

# Co-o NETWORK

THE BIMONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR USDAW ACTIVISTS – SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2021



SCOTLAND BRINGS IN  
NEW LAW TO PROTECT  
SHOPWORKERS

## SUCCESS IN SCOTLAND



**RESPECT  
WEEK  
IS  
COMING**

**15-21 November**

**RAISING AWARENESS THAT  
ABUSE IS NOT PART OF THE JOB**





# U USDAW

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# LOBBYING FOR A DIFFERENT SOCIETY

In August, Usdaw's Freedom From Fear summer campaign took to the streets and the airways to raise awareness of the troubling rise of abuse and violence against shopworkers during the pandemic.

Dozens of Usdaw reps and members took part in TV and radio interviews to explain to the country the abuse they experienced during lockdown and the impact this had on their mental and physical wellbeing. The campaign week was immensely successful and was picked up by local and national TV and radio. It received sympathetic coverage from every network that covered it and resulted in 180 interview broadcasts.

The campaign also received praise from Labour Leader Keir Starmer in his keynote speech at the TUC. I want to thank each and every person who took part because nothing is more powerful than Usdaw reps and members telling their stories in their own words.

Usdaw's 'Christmas is not Working' campaign has started to gather momentum as retailers begin to think about the festive period. A number of retailers have already announced that they will close their stores on Boxing Day and/or on New Year's Day including Poundland, Sainsbury's, Argos, Habitat, Aldi, Morrisons, Waitrose, Home Bargains, Pets at Home and Marks & Spencer. I now hope that other retailers will follow suit by closing their stores on 26 December to help workers enjoy their Christmas,



give them a well-deserved breather and make Boxing Day special again.

Usdaw is the campaigning union and the last two months have been extremely busy as we continue to lobby the Government on a number of issues important to our members including an economic plan that delivers decent pay and conditions, to bring in a specific offence to protect shopworkers from abuse and violence and to end the appalling practice of 'fire and rehire'.

To deliver these changes we also need a Labour Government, a Government that will put the interests of working people first.

Usdaw General Secretary

*Paddy Bell*



save the date

**18-24 OCTOBER**

# MEMBERSHIP WEEK



Let's deliver a massive boost  
to the membership and  
make a real difference in  
workplaces across the country

[www.usdaw.org.uk/membershipweek](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/membershipweek)



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# IN THE NEWS

Don't forget to email the editor your view [network@usdaw.org.uk](mailto:network@usdaw.org.uk)

## STARMER SETS OUT PARTY STRATEGY

In September, Labour Leader Keir Starmer, outlined his vision for the Labour Party.

In a lengthy essay he set out 10 principles to 'form the basis of a new contract between Labour and the British people', and addresses workers' rights, Brexit, coronavirus and climate change.

### Uniting the Labour Party

Starmer wants to stop arguing about Old and New Labour and Corbynism. He wants the party to move from squabbling over its own past and focus on the future of the country.

### The Contribution Society

Starmer calls for a 'contribution society' which would partner the resources of the state and the private sector to prioritise health, living conditions, working conditions and the environment.

### Brexit

Labour will fix the Brexit deal because it sees business as a 'force for good'.

Since Britain left the EU, trade barriers have added an extra £600m in



cost, there is a growing frustration over red tape, staff shortages (such as HGV drivers) and empty supermarket shelves.

### Coronavirus

Starmer criticises Boris Johnson's handling of the pandemic which resulted in a high death toll. He sees the pandemic as a major turning point for Britain comparable to the recovery from World War Two and believes that 'people want to emerge from lockdown into something better'.

### Climate Change

Post-covid, the Labour

Party would invest in a green recovery that would use the challenge of tackling emissions as an opportunity for British industry and jobs. They would boost the car industry to ensure that Britain leads in the production of electric cars and get more offshore wind turbines built, powering homes with clean energy.


### Workers' Rights

In the first 100 days of government, Labour will sign into law a New Deal for Working People. It will provide security and opportunities for people


across the country, with improved conditions, quality jobs, training and better pay.'

### Culture Wars

Starmer believes that the Conservatives have fuelled the culture wars by obsessing about what is happening on university campuses and black players taking the knee. Labour will not wade into every row and will

 @UsdawUnion

 UsdawUnion

 UsdawUnion



focus on opposing the 'conspiracy theories, crankery, misinformation and hatred' allowed to flourish, often as part of the debate.

### Race Equality Act

Starmer backs a new Race Equality Act to tackle 'complex structural racism' which exists in Britain. This follows the racism faced by England football players such as Marcus Rashford after they took the knee at games and outcry over a highly criticised Government-commission report which claimed to have found no evidence of systemic racism in the UK.

### Broader Issues

Starmer wants to set waiting list targets for mental health services, modernise education and stop street harassment.

### THE 10 PRINCIPLES ARE:



- We will always put hard-working families and their priorities first.
- If you work hard and play by the rules, you should be rewarded fairly.
- People and businesses are expected to contribute to society, as well as receive.
- Your chances in life should not be defined by the circumstances of your birth – hard work and how you contribute should matter.
- Families, communities and the things that bring us together must once again be put above individualism.
- The economy should work for citizens and communities. It is not good enough to just surrender to market forces.
- The role of Government is to be a partner to private enterprise, not stifle it.
- The Government should treat taxpayer money as if it were its own. The current levels of waste are unacceptable.
- The Government must play its role in restoring honesty, decency and transparency in public life.
- We are proudly patriotic but we reject the divisiveness of nationalism.

## IS YOUR MOTOR INSURANCE DUE FOR RENEWAL SOON?

# HERE WE EXPLAIN WHY GETTING MOTOR INSURANCE OVER THE PHONE CAN BE CHEAPER THAN ONLINE...



Purchasing your Motor Insurance online is a popular way to do what is for many, a yearly exercise. Most insurance brokers have websites where you can get an online quote but using these websites may not guarantee you the best price.

### Here we explain the benefits behind making a phone call when your car insurance is due:

- Online quotes use set questions to generate a quote.
- They don't get to know the real you because they can't ask you additional questions to build a greater understanding of you as a driver.
- A phone conversation may enable insurers to offer a more favourable policy, for example with a lower excess or a cheaper premium, because of the extra information you're able to share with them.
- It may well be that your circumstances fit perfectly within the questions set online but, we sometimes find that customers using broker websites to obtain car insurance quotes, could have obtained a cheaper price by speaking to us over the phone.



**For the very best rates call** the dedicated Usdaw motor insurance quote line and let us show you how much you could save.

**0344 381 7844\***

\*Lines open Mon-Fri 9am to 7pm, Sat 9am to 3pm, Sun 10am to 3pm

For more information visit: [www.uia.co.uk/usdaw/car-insurance](http://www.uia.co.uk/usdaw/car-insurance)

## LIGHTS OUT?

## HIGH DEMAND FOR ENERGY PUSHES PRICE UP



Soaring energy prices have been dominating the headlines for the last few days with a number of energy suppliers going bust.

The cost of natural gas has skyrocketed with a 250 per cent price increase since January 2021, this has had an impact on energy providers with their costs rising by 70 per cent in August alone.

There are a number of reasons for this including a worldwide squeeze on gas and energy supplies, a cold winter in Europe and an increased demand from Asia (which also suffered a cold winter).

The UK has been hit badly because it's one of Europe's biggest users of natural gas, supplies of renewable energy are down and a recent fire at a national grid site

closed a power cable supplying electricity from France.

Energy providers are under pressure to increase consumer prices however, companies cannot charge above the price cap set by energy regulator Ofgem. The price cap sets the maximum prices suppliers in England, Scotland and Wales can charge on a standard (default) tariff.

A higher cap is due to come into force from 1 October which will see it rise by an extra £139 to £1,277. People on pre-payment meters could see an increase of £153 and households on fixed tariffs that are coming to an end will struggle to find a cheap replacement.

Despite the price cap increasing many suppliers have been unable to

cover their cost with the following companies going bust: Simplicity Energy, Green Network Energy, Hub Energy, MoneyPlus Energy, PFP Energy, Utility Point, People's Energy, Green Supplier Limited and Avro Energy. Others are on the brink of collapse.

### What should you do if your energy supplier goes bust?

Ofgem has advised customers to take a meter reading and not to switch suppliers immediately as the energy watchdog will eventually move you to a new supplier. In the transition period where you may not have a supplier, your supply will not be disrupted and you will still have electricity and gas in your home.

WIN

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Sponsored by Usdaw Insurance. [www.usdaw.org.uk/uia](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/uia) Closing date 15 Nov 2021. Terms apply.



## IN BRIEF

### HOMEBASE

Homebase is creating 300 new retail jobs for young people in the UK. The jobs have been created as part of the UK Government's Kickstart scheme and Homebase becomes the first home and garden retailer to take part in the initiative.

