is committed to supporting and developing its reps, and the union knows it's particularly important to provide new reps with all the training they need to feel confident and stay in the role for longer.

To ensure all new learning reps can complete their development process, the union's education department has produced three new online courses.

Following the same format as the paper handbooks, the courses should be completed before reps

begin their introductory training course.

The courses are easy to follow, only take 20-30 minutes to complete and can be taken on a mobile phone, tablet or PC. These courses are a mandatory part of the learning rep development process but don't worry if you have any issues completing them – your area organiser will be happy to help.

Sign up for *ULR Part 1: Lifelong Learning and Usdaw* here www.usdaw.org.uk/ULRHB1

NEW IN!

Leaflets, factsheets, posters and postcards

Member Offers (Leaflet 398)

Pensions – How much has been lost to pension scammers?
(Leaflet 452 and factsheet)

Save the Union Learning Fund
(Poster and postcard)

Online Courses

ABCs of ICT – IT bitesize course
www.usdaw.org.uk/ABCsofIT

Health and Safety during Covid-19
www.usdaw.org.uk/Covid19course

Mind your Head – Bitesize Mental Health course
www.usdaw.org.uk/mindyourhead

CV Writing – IT bitesize course
www.usdaw.org.uk/cvwriting

Helping With Homework – new bitesize maths course
www.usdaw.org.uk/mathshomework

Quirks of the English Language – English bitesize course
www.usdaw.org.uk/quirksofenglish

Vulnerable Workers Home Study
www.usdaw.org.uk/homestudy5

The Impact of Covid-19 on Domestic Violence
www.usdaw.org.uk/CovidandDV

ULR Part 1: Lifelong Learning & Usdaw
www.usdaw.org.uk/ULRHB1

ULR Part 2: The Role of the ULR
www.usdaw.org.uk/ULRHB2

ULR Part 3: Online Learning Gateway
www.usdaw.org.uk/ULRHB3

Health & Safety Reps' Handbook (P1)
www.usdaw.org.uk/HSReps1

Health & Safety Reps' Handbook (P2)
www.usdaw.org.uk/HSReps2

Health & Safety Reps' Handbook (P3)
www.usdaw.org.uk/HSReps3

Pensions Home Study
www.usdaw.org.uk/pensionshomestudy

For a complete list of Usdaw publications and to order visit:
dtp.usdaw.co.uk/PublicationsCatalogue

Twitter Takeover



The British Retail Consortium

Our CEO Helen Dickinson tells the @UsdawUnion and @coopuk Freedom From Fear Summit that we must see a change in the law to show that the abuse of retail colleagues will not be tolerated. #Respect20



UNI Global Union

We love global solidarity! UNI affiliates in over 20 countries show their support for retail workers in the UK as @UsdawUnion holds its National Respect for Shopworkers Week.



Email your thoughts and pictures to us at: network@usdaw.org.uk or tweet us at: @usdawunion



BBC Andy Gill

"They can destroy you. They can absolutely take your soul." Shopworker Pat from #Liverpool on the effect of abusive customers during the #coronavirus pandemic. @UsdawUnion wants tougher laws on ppl who attack or abuse retail workers. @BBCNWT



Kerry McCarthy MP

Abuse and violence against shopworkers is on the rise, and it's shocking to hear some Bristol stores are hotspots. Staff shouldn't be scared to go to work in our local shops. More than happy to join @coopuk @UsdawUnion in backing @AlexNorrisNN's Bill - Govt needs to do so too!



Sadiq Khan

Shopworkers are doing a fantastic job for our communities in such challenging circumstances. It is vitally important that they are safe at work. Proud to support Respect for Shopworkers Week. @UsdawUnion @SophieKLinden #FreedomFromFear #Respect20

100,000 100,000 100,000 100,000 100,000 100,000 100,000 100,000 100,000 100,000



Paddy Lillis

Absolutely brilliant! Such a fantastic result on a campaign that has clearly resonated with the public. The message is loud and clear, abuse is #NotPartOfTheJob! Thanks to all who have supported the petition. We now take the campaign to Parliament and the Govt. needs to listen. Immensely proud of our reps, activists and members who have worked hard to achieve this tremendous milestone. Retail workers, their friends, family and loved ones, are saying loud and clear that enough is enough, abuse should never be just a part of the job. petition.parliament.uk/petitions/328621



Keir Starmer

Shopworkers have worked throughout this pandemic to keep the country going. They should never be subjected to abuse for doing their job. Well done to @UsdawUnion for protecting their members.



Yvette Cooper MP

Appalling that we have seen reports of violence & abuse against shopworkers increasing this yr - no one shd feel unsafe at work. That's why @CommonsHomeAffs has launched a new inquiry.



Jack Dromey MP

Well done to @UsdawUnion! As a former Shadow Police Minister I saw first hand the devastating impact violence against retail workers can have. We must protect our vital key workers from abuse, threats and violence.

Lifelong Learning

Learning through the Usdaw Gateway



Usdaw's Learning Gateway can start you learning in whatever subject you are interested in.

- You could improve your English and Maths, develop your digital skills or learn a language.
- You can use the Gateway for personal and career development or just to learn for interest or fun.
- Online and distance learning means you can learn whenever and wherever you like.
- Many of the courses are free, or subsidised for Usdaw members.

How does it work?

To get started, go to the Learning Gateway and click on a subject you are interested in.

www.usdaw.org.uk/LearningGateway

You'll be taken to a list of learning sites with short descriptions of the courses on offer and whether there is a charge.

Find the course that's right for you and start your learning journey!

www.usdawlearn.org.uk

