

Respect for Shopworkers Week 13-19 November 2023

Reps' Briefing
Northern Ireland



Keep Your Cool

Usdaw's Freedom From Fear Campaign exists to tackle abuse and assaults against public facing workers. Each year during the run-up to the busy Christmas shopping period, the Union runs a Respect for Shopworkers Week. The purpose of this week is to clearly get the message across that abuse is not part of the job.

Retail workers across the country are faced with unacceptable levels of abuse, threats and violence. Our latest survey figures show that more than 7 out of 10 retail workers have been abused in the last 12 months. 49% of retail workers have been threatened with physical violence and 8% have been physically assaulted.

At the start of the pandemic, and at other points since, we know that a lack of stock and long queues have both become common flashpoints for abuse towards retail workers. It is likely that this will again be the case in the busy run up to Christmas and that's why it's so important that we get the **Keep Your Cool** message across to customers.

Across England, Scotland and Wales, Usdaw has successfully delivered increased legal protections for retail workers. Retail workers in Northern Ireland face abuse, threats and violence in much the same way as other Usdaw members. We need to ensure that politicians in Northern Ireland are aware of the need to protect retail workers. Key to that is ensuring that all incidents are reported, so the theme of this year's Respect Week is 'Report it. Sort it.'

Ensuring that all cases are reported will help send a clear message to colleagues, employers, politicians and the police of the scale of the issue and the need for further action to protect retail workers.

That's why it's so important to deliver a highly visible campaign. A high profile campaign will give retail workers the confidence to report all instances of abuse and also educate the public on the need to keep their cool.

We can only do this with your help. Please use the order form enclosed to order everything you need to be able to run the campaign in your workplace.

Thank you for supporting this important campaign. Through us all working together we can make this year's Respect for Shopworkers Week a huge success.

Stay safe,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Paddy Lillis'.

Paddy Lillis
General Secretary

How You Can Help

We are asking reps to run a one-day Keep Your Cool campaign in their store, any day between 13-19 November 2023.

The campaign can be anything from a campaign stall, to a few simple conversations with colleagues (please see below for more ideas). Whatever the format of your campaign, there are three simple actions we are focussing on to enable you to engage with staff in your store:

1. Ask members and non-members to fill in the Freedom From Fear survey:
www.usdaw.org.uk/fffsurvey
2. Talk to members and non-members about Usdaw's Freedom From Fear campaign. Encourage all staff in your store to report all instances of abuse, threats and violence and ensure they are dealt with under the new law.
3. Ask any non-members who engage with the campaign to join Usdaw!
www.usdaw.org.uk/join

About the Campaign

Ushaw has been running our Freedom From Fear Campaign since 2002. Unfortunately, as a result of cuts to police funding and delays in the criminal justice system, the trend in retail crime numbers is going the wrong way.

Ushaw's survey results have shown a troubling increase in violence and abuse against retail workers in recent years.

We know our members suffer appalling abuse and violence while at work, however the official retail crime figures don't always reflect the true picture. This is because not all retail crime is reported.

Report It. Sort It!

Unreported retail crime means that individuals do not get the justice they deserve following an incident. It also skews the picture of retail crime as a whole, meaning that workplaces may be allocated less security resources than they need, and it may affect how often a particular location is policed.



We need a Law to Protect Retail Workers

More reporting of retail crime will build a truer picture of the scale of this issue and help us achieve our ultimate political goal – a law in Northern Ireland that makes it a specific crime to attack or abuse a retail worker while they are at work. Such a law must include tough sentences to act as a deterrent for would-be offenders.

This would give our members the proper protection they deserve.

Running a Keep Your Cool Event

Running a Campaign Stall on the Shop Floor

This is a great way to engage with the public and spread the message for people to 'keep their cool'.

The first step is to talk with your store manager about where and when to hold the stall. After that you'll need to order materials in plenty of time to make sure they arrive for the event and organise for people to staff the stall. Don't forget to promote the campaign on your Union noticeboard if you have one.

If you haven't done a stall before you might want to contact your Area Organiser through your local office on **0800 030 80 30** for advice.

Talking to Colleagues

Whilst it is fantastic to engage with the public, it is also important that we get the message across to retail workers that abuse is not part of the job. A colleague event can be as big or small as you feel comfortable with. You could run a campaign stall in the staff room/canteen or spend a couple of hours talking to colleagues while they're in work.

The first step is to talk with your store manager about when to hold the event and how best to promote the message. Try and agree a day and time when there will be plenty of your colleagues around for you to talk to about the campaign.

Don't forget to promote the campaign stall on your Union noticeboard if you have one. If you haven't run a campaign before you might want to contact your Area Organiser through your local office on **0800 030 80 30** for advice.

Noticeboard Campaign Display

If you are not able to commit time to the campaign, but still want to get the message across to members in your store, you can cover the Union noticeboard in your store with campaign information – just for the week.

This is a great way to run a visible campaign if you are not able to commit time-wise. If you think this may be the best option for you, please tick the enclosed order form for a 'Noticeboard Pack' and we will send you a pack of materials to enable you to quickly and easily take part.