### JOHN LEWIS

John Lewis is to open a warehouse in Milton Keynes that will employ 500 people as it tries to meet surging demand for online shopping. The new facility at Fenny Lock, which it has leased from Tesco for 11 years, will be John Lewis' second biggest distribution centre after nearby Magna Park.

### SPECSAVERS

Specsavers has created 47 new jobs in Essex to support increasing customer demand for sight and hearing tests post lockdown.

## MEMBERSHIP

### FOR WEEK ENDED 25 SEPTEMBER 2021

South Wales & Western	43,266
Eastern	53,323
Midlands	50,299
North Eastern	52,122
Scottish	38,997
Southern	54,100
North West	79,473
<b>Total</b>	<b>371,580</b>

## SUPPLIERS STRUGGLING

# HAULAGE CRISIS CONTINUES



The shortage of HGV drivers and the impact this is having on the retail industry is becoming an increasingly important issue for employers and unions.

A wide range of factors are given as contributing factors towards the crisis, including lockdown's effect on driver training and testing, an aging workforce, changes to IR35 rules, Brexit and drivers seeking other careers due to poor pay and conditions.

The shortage is likely to worsen in the coming months, as demand increases throughout the economy in the run up to Christmas.

Some companies have even suggested there may be food shortages or price increases.

According to research published in the 'Asset Alliance Group Industry Monitor' in June 2021, the shortage of drivers was the most troubling concern for business, greater even than the UK's dreary economic outlook. Media interest in the subject is high and many employers are putting high profile measures in place in an effort to address the crisis.

### Food Prices

Supermarkets, including Morrisons, Tesco and Iceland, have all in recent weeks said that driver shortages

combined with the other factors, such as regulatory checks on imported food and rising prices for fuel, freight, and raw materials, are likely to lead to an increase in food prices in the coming months.

Traditionally, supermarkets may try to manage such pressures by reducing costs or forcing suppliers to cut their margins; but with suppliers facing the same pressures, it is likely their ability to continue to do this will be limited.

### Drivers' Pay

Drivers' pay, as a means of addressing the driver shortage, is likely to be an issue that crops up in local and national negotiations in 2021 and 2022. Average pay increases for drivers are already higher than in many other roles. However, more is likely to be needed in order to tackle the unfolding crisis.

### Improvements

We have already seen some significant steps taken from Usdaw recognised employers as a result of the driver shortage. This includes: pay rises, bonus schemes, market condition allowances, new driver incentive pay, a retention bonus, rest days and increased overtime rates.

[www.usdaw.org.uk](http://www.usdaw.org.uk)

## BENDING THE RULES

# FLEXIBLE WORKING FROM DAY ONE OF EMPLOYMENT

The Government announced plans to make the right to request flexible working a day one right, as well as a new entitlement of one-week unpaid leave for carers.

Currently anyone who has worked in the same job for 26 weeks or more can ask their employer for a change in their working hours. The employer should carefully consider the request in a 'timely manner' and only reject the request if there is a clear business reason for doing so.

Under the new plans the Government is recommending people be allowed to request flexible working from day one, oblige businesses to respond quicker than the current maximum of three months and if the request is turned down the employer will need to explain why and suggest an alternative work arrangement.

Although these changes are welcomed, they are unlikely to change the overall uptake of flexible working. Labour Force Survey statistics showed that between 2013-2020 the proportion of people who did any kind of flexible working only rose from 26 per cent to 30 per cent. There are a number of reasons for this:

- The right to request flexible working is a weak right, it is only a right to ask and employers have almost unfettered discretion to turn down a request, in line with one of eight statutory 'business reasons'.
- The right to a written decision, to a meeting with the employer to discuss the request and the right to an appeal were repealed when it was extended to all employees in 2014.
- Only one request can be made in 12 months, where agreed it leads to a permanent contract change.
- Employees don't put requests in because they assume it will be

## LOW PAID WORKERS DO NOT FEEL SAFE ENOUGH IN THEIR JOBS TO ASK FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING

turned down and there's fear that flexible working will damage their careers.

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: "There are significant problems with the current statutory provisions not least many are unpaid and have lengthy continuous service conditions.

"Family friendly rights predominantly benefit workers in permanent professional jobs and are designed around the idea of the standard employment relationship where someone has lifelong, secure full-time employment on a wage that is good enough to support a family. Family friendly rights do not reflect the reality of the lives of Usdaw members.

"The right to request assumes that low paid workers, parents and carers can freely negotiate flexible working when in reality they have very little power to do so. It is risky for low paid workers to ask for flexible working because they are then often seen or believe they will be perceived as unreliable; this makes it harder to get extra hours or future work.

"Members therefore rely on annual leave and shift swap arrangements. Some feel compelled to rely on sick leave to mask care emergencies.

"The bottom line is that many low paid workers do not feel safe enough in their jobs to ask for flexible working and the law needs to change to acknowledge this."

[www.usdaw.org.uk/Help-Advice/Parents-Carers/Flexible-Working-and-Time-Off](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/Help-Advice/Parents-Carers/Flexible-Working-and-Time-Off)

## NOMINATIONS OPEN FOR REGIONAL POLITICAL TEAMS

The union is currently re-appointing all Regional Political Committees, with the term of office starting in January 2022.

The role of the Regional Political Committee is to lead the union's political campaigning and engagement work in each region. This work is crucial as we build for the next General Election and members of the committee will play an important role in increasing political engagement and activity amongst Usdaw members.

Members of the Labour Party who are Usdaw delegates to their Constituency Labour Party General Committee (GC) are entitled to nominate themselves to the committee.

Those who are interested but not currently members of the Labour Party or an Usdaw delegate to the GC of their local Constituency Labour Party, can join the Labour Party by going to:

[join.labour.org.uk](http://join.labour.org.uk)

The closing date is Sunday, 31 October 2021, which allows the November Regional Councils to consider all nominations and make recommendations to the December National Executive Council.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact the Politics Office on 0161 249 2452 or [politics@usdaw.org.uk](mailto:politics@usdaw.org.uk).



PUZZLED BY PENSIONS?

# GUIDE TO AUTO-ENROLMENT



## PUZZLED BY PENSIONS? AUTO-ENROLMENT GUIDE

A guide on the importance of encouraging members to stay in a workplace pension scheme

**S**ince their introduction in 2012, the auto-enrolment laws have resulted in millions more workers paying into workplace pensions. Usdaw encourages all members not to opt out of their company pension scheme, and to pay in as much as they can afford.

It's estimated that once auto-enrolled, around 90 per cent of workers remain in their pension scheme – but this still leaves a significant amount of people who are saving nothing for their retirement. Usdaw reps can play a big part in getting members to see

the benefits of their pension, and our auto-enrolment guide will help you give your members the facts.

This newly updated guide is packed with useful information on the current regulations, and tips on how you can support and encourage membership of the pension scheme where you work. And if you're passionate about pensions, why not contact Usdaw's pensions section about holding a pensions awareness campaign?

Read the guide online at: [dtp.usdaw.co.uk/GuidetoPensionsAutoEnrolment](http://dtp.usdaw.co.uk/GuidetoPensionsAutoEnrolment)

For a complete list of Usdaw publications and to order visit:  
[dtp.usdaw.co.uk/PublicationsCatalogue](http://dtp.usdaw.co.uk/PublicationsCatalogue)

## NEW IN!

### Leaflets & Booklets

Join Sata Today (Leaflet 137)

Join Usdaw Today (Leaflet 299)

While you're looking after the shop, who's looking after you? (Leaflet 362)

Want To Know More? Go to [www.usdaw.org.uk](http://www.usdaw.org.uk) (Leaflet 390)

Puzzled by Pensions? How much has been lost to pension scammers? (Leaflet 452)

### Factsheets, forms, posters and surveys

ABCs of ICT – IT bitesize course  
[www.usdaw.org.uk/ABCsofIT](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/ABCsofIT)

Health and Safety during Covid-19  
[www.usdaw.org.uk/Covid19course](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/Covid19course)

CV Writing - IT bitesize course  
[www.usdaw.org.uk/cvwriting](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/cvwriting)

Vulnerable Workers Home Study  
[www.usdaw.org.uk/homestudy5](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/homestudy5)

Health and Safety Reps Part 1  
[www.usdaw.org.uk/HSReps1](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/HSReps1)

Health and Safety Reps Part 2  
[www.usdaw.org.uk/HSReps2](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/HSReps2)

Health and Safety Reps Part 3  
[www.usdaw.org.uk/HSReps3](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/HSReps3)

Helping With Homework - bitesize maths course  
[www.usdaw.org.uk/mathshomework](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/mathshomework)

The Impact of Covid-19 on Domestic Violence  
[www.usdaw.org.uk/CovidandDV](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/CovidandDV)

Looking After Your Mental Health  
[www.usdaw.org.uk/yourmentalhealth](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/yourmentalhealth)

Staying Safe Online  
[www.usdaw.org.uk/SafeOnline](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/SafeOnline)

Union Learning Rep Part 1: Lifelong Learning and Usdaw  
[www.usdaw.org.uk/ULRHB1](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/ULRHB1)

Union Learning Rep Part 2: The Role of the ULR  
[www.usdaw.org.uk/ULRHB2](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/ULRHB2)

# REPORT IT TO SORT IT

**U**sdaw launched its Freedom From Fear summer campaign with shocking statistics from its annual survey.

Preliminary results from nearly 2,000 retail staff show that in the last twelve months:

- 92 per cent have experienced verbal abuse.
- 70 per cent were threatened by a customer.
- 14 per cent were assaulted.
- One in five victims have never reported an incident to their employer, including 5 per cent who had been assaulted.

The scale of the problem prompted Usdaw to organise an additional campaign week in August. During the week, Usdaw members, reps and activists did a fantastic job of raising awareness of the year-round Freedom from Fear campaign, talking to the public at street stalls to promote a message of 'respect for shopworkers' and running campaigns in their workplaces.

The UK-wide campaign coincided with a new protection of workers law coming into force in Scotland on 24 August. Usdaw promoted this ground-breaking legislation, by urging shopworkers to 'report it to sort it'. The union also continues to urge the Government to pass a similar law that extends those protections to shopworkers in Northern Ireland, Wales and England.

Usdaw General Secretary Paddy Lillis said: "Once again our members are telling us that some people have responded to this appalling

pandemic by abusing shopworkers. At a time when we should all be working together to get through this national crisis, it is a disgrace that staff working to keep food on the shelves are being abused.

"The number of staff who do not report incidents is very worrying. I totally understand why they may feel it won't make a difference, but my message to shopworkers is incredibly clear, abuse is not a part of the job. It is really important that staff do tell their manager when they experience violence, threats or abuse. If they do report it we can help to sort it.

"Government action to protect shopworkers is needed. Our Freedom From Fear campaign has received praise from Labour leader Keir Starmer and we welcome the launch of the Abuse of Public-Facing Workers (Offences) Bill by Labour MP Olivia Blake. However, we are under no illusion and understand that this Bill stands little chance of being successful without Government support, so we urge ministers to get behind this important measure.

"The pandemic has shown just how reliant we are on key workers, many of them in low-paid insecure employment and often facing abuse from the public. These essential workers deserve a new deal to ensure that they are properly valued, they deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, and they deserve the protection of the law."



Co-op Dennistoun, Glasgow with Daniel Johnson MSP and Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis





Welcome to Dennistoun's Co-op







Warrington



Andover



Preston







Blackpool



Erdington, West Midlands



Croydon



Plymouth



Cambridge

# CAMPAIGNS

Keeping you up-to-date on Usdaw's priorities

## BOXING DAY CLOSURES GAIN SPEED

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

Retail workers have been putting in long, tough shifts to help customers get ready for Christmas, and they barely have the time and energy to make their own preparations.

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

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

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

This year the campaign has been gaining some momentum with Poundland announcing it will close stores on Boxing Day and New Year's Day.



The bargain retailer is the latest chain to announce festive closures and joins: Sainsbury's, Argos, Habitat, Aldi, Morrisons, Waitrose, Home Bargains, Pets at Home and Marks & Spencer.

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: "Usdaw national officers have done a fantastic job in negotiating these

closures. Giving staff time off on Boxing Day and/or New Year's Day means staff get a proper break over Christmas.

The pandemic showed just how important shopworkers are to our society and communities, as they stepped up and kept essential services running throughout. Key workers have done so

much this year and we don't think it is too much to ask to give them the longest possible break over the festive season. We now hope that other retailers will follow suit by closing their stores on 26 December to help workers enjoy their Christmas, give them a well-deserved breather and make Boxing Day special again."



## HOLYROOD AGREES TO LISTEN

# NEW YEAR'S DAY STORE CLOSURE CONSULTATION

Usdaw has been campaigning for 14 years for large retail stores in Scotland to close on New Year's Day. Hogmanay and New Year is a special holiday, but this is not reflected in the experience of many retail workers, with three-quarters saying they spend too little time with friends and family.

Scottish Ministers have the power to prohibit large retail stores from opening on New Year's Day. They have chosen not to implement this, preventing our members from having a decent break over the Christmas period.

With your help in signing the petition last year, we have managed to persuade the Scottish Government to launch a consultation on closing large stores on New Year's Day.

We know that this is an issue that is important to our members. Our survey results couldn't be clearer:

- 99 per cent of members agree that large stores in Scotland should close on New Year's Day.



- 72 per cent said that they or their colleagues come under pressure to work on New Year's Day or 2 January.
- 48 per cent of members said that working on New Year's Day was not voluntary in their store.
- 76 per cent said that working over New Year affected their ability to enjoy the holiday.
- 74 per cent said they spend too little time with their loved ones over New Year.

There's no surprise that our members feel this way. As workers throughout Scotland get to enjoy

a day off, our members have to go into work, even though stores are generally very quiet on the day, showing that there is very little customer demand for stores to open.

With the launch of the consultation, the Scottish Government has finally agreed to listen to the opinions of those most affected by stores trading on New Year's Day – shopworkers.

The consultation closed in August and we are now waiting for the Scottish Government to respond.

## PROTECTION OF SHOPWORKERS 'UNDER CONSIDERATION'

# IT'S TIME FOR WESTMINSTER TO TAKE ACTION

Usdaw welcomes interventions from Labour frontbenchers urging the Government to follow Scotland's lead and introduce a protection of shopworkers law. Responding to the Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill second reading debate, the Government minister indicated an amendment is still under consideration.

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: "With recent survey results showing that over 90 per cent of retail workers have been abused in the last 12 months and one in seven

have been physically assaulted, the current provisions to protect shop staff are clearly not working. We are grateful to the Labour frontbench for continuing to pursue the protection of shopworkers from violence, threats and abuse. We also welcome the cross-party support this attracted in the House of Lords debate last night.

"We again urge the Government to bring forward a substantial measure that delivers much needed protections. When retail employers, leading retail bodies, the Home

Affairs Select Committee and the shopworkers' trade union jointly call for legislation, it is time for the Government to listen.

"In Scotland, MSPs voted through a new ground-breaking law to give shopworkers the protection they deserve, which came into force last month. We are now looking for the House of Lords to similarly support key workers across the retail sector, who regularly suffer violence and abuse."

[www.usdaw.org.uk/Campaigns/Freedom-From-Fear](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/Campaigns/Freedom-From-Fear)

UNIVERSAL CREDIT CUT

# FINANCIAL BOOST TO BE SCRAPPED IN OCTOBER



“THE £20 HELPS TOWARDS SCHOOL CLOTHING, SCHOOL SHOES AND FOOD FOR MY SON; REDUCING IT WILL MEAN I HAVE TO USE FOOD BANKS AGAIN.”

Usdaw has been campaigning against the £20 cut by urging MPs to back an opposition day motion to stop universal credit cuts, which was tabled by the Labour Party and debated in the House of Commons.

Usdaw recently conducted a survey of members who are in work and are entitled to universal credit. These are some of the comments received from working people who will struggle to cope with the loss of over £1,000 per year when the £20 a week uplift will officially end on 6 October:

- “We have a young son who is flying through clothes and other items. That £20 a week isn’t a lot but it helps so much!”
- “I get the housing element of universal credit so the reduction will mean I have to pay more rent which will mean I will struggle to pay other bills.”
- “Money is already very tight. There have been changes to work over

the last 12 months which has meant that our family has more debt than before covid. We are struggling to return our finances to the point they were at pre-covid and that £20 may not feel like a lot to most however it is a huge difference in essentials for us.”

- “At the moment it pays my council tax so if it goes I’ll have to not pay something else. I’m just surviving now, not living, surviving. I work to pay rent bills and travel to get to work can’t remember last time I bought underwear or clothes.”
- “I’m 35 and a lone parent to my eight year-old daughter and limited to the hours I can work. The price of everything is shooting up - food, fuel, clothing - and we struggle from time to time. Just the thought of losing £20 a month is scary. It would push not only myself but others into further poverty.”
- “The £20 helps towards school clothing, school shoes and food for my son; reducing it will mean I

have to use food banks again.”

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: “The real experiences of working people relying on income from universal credit should be at the forefront of MPs’ minds when they vote on the Government’s cut.

“We welcomed the £20 uplift, but it was only a short-term sticking plaster that is now being painfully ripped off.

“These comments from our members are just a small snapshot of difficulties millions of families will face if the Government ploughs ahead with reducing their income by over £1,000 a year.

“That extra £20 has been in place since the start of the pandemic and has been a real lifeline for millions of families. It’s not too late for the Government to do the right thing.”

The cut is due to come in effect on 6 October. However, the exact date the money will stop being paid will vary depending on the day universal credit is paid.

## CAMPAIGNING FOR SECURE, FAIR AND QUALITY JOBS WORK

# LABOUR JOIN USDAW TO PUSH FOR NEW DEAL

Usdaw members gave evidence at the Low Pay Commission as the Labour Party called for a 'new deal for workers'.

In August, Usdaw members gave evidence at the Low Pay Commission on minimum wage rates.

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: "We very much welcome the opportunity for a few of our members to speak directly to commissioners about living on or near minimum wage rates. At the beginning of the current consultation in June this year, Usdaw provided evidence of why we need a new deal for workers that includes at least £10 per hour, an end to youth rates and more secure employment.

"The impact of the coronavirus crisis continues to be felt across our economy and society. Workers in retail, distribution and many other low-paid industries have shown just how vital they are to keeping the UK economy going during a time of extreme pressure. As we emerge from the pandemic, these key workers must not be forgotten and it can only be right that their contribution is recognised with a wage they can live on.

"Recently the Labour Party launched a 'new deal for working people' which pledges to fundamentally change our economy and make Britain the best place to work.

"The new campaign sets out how Labour's new deal for working people is based on five principles of good work which include security and opportunity at work, quality jobs, a fairer economy, opportunity

for all and work that pays.

"Usdaw welcomes this new deal as we have been calling for a minimum of at least £10 per hour for all workers, job security, an end to zero-hour contracts and better sick pay for a number of years. As the country tries to recover from the pandemic, the best way to thank key workers is to ensure decent pay and fairness at work."

### USDRAW'S NEW DEAL FOR WORKERS CALLS FOR:

- A minimum wage of at least £10 per hour for all workers, ending rip-off youth rates and providing a living wage.
- Minimum contract of 16 hours per week, for everyone who wants it, that reflects normal hours worked and a ban on zero-hour contracts.
- Better sick pay for all workers, from day one, at average earnings.
- Protection at work – respect for shopworkers, abuse is not a part of the job.
- A proper social security system, Universal Credit does not provide a safety net.
- Job security, with day one employment rights for unfair dismissal and redundancy.
- Fair treatment and equality for all workers, including equal pay.
- A voice at work, stop rogue employers refusing to engage with trade unions and end 'fire and rehire'.

## INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY NEEDED FOR RETAIL

# SUPPORT CRUCIAL FOR STRUGGLING SHOPS

Usdaw continues to call for the Government to work with them and employers to develop an industrial strategy for retail. The union has long campaigned for action to support the struggling retail sector.

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: "The UK retail sector has been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic on an unprecedented

scale. For an industry already facing significant challenges, the long-term impact will be severe.

"With over 180,000 jobs lost across the industry last year and 200,000 predicted for this year, we need immediate action from the Government to reduce rents and rates for high street retailers, alongside levelling the playing field with an online sales tax. The

coronavirus pandemic has pushed many retailers and retail workers to breaking point, so we need Government measures to be equally significant.

"Retailers need urgent measures to deal with the immediate crisis and a longer-term strategy to deal with the issues facing the industry. Usdaw is calling for the Government to adopt an urgent recovery plan."





# CLASS ACT SUMMER 2021

Reps gathered at Wortley Hall for Usdaw's Summer School 1, a popular, week-long, training and learning programme.

In September, Usdaw hosted its first major face-to-face event since the start of the pandemic in March 2021. The event took place at Wortley Hall in Sheffield, an educational and holiday centre, for the trade union, labour and co-operative movements.

Working in small work groups of approximately 14 members, each with its own tutor, activists spent the week learning about:

- Usdaw's aims and objectives, and understanding the challenges facing trade unions.
- Meeting skills (minutes, chairing, branch meetings, by laws and standing orders).
- Speeches and presentation skills.
- ADM, how it works, writing propositions, amendments and composites, voting etc. and

students participated in a mock ADM.

- Equality issues including language stereotyping and prejudice in the media.
- Developing self-confidence and improving their organising and communication skills.

## Here's what the participants said about Summer School:

### JAMIE GIBLEN H065

"As a driver, I experienced quite a lot of abuse from people during the pandemic. This affected my confidence to the point that I was contemplating whether or not I should carry on being a rep. I knew I had to do something to change how I felt.

"A few people, who'd already been

to Summer School, encouraged me to apply and I'm so glad I did. When I first arrived, I felt quite socially awkward but within a couple of days I felt like I had known everyone for years.

"At Summer School I learnt about ADM, how to write a proposition and how to present it. My proposition was calling for more resources dedicated to supporting drivers who suffer from trauma due to the abuse they experience on the road. You get filmed when you present your proposition. It's a nerve-wracking experience but a very useful exercise. When I was presenting, I felt like I was making a lot of mistakes and not doing a good job at all but when I watched it back, I realised that what I was feeling wasn't visible to anyone else. This



whole thing's been brilliant.

"I have learnt so much about the union, how it works and what it offers. I have also gained confidence, something I used to struggle with. Last week the thought of doing inductions was terrifying but Summer School taught me how to address a large group of people without being petrified. This has really helped me with my confidence and now I feel like I can do inductions on my own. Who knows, in a couple of years' time you might even see me at the rostrum at ADM!

"I'm someone who left school and went straight into work, so I never got a chance to do any further education. The union has given me some incredible training opportunities and Summer School's got me excited about learning. I can't wait to get stuck in and do the bitesize and home study courses.

"Being at Summer School has made me realise how much work the union puts into developing its reps. I want to thank all the tutors for providing such a friendly and supportive learning environment.

"I would absolutely encourage other reps to think about applying. Summer School is challenging and fun, you learn loads and you get to meet a great bunch of people."

really boosted my confidence.

"Explaining my proposition and talking about my experience to a group of people helped me clarify the proposition. The more we talked about it the more I realised I wanted to take this proposition to ADM. If it wasn't for Summer School, I would never have considered putting this proposition forward for ADM.

"I'm the only rep in a workplace of over 500 people so the last 18 months have left me feeling exhausted but going to Summer School has completely revitalised me. The tutors are fantastic and work hard at providing a learning environment that is fun and relaxed.

"I've learnt so much in the last week and I'm really looking forward to putting this into practice when I go back to work. I also made loads of

great friends and now have a bigger network of people I can call on for help and support."

### **JULIE WRIGHT F019**

"I'm quite an active rep and have completed the shop stewards and health and safety training courses but this is the first time I have done something like this.

"I'm 54, and at a point in my life where I have time to do things for myself. I really wanted to challenge myself and a couple of people encouraged me to apply for Summer School.

"Up until a couple of weeks ago I was really panicking and thinking I can't do this. But thankfully, my branch secretary was fantastic and convinced me that I could. I'm so glad I took her advice because the

### **HOW TO APPLY FOR SUMMER SCHOOL 2022**

Each branch can nominate up to two members for each Summer School. Successful nominees will be selected by the National Executive Council from the shortlists submitted by each Regional Council.

Please contact your branch secretary if you wish to be nominated for Summer School 2022 or speak to your area organiser if you would like to know more.

# TUC ONLINE CONGRESS 2021

Usdaw makes a compelling case for an economic plan that delivers for working people, an end to 'fire and rehire' and £10 per hour for all workers from day one

**T**he TUC's 2021 annual congress took place online from 12-14 September. Usdaw called for an economic plan that delivers for working people and an end to 'fire and rehire'. The union also received praise from Labour leader Keir Starmer for its Freedom From Fear campaign.

## ECONOMIC PLAN

Usdaw president Jane Jones called for an urgent economic plan that delivers decent pay and secure work with good terms and conditions for all workers. "Retail workers have had 18 months like no other," said Jane. The pandemic has shown just how severe the challenges are for so many working people across the country. The crisis has demonstrated a UK labour market defined by low pay, insecure work and in-work poverty, where employment practices, such as zero hours and short hours contracts are damaging mental health and wellbeing.

"Retail workers, like many other key and essential workers have been underpaid and undervalued for too long. They have faced an appalling increase in abuse during the pandemic and all of this has an ongoing impact on their mental health and wellbeing. In the public sector or the private sector, it is not acceptable that workers are left worrying about insecure work and poverty pay. It is not acceptable that workers across many key sectors are facing abuse on a daily basis, while trying to do their jobs and keep the public safe.

"It is clear that we urgently need an economic plan that delivers

real changes for working people. A plan that invests in our vital public services, including the mental health support that is so desperately needed. We need a plan for decent pay and secure work with good terms and conditions, including decent sick pay so people can take time off when ill, a plan that gives all working people the respect and dignity they rightly deserve."

## END 'FIRE AND REHIRE'

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis blasted the Government for standing by while workers' terms and conditions are eroded. "The retail workforce is facing a crisis of devastating proportions," said Paddy. "The sector was already facing huge structural difficulties before the Covid-19 pandemic hit. The pandemic has made things even tougher for retail businesses and for retail workers. Many are cutting jobs, through round after round of restructuring. This is a crisis spiralling out of control, with no sign of the Government intervention that retail workers so desperately need.

"Far too many workers' jobs are in peril and so are their terms and conditions. It's no surprise that this Government has also stood by while workers' terms and conditions are eroded. Even the Prime Minister has agreed that the practice of 'fire and rehire' is unacceptable, but his government has done nothing about it. Instead, trade unions are fighting against this appalling practice in the workplace and in the courts.

"Losing your job is devastating. It's even worse when you don't have adequate rights or training opportunities. We need to join

forces to campaign for better redundancy rights that include increased statutory redundancy pay and a retraining budget for all workers given notice of redundancy, because they deserve the best chance of re-entering the workforce."

## NEW DEAL FOR WORKERS

Usdaw welcomed Keir Starmer's address and his commitment that the next Labour Government will deliver a range of improved rights for working people including a minimum wage of £10 per hour, rights for all workers from day one, right to request flexible working, end to zero-hour contracts, increased and guaranteed sick pay and more workers covered by collective agreements.

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: "Keir Starmer has today set out a comprehensive package of reforms that will deliver security and opportunity for workers, alongside quality jobs that make work pay. This new deal for workers clearly demonstrates why our members need a Labour Government and that Labour is the only party that will deliver this much needed change.

"The coronavirus emergency has brought about a new understanding of the essential role retail workers have in keeping our communities fed, healthy and safe. Usdaw's consistent calls for shopworkers to be respected and valued are being heard, but that must not fade into the background when this national crisis passes. There must be lasting and fundamental change to the way society views our lowest paid workers. We need Labour's new



deal for the workers employed in our supermarkets, distribution warehouses, food processing sites and home delivery operations.”

### **PRAISE FOR USDAW'S FREEDOM FROM FEAR CAMPAIGN**

In his keynote speech, Keir Starmer praised Usdaw's Freedom From Fear campaign, which seeks to protect shopworkers from violence, threats and abuse.

In praising key workers and their trade unions for all they did to help the nation through the pandemic, the Labour leader said: “I particularly want to pay tribute to Usdaw's ‘Freedom from Fear’ campaign against violence and abuse towards shopworkers. Having spoken to many shopworkers over the last 18 months I am in no doubt how important that campaign is to them.”

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: “We very much welcome Keir Starmer's recognition of our campaign to protect shopworkers, which follows consistent support from Labour in Parliament for trying to achieve a change in the law. Today the Government has a chance to reverse their past opposition by introducing an amendment to their policing bill, as ministers promised in the House of Commons.

“We urge the Government to keep to their word and ensure that the measure they bring forward is substantial and delivers much needed protections. When retail employers, leading retail bodies, the Home Affairs Select Committee and the shopworkers' trade union jointly call for legislation, it is time for the Government to listen.

“In Scotland, MSPs voted through a new ground-breaking law to give shopworkers the protection they deserve, which came into force last month. We are now looking for the House of Lords to similarly support key workers across the retail sector, who regularly suffer violence and abuse.”

[www.usdaw.org.uk](http://www.usdaw.org.uk)





# MEMBERS TALK ABOUT MENTAL

In September a group of Usdaw reps met with the shadow mental health minister, Labour MP Rosena Allin Khan to discuss what more support our members need at work when experiencing mental health difficulties.

Rosena Allin Khan paid tribute to the work of Usdaw members during the coronavirus pandemic. She talked about the pressures of working in retail and other frontline jobs of which she had firsthand experience. Usdaw reps talked about the impact of low-hours contracts on our members mental health and how difficult it can be to disclose anxiety or depression in a back to work interview which often feels like part of the disciplinary process.

The fact that so many retailers have removed middle management roles has also made it difficult for members to open up about how

they are feeling. Managers are often too thin on the ground and may not have the time to listen or engage with colleagues who are struggling. Managers may feel under pressure to meet targets and deadlines and aren't always people focused.

Rosena Allin Khan was keen to hear what our reps had to say about the issue of training for managers. Usdaw reps know that members with mental health problems are often entitled to reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act whereas managers may not. Joint training for managers and reps was a good way to approach the problem and this was particularly important when it came to hidden disabilities such as mental health problems where the response was often 'you look alright to me'.

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: "Our reps did an amazing

job, sharing their knowledge representing members with mental health problems and discussing their own personal experiences with immense courage and clarity. Their honesty and straight talking made a really strong impression on the shadow minister and I know will undoubtedly help Rosena and her team develop policies on mental health at work that will deliver for our members."

The Labour Party is committed to introducing practical steps that will help make sure mental health problems at work are better managed and supported. The focus is very much on what workers need to help them stay in work and recover from a mental health problem. Rosena Allin Khan is looking at a range of options including better enforcement of the right to reasonable adjustments



# HEALTH

and working with colleagues across the Labour Party to tackle low hours contracts and other working practices that can damage mental health.

This is an issue that urgently needs addressing; TUC research shows that a worker with a mental health problem is far more likely to lose their job than a colleague with a physical disability. This isn't because workers with mental health problems don't want to stay in work; it's down to discrimination and the fact that too many employers still see anxiety and depression as reasons to dismiss workers.

And whilst the UK Government has recently announced a Mental Health Recovery Plan, this makes no mention of the workplace or the fact that the coronavirus pandemic has worsened inequality and unfairness at work.

## THE INEQUALITY OF MENTAL HEALTH

World Mental Health Day takes place on the same day each year (10 October) and aims to raise mental health awareness around the world. This year the theme, was set by the World Federation for Mental Health, and is 'Mental Health in an Unequal World'.

The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted that although mental health problems like depression and anxiety can affect anyone at any time they aren't distributed equally across all groups in society.

Throughout the pandemic Usdaw has emphasised that the impact of Covid-19 on people's lives, livelihoods, physical and mental health has not been equal.

Prioritising mental health has never been more critical than it is now as new mental health problems have developed as a result of the pandemic, and existing mental health problems have been made worse.

To better understand how the pandemic was impacting on Usdaw members' mental health the union carried out a national survey late last year to which over 4,000 members responded.

### Key findings

Almost three quarters (74.2 per cent) of survey respondents felt anxious about going into work during the pandemic with young women reporting the highest levels of anxiety.

The biggest factors contributing to members' anxiety at the height of the pandemic were:

- Fear of contracting the virus
- Customer abuse and harassment
- Money worries

Young members are far less likely to talk to anyone about their concerns compared to respondents of all ages.

### The experience of young members

Whilst the coronavirus crisis has tested everyone's mental wellbeing, our study shows that there are some very specific challenges facing young people. We know that younger workers are more likely to be working at weekends and late at night and employed on so called flexi contracts which usually involve short notice and unpredictable changes to working hours and shifts.

It is not surprising therefore that younger members were much more likely to report feeling anxious at work over working hours than older workers – more than one in four young members identified this as a cause for anxiety compared to just over 6 per cent of older workers for whom fear of contracting the virus was the number one concern.

Young workers are also far more likely to say that financial worries are currently making them feel anxious. Almost a quarter of young workers said that worrying about money was making them feel anxious compared to only 6.5 per cent of survey respondents of all ages.

Ushaw's 'It's good to talk' campaign provides the union's workplace reps with advice and resources to support members experiencing common mental health problems such as anxiety and depression.

For more information:  
[www.usdaw.org.uk/  
 CovidMHSurveyResults](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/CovidMHSurveyResults)





# ACTIVIST IN-DEPTH NIKKI FITZSIMMONS

**U**sdaw rep Nikki Fitzsimmons takes time out of her hectic schedule to chat to *Network* about stand down, Summer School and looking after members during the last 18 months.

## Where do you work?

I've worked at Tesco for the last 25 years and have been based in various stores in the Birmingham area. I'm currently working at the Yardley store.

## Why did you become a rep?

I used to be a manager in Tesco and once I stepped down from that role I decided to become a rep, that was back in 2016. I put myself forward because I was already familiar with

all the policies and processes so I knew I could help my colleagues.

## You're very active in the union, can you tell us what you've done over the last few years?

Once I became a rep, I got the bug. I haven't stopped since and have been on stand down as well as on both academies. The academies were amazing opportunities and I learnt so much. My favourite bit is doing stand down as I get to go to different workplaces and meet non-members.

## How do you recruit non-members?

You have to be friendly and approachable because people won't

warm to you if you're miserable. You also have to believe in what you're saying. I promote the union because I genuinely believe in the services Usdaw provides for its members and I think that comes across.

Usdaw's the campaigning union so I always talk about the campaigns. During covid, shopworkers were classed as key workers but we weren't being paid like key workers. I let members and non-members know that Usdaw's New Deal for Workers is calling for a minimum wage of £10 per hour for all workers.

It's also important to promote the wins you've had. Most shopworkers experienced horrific levels of abuse during the pandemic but many of them don't know that Usdaw was



Nikki at the Chainmakers festival in 2019

instrumental in getting a protection of shopworkers law in Scotland.

### What campaign have you been promoting recently?

I believe a good working environment can contribute to better mental health. That's why I regularly promote the mental health campaign. This is such a big issue at the moment, everyone's struggling. People who were shielding and people who worked through the pandemic are experiencing anxiety and depression.

There's a lot of stigma around mental health so the first thing I try to do is raise awareness.

Mental health issues need to be seen in the same way as physical illnesses. You wouldn't blame someone who suffers from migraines, equally we shouldn't blame people who struggle with anxiety or depression.

By promoting Usdaw's mental health campaign and raising awareness with both staff and managers, I've been able to secure reasonable adjustments for a couple of members who have mental health issues.

### In 2018 you won the Individual Organising Award, can you tell us about that?

I won the award because I increased membership in the Birmingham area and I managed to get cluster reps in convenience stores.

Cluster reps are reps who look after a number of convenience stores. It's quite difficult to get reps in conveniences so I was really pleased I could do this. I honestly didn't expect to win so I was absolutely ecstatic when I did.

### As a rep, how have you found the last 18 months?

I was shielding as I'm classed as extremely clinically vulnerable. But I was still carrying out my reps' duties digitally. I was representing members via Zoom and dealing with a lot of queries from members by phone. I even conducted inductions through Zoom which was very odd at first but as the pandemic progressed, we all got used to using Zoom. As useful as this was, I don't think you can really connect with people in the same way as when you're in a room with them.

### What are you focusing on at the moment?

I'm focusing on getting our young workers to become reps. I'm slightly worried that in a few years, when older reps retire, we won't have enough young reps to take over. Recruiting young workers into the union can be quite challenging. Where I am, a lot of young workers are students at either Birmingham or Aston university. They always say there's no point joining the union because they won't be there in a couple of years' time. I tell them straight, whether you're here for a year or whether you're here until you retire, you need to be protected. Your employer protects itself with a team of legal advisors so you should also have someone fighting your corner. That usually works! Once they become members, I keep a look out for the ones who might make good reps.

### What's next for you?

I recently completed Summer School 1 and also finished a 12-week counselling course. Now I'm mulling over whether I should do the next level of the counselling course.

Have you got an experience or advice that would inspire other reps? Email us at: [network@usdaw.org.uk](mailto:network@usdaw.org.uk)

# COLLABORATING FOR COLLEAGUES

Co-op distribution reps worked with the company to deliver safety in their sites during the pandemic

Co-op distribution reps across all sites have done a fantastic job of looking after members during the last 18 months. *Network* caught up with Aaron Wall, Ian Shuttleworth and Brian Loughhead to talk about the work they have been doing.

## BRIAN LOUGHHEAD NATIONAL REP AND SENIOR UNION REP

"I was on calls from 9am to 9pm, 7 days a week. I would be in a meeting with the Co-op managers at 9am, then I would take calls from the regions and in the evenings I would brief the rep teams. At one point I was even going out and buying hand sanitisers and masks!

"My role was co-ordinating everything on a national level. Every time something changed (and it changed a lot), I was responsible for helping draft a policy to encapsulate the change.

"Everything had to be done there and then. On top of this, different guidelines applied in Scotland and Northern Ireland, so we had to get our heads round different rules applying in different sites.

"The Co-op made a big effort to include us in meetings and discussions and we all worked together to draft the new policies. The whole process was very collaborative and we tried our best to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our colleagues.

"I was briefing the reps every evening because they were crucial in helping us roll everything out. I

wanted to get their feedback and make sure they were onboard with the change. Also, it was a good way of checking in with them to make sure they themselves were coping.

"In some sites we had every shop steward stood down to help support the managers as well as the members. Reps were doing walk arounds, ensuring safety measures had been implemented and were being adhered to, and just checking up on members to see how they were coping and whether they had any concerns.

"I think one of the biggest issues we'll have going forward will be mental health. There are people who have been shielding and people who worked through the pandemic suffering from anxiety and depression and there's those who have lost family, friends or colleagues trying to come to terms with their loss and grief.

"We're already putting steps in place to deal with this, nationally, we're working with the Co-op on mental health awareness days and mental health first aider courses. It's important to have trained reps and team managers on the frontline to deal with mental health queries.

"The whole thing has been hectic and stressful, and my teams were never off. There was a constant flow of work to get through but thankfully things are calming down now and we are cautiously looking at trying to get everything back to normal.

"I'm really proud of all the reps and the tremendous job they did



Aaron Wall, Brian Loughhead and Ian Shuttleworth

during the pandemic.

"All the reps were available and very supportive. Don't get me wrong, they challenged anything that they didn't feel comfortable with, but you wouldn't expect anything else from our reps."

## AARON WALL COVENTRY

"I worked throughout the pandemic," said Aaron. "Things were crazy back then. Everything happened so suddenly. The country went into lockdown, people were panic buying and advice was changing on a daily basis. It was such a confusing time for everyone.

"The first thing we did was to prioritise the safety of our members. We've got about 500 people on site at any given time so we had to ensure they could get in and out





of the building safely. We devised a one-way system and agreed that colleagues could finish their shift 10 minutes early to make sure everyone had dispersed before the next shift arrived.

We implemented cleaning stations for manual handling equipment and radio frequency PPE kits for those who needed it.

"I got a lot of calls and messages from members mostly around the self-isolation rules, who was eligible for furlough and which conditions qualified for shielding. We did have quite a lot of people shielding but luckily it didn't lead to a shortage of workers because we had already started looking at headcount in preparation for the Brexit shortfall. This meant that staffing-wise things evened themselves out. We had to

get external trainers in to make sure everyone was up to speed and ready to do the job.

"The most difficult piece of work we had to do was around the number of holidays people had left to take. Understandably people wanted to keep hold of their holidays because they wanted to go away when lockdown eased. At that point we had no idea when lockdown restrictions would ease so we had to explain to them that if they didn't take their holidays, they would lose them. Even though this is in our agreement it was something we've never had to use before. It was a difficult message for us to get across.

"At times I got a bit much. Sometimes I was working 14-hour days and by May I felt burnt out. I

took some annual leave, sat at home and enjoyed the feeling of not doing anything for a few days.

"I had a lot of support from the union, particularly Brian, who gave us updates every day. Thankfully we have a good working relationship with the company which meant we were included in all the meetings and we worked together to find solutions.

"I couldn't have done this on my own so I want to thank all the reps at Coventry for doing a brilliant job and congratulations to the health and safety team for winning the Safest Depot of the Year Award."

**IAN SHUTTLEWORTH**  
**WEST THURROCK**

"We implemented similar measures at our site, with a one-way system,

*continued from p29*

ending the shift 10 minutes earlier and getting rid of clocking out to avoid people congregating in one place.

"We also stopped dealing with disciplinarys so that the reps and managers had the time to deal with the sheer volume of work that was coming at us through policy changes.

"A big one for us were pick rates. Because we had to implement social distancing on the warehouse floor staff couldn't pick as quickly as they normally would. We convinced the company to re-measure and the pick rate went down from 90 to 88. This was only a guide, there was some leeway, and no-one was disciplined for not reaching the pick rate.

"My workload was very heavy; I was on the training team as well as carrying out my rep duties. We would put in our eight-hour shift at work, deal with queries from members and then do our evening call with Brian, which could last between an hour and an hour-and-a-half.

"Communication was key in this. Thankfully, we were already using WhatsApp groups and Teams to stay in touch and support one another. During the pandemic digital communications became indispensable. It was the only method of communication that could deal with the speed of change and the sheer amount of work we had to get through.

"We worked hard and did what we could to make the site safe. We also had to manage the change with our colleagues which can be a challenge when you're dealing with hundreds of people, all with different ideas and needs.

"There's a big reps' team on site, and we couldn't have done this without all of us working together and supporting one another. So, a big thank you to all the reps at the West Thurrock site for everything they did in supporting members and one another."



# GET READY FOR MEMBERSHIP WEEK 18-24 OCTOBER 2021

**D**uring the pandemic many recruitment activities were halted or looked very different however now that the restrictions have eased, the union is once again looking towards recruitment. Usdaw's holding a membership week in October to try and strengthen its membership.

The last year has shown the value of being in a trade union. That's why it's more important than ever that reps continue to recruit new members so that they have access to the benefits of Usdaw membership. Also, it's vital that we maintain our membership levels so that we can continue to be a strong and influential voice for our members.

## START PLANNING FOR MEMBERSHIP WEEK WITH THIS CHECKLIST:

- Speak to your manager about time off to organise an event.
- Order recruitment leaflets and promotional materials in advance.
- Identify areas/departments in your workplace where membership is low.
- Arrange your team of reps on a rota to cover all shifts.
- Contact your area organiser or local office for help.
- Contact the Network/Arena team with details of your event and to discuss photographs and coverage in the magazines.

Here's a short refresher to recruiting:

### THE VALUE OF INDUCTIONS

Many Usdaw agreements give reps time off to recruit at inductions. However, due to the pandemic,

changes to the process may have been agreed. Speak to your manager/area organiser to clarify the process if you are unsure.

### REASONS TO JOIN USDAW

Better pay, safer workplaces, advice and support, legal and accident cover and member offers and discounts are all good reasons to join.

Use success stories. Have you secured flexible working for a colleague? Did a member win an accident injury claim using Usdaw's legal service? Have you won a grievance? Do you save money using the cinema discount? Give real life examples so that new starters get a clear idea of what the union can do.

### COVID-19 WINS

Behind the scenes Usdaw lobbied the Government and employers to ensure that the needs of Usdaw members were taken into consideration when policy decisions to deal with the pandemic were made, including winning 10 per cent pay bonuses, getting sick pay from day one, enhanced colleague discounts, furlough for workers unable to work and improved health and safety measures with enhanced social distancing, plastic screens and limiting the number of customers in stores.

### RECRUITMENT CHAT

Here are some of the issues that workers may raise when they are asked to join the union, with some suggested responses.

#### *I can't afford to join*

No one underestimates money

worries but it's a question of priorities – you wouldn't drive your car without insurance or leave your house uninsured, so think of union contributions as your workplace insurance.

#### *I'm part-time and don't work enough hours to join the union.*

One in three Usdaw members work part-time. Part-time workers get all the same benefits as full-time workers. The terms and conditions of most part-time workers have been won by unions negotiating for them – the issues that affect full-time workers also affect part-timers.

#### *Why should I join the union, I get all the same benefits anyway?*

No you don't! You get the same terms and conditions that the union negotiates for its members. However, you wouldn't get union advice or representation and you would have to meet your own legal costs if you had a very serious problem or accident at work.

### JOINING ONLINE

Employees at Tesco, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Argos, the Co-op and many other employers are now able to join online through the Usdaw website and have their monthly contributions deducted from their wages rather than having to complete a direct debit form. For reps, this makes recruiting members at these workplaces easier and quicker than ever before and eliminates the use of paper forms. The form can be accessed at: [www.usdaw.org.uk/join](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/join)

More info at: [www.usdaw.org.uk](http://www.usdaw.org.uk)





# WHEN YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM ATTACKS

**A**n autoimmune disease is a condition in which the immune system mistakenly attacks the body. The immune system is a complex network of special cells and organs that defend the body from germs like bacteria and viruses. In an autoimmune disease, the immune system mistakes part of the body, like joints or skin, as invaders and attacks the healthy cells.

## Who is at risk?

- Women of childbearing age are more likely to get immune diseases.
- Some autoimmune diseases are more common in certain ethnic groups for example type 1 diabetes in white people.

## What causes autoimmune diseases?

- *Genetics* - Certain autoimmune diseases, like multiple sclerosis and lupus, run in families.
- *Environment* - Researchers suspect environmental factors like exposure to chemicals or solvents could be involved.
- *Infections* - Viral and bacterial infections are linked to many autoimmune diseases.
- *Diet* - A 'Western' diet is another suspected risk factor for developing autoimmune disease. Eating high-fat, high-sugar, and

highly processed foods is linked to inflammation, which might set off an immune response.

- **Smoking** – Research has linked smoking to a number of autoimmune diseases, including lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, hyperthyroidism and MS.

### What are the symptoms?

Although individual autoimmune diseases have their own symptoms which can come and go, the early symptoms of many autoimmune diseases are very similar:

- Fatigue
- Achy muscles
- Swelling and redness
- Low-grade fever
- Trouble concentrating
- Numbness and tingling in the hands and feet
- Hair loss
- Skin rashes

### Autoimmune Diseases

Autoimmune diseases include:

- **Type 1 Diabetes** – the immune system attacks and destroys insulin-producing cells in the pancreas.
- **Rheumatoid Arthritis** – the immune system attacks the joints causing soreness and stiffness.
- **Psoriasis** – causes skin cells to multiply too quickly which build up and form inflamed red patches.
- **Multiple Sclerosis** – the immune system attacks the protective coating around the nerves. the damage affects the brain and spinal cord.
- **Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (LSE)** – a disease that can damage the joints, skin, kidneys, heart, lungs and other parts of the body.
- **Inflammatory bowel disease** – a disease that causes chronic inflammation of the digestive tract for example Crohn's.
- **Graves' Disease** – attacks the thyroid gland in the neck, causing it to produce too much of its hormones, which causes nervousness, a fast heartbeat, heat intolerance and weight loss.

### Supporting members with autoimmune diseases

Someone with an autoimmune disease may be entitled to the protection of the Equality Act (Disability Discrimination Act in Northern Ireland). This can help them get the right support at work because the Equality Act gives members important legal rights.

Autoimmune diseases can have an impact on attendance and performance, which could lead to them being disciplined under capability procedures or absence management policies. They may also find that aspects of their job make their condition worse.

To support a member with an autoimmune disease a rep would need to show that the member fits under the definition of a disabled person under the Act. If you can show that the member meets this definition you will have a much stronger case in arguing that the employer should support the member.

### Conditions automatically covered under the Act

The only conditions automatically covered are MS, cancer, HIV/AIDS or being registered blind/ partially sighted.

### What you need to do to cover a member under the Act

For all other conditions it needs to be demonstrated that a member meets the definition of a disabled person as set out in the Act.

To do this you need to look at the following five points:

#### **Does the member have a physical or mental impairment?**

Auto immune diseases such as diabetes would fall under a physical impairment.

#### **Is it more than a trivial condition?**

You would have to show that the impact on the member's life is more than trivial. Keeping a diary can help to document the effects.

#### **Has it/will it last a year or more?**

The member does not have to be constantly in pain or experiencing symptoms. People may feel better or worse at certain times, therefore conditions that fluctuate can be counted.

#### **What would happen if they stopped taking medication?**

In deciding whether someone is disabled the effect any medication or treatment is ignored.

#### **Does it affect my everyday life?**

It is important to ask the member to outline how the condition affects them at work and in their daily life. Then go through a typical day with them and ask how their symptoms affect their day-to-day activities such as getting out of bed, bathing, getting dressed, eating, travelling to work etc.

You can look at: Mobility, manual dexterity, lifting everyday things, co-ordination, speech, memory, hearing, concentration, eyesight and learning/understanding.

If you can show that the member meets each of the five criteria listed, then they will be entitled to the protection of the Equality Act (DDA in Northern Ireland).

### Reasonable Adjustments

Once a member is classed as disabled under the Equality Act, (DDA in Northern Ireland), then their employer has a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments in the workplace that take account of the member's condition to ensure they are not at a disadvantage.

There isn't 'a one size fits all' approach as autoimmune diseases affect people differently.

Therefore, it's best to speak to the member about their experience when discussing any changes. They will be the expert on how their condition affects them and what support would help them at work. Changes could include; changing elements of their job, transferring to a different role or flexible hours.



# DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR PENSION IS INVESTED?

**A** 2020 survey found that just a fifth of women in the UK are aware that their pension savings are invested in the stock market, and when men were included 69 per cent of the country's workers were ignorant as to how their workplace pension scheme works.

The Organisation of Economic development (OECD) calculates that the UK workforce has a combined pension pot of £2.6 trillion. However, unless you take ownership of your pension fund it could be invested in areas such as deforestation and fossil fuels.

Many workplace pension plans

use a default investment fund; this means that unless you specify where your money is to be invested it's invested in a default fund chosen by the pension provider, such as in the fossil fuel industry.

A term widely used to categorise funds which seek to minimise harm to the environment amongst other aims are 'ethical funds' otherwise referred to as ESG investment funds. In this case E stands for the impact the companies the fund invests in have on the environment. Social in this respect means investing to protect society. For example, by considering how companies treat their suppliers and employees,

and whether they offer equal job opportunities. Governance means supporting sound business practices when investing. For example, by trying to make sure that executive pay is tied to performance, company boards reflect society and minority shareholders are protected.

There is also a push towards greater transparency in the pensions sector. New legislation in the EU and UK, for example, requires greater disclosure of companies' exposure to climate change and their contribution to it.

To learn more about ethical investments go to [makemymoneymatter.co.uk](https://www.makemymoneymatter.co.uk)

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## PENSION NEWS

### ECONOMY IMPACTED BY OVER FIFTIES LEAVING WORK

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has warned that the exit of workers aged between 50 and 65 from the workforce could negatively impact both individuals' finances and the wider economy.

The ONS's 'Living longer: impact of working from home on older workers' study estimated that if the employment rate of people in the age group matched that of those aged 35 to 49 years, it would add more than 5 per cent to UK gross domestic product, equating to around £88bn.

### OVER FIFTIES WANT THE GOVERNMENT TO KEEP THE TRIPLE LOCK PROMISE

A Canada Life report found that almost half of UK adults support the triple lock promise – although it found a big generational divide.

The triple lock is a promise that the state pension will increase each year in line with inflation (Consumer Prices Index), increasing average wages, or 2.5 per cent, whichever is highest.

Over 50's are much more likely to want to keep the triple lock promise with almost six in ten (59 per cent) supportive of maintaining it compared to around a third (34 per cent) of those under 50. Women are perhaps more likely to see both sides of the argument, with more than a quarter (27 per cent) saying they don't know, compared to less than one in ten (9 per cent) men. The pandemic has brought the triple lock under scrutiny as the coronavirus furlough scheme has led to an artificially high increase to wages, which could raise the state pension by around 8 per cent. There are concerns that this will be perceived unfair during a time when the Government is considering a tax rise for working people.

### FCA RELAUNCHES SCAMSMART CAMPAIGN

New research from The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) found that savers are nine times more likely to accept advice from someone online than in person. With over £2 million lost to pension scams since the start of 2021, the FCA are urging savers to 'flip the context' and imagine what they would do if they received pension advice from a stranger while enjoying a quiet pint in their local, or out shopping with friends.

### WOMEN HIT BY GENDER PENSION GAP

UK women have smaller pension pots than men at every stage of their career, with the gap widening to as much as 56 per cent at retirement. After analysing data from approximately four million of its pension scheme members, Legal & General found that the gender pension gap remains largely unchanged at 17 per cent.

Low pay and caring responsibilities are major

contributing factors to the gender pension gap as women often take part-time positions or become self-employed to manage family commitments. Gendered differences in the workplace and in the family will be reflected in retirement wealth.

### HAVE YOU CHECKED YOUR FORECAST?

Four in 10 fail to check their state pension forecast before retirement.

The research was conducted by Opinium on behalf of Just Group among 1,043 UK retired and semi-retired adults aged greater than 55 between 21st and 26th April 2021.

### DWP TOO SLOW TO TELL PENSION AGE CHANGE

The parliamentary and health service ombudsman has ruled that government officials were too slow to tell many women they would be affected by the rising state pension age.

The 1995 Pensions Act changed the law so that women would no longer be able to claim their State Pension at 60.

The ombudsman received a significant number of complaints about the way this was communicated by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). Many women said that they were not aware of the changes, and experienced significant financial loss and emotional distress as a result.

The investigation found the Government did not act quickly enough and should have written to the affected women at least 28 months earlier than it did.

### IMPROVE YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF PENSIONS

Usdaw's online pension home study course will help you understand the different types of pension scheme on offer today and help you improve your pension knowledge. You will build up confidence about your own pension, which will help you answer other people's pension queries in your workplace.

The course is straightforward and easy to follow and is completely free for Usdaw members. It consists of four small modules, each taking approximately 30 minutes to complete. You can access the course via this link:

[www.usdaw.org.uk/Members/Training-Development/Pensions-Home-Study](https://www.usdaw.org.uk/Members/Training-Development/Pensions-Home-Study)

Further information can be found on the Usdaw Pensions website, which contains a host of pension related information about workplace, personal and state pensions:

[www.usdaw.org.uk/pensions](https://www.usdaw.org.uk/pensions)

# #WRD21



## SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR ANTI-RACISM ON 22 OCTOBER

**W**ear Red Day is an anti-racism awareness day where you can show your support and raise money for the educational charity Show Racism the Red Card.

Euro 2020 exposed the ugly side of football when three black players, Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho and Bukayo Saka received a wave of racist abuse after they missed penalties in the final. *Network* speaks to Paul Kearns, deputy chief executive of the charity Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC), on how trade unionists can play a part in tackling racism.

### SRtRC is the UK's largest anti-racism educational charity, can you tell us what it does?

SRtRC uses high profile football players to help tackle racism in society. The charity was established in 1996 when the then Newcastle United goalkeeper Shaka Hislop had

racist abuse hurled at him by four young teenagers when he was filling up his car. When they realised it was Shaka Hislop, the football player, they started singing his name and then asked him for his autograph.

This left a big impression on Shaka, who realised he could use his status as a professional football player to educate people about racism. At the charity's first ever event, Shaka and fellow teammate John Beresford visited Gosforth High School in the North East to speak to pupils about their lived experiences.

It was very powerful to have two players, one black, one white, talk to pupils about racism and its consequences. Shaka talked about his experience of racism and the damaging effect it can have. John talked about his younger days when he engaged in racist behaviour and how his views completely changed when he started playing football

with black players. Twenty-five years on, Shaka is the honorary president of the campaign, John received an MBE for his anti-racist work and we have reached almost a million young people.

### Why are players taking the knee?

Premier League players started taking the knee to highlight the racial inequality and discrimination faced by black players in football. The team made a collective decision to take the knee during Euro 2020 to demonstrate their opposition to racism.

Gareth Southgate, England manager, and his squad made it clear that taking the knee was an anti-racist gesture and not a political one. It was a peaceful way of protesting discrimination, injustice and inequality. After this clarification, anyone who continues to boo this gesture is protesting anti-racism.

First Series Summer School show their support for SRtRC



IN A RACIST SOCIETY,  
IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO  
BE NON-RACIST, WE  
MUST BE ANTI-RACIST

**ANGELA DAVIS**

POLITICAL ACTIVIST AND AUTHOR

### Were you surprised by the abuse black players received after missing penalties in the final shootout?

Sadly no. The Professional Footballers' Association found that two in five Premier League players received abusive messages during the 2020-2021 season. Racist abuse peaked in May 2021 and homophobic abuse was also prevalent throughout the season.

After the Euro final, the fallout on social media was horrendous. The UK Football Policing Unit received 600 reports of racist comments sent to the black players, 207 of these were deemed as criminal and 11 people have been arrested so far.

### What factors are contributing to this level of racist abuse?

Between 2013-2018 hate crime doubled and the vast majority of those crimes were based on race or ethnicity. Many factors play a part in this: the decimation of industry, globalisation, stagnant wages, underemployment and job insecurity. This coupled with the erosion of the welfare state and public services have all caused the

febrile conditions we need for hate to thrive.

In this country, we've had a Conservative Government that implemented austerity for a decade and when you have austerity you have certain groups who are scapegoated. It's a tactic that Governments have used over and over again because it's effective in drawing anger away from their political decisions and bringing it down on people who have no power.

Even before the EU referendum sections of the media played an important role in mainstreaming far-right views and elevating the threat posed by immigration. During the referendum we saw a ramping up of this rhetoric and as a result there was a rise in racist abuse and attacks.

Football has always been a mirror of our society. If you have racism in society, you will have racism in football.

### How can trade unionists fight racism?

Trade unions are built on solidarity and have a proud history of fighting the far right and their politics of

division and blame. The far right always targets specific groups such as ethnic minorities, religious minorities, refugees, women and the LGBT+ community so we need to stand together in solidarity and oppose all forms of hate.

Organisations can look at football itself to see how it has tried to tackle the issue of racism within the game. It's been a multi-layered approach with fans at the grassroots level making it clear they didn't want their players subjected to this kind of abuse. Football authorities have also been working hard to educate fans and trying to recruit diverse players, coaches and managers.

As individuals we have the power to change things. We can act as allies to a colleague who is being subjected to racism, we can challenge our friends and family if they say something racist or engage in racist behaviour and we can show our support for anti-racism by taking part in events like Wear Red Day.

These small ripples can be the catalyst for huge societal change.



# PROLONGED SITTING OR STANDING IS BAD FOR YOUR HEALTH

*A new report recommends some 'safe limits' for sitting and standing in order to avoid injuries*

The EU's European Agency for Safety and Health has issued two reports on the health problems from prolonged standing and sitting at work. They explore the health effects, provide prevention strategies to avoid injury from prolonged standing and sitting and give guidelines on 'safe limits'. While the main health hazards from both are musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) such as low back pain, there are other significant effects on long-term health.

## What is prolonged constrained standing and how can it impact health?

Prolonged standing can be defined as standing continuously for more than one hour or standing for more than four hours in a day. Prolonged constrained or static standing also involves standing on the spot (movement restricted to a 20 cm radius) and not being able to obtain temporary relief by walking or sitting.

Health effects include: pain and disorders of the legs, knees, ankles and feet, low back pain, high blood pressure/restricted blood flow, heart disease, varicose veins, fatigue and problems in pregnancy.

## What is prolonged sitting and how can it impact health?

Prolonged sitting can be defined as sitting for two hours or longer at a time. It has three main characteristics: low energy expenditure, a seated body posture

and static loading (physical exertion to maintain the same position).

Health effects include: low back pain, neck and shoulder complaints, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease, obesity, certain types of cancers, mental health issues and premature death.

## Are these a significant concern for our membership?

Yes. We have a significant number of members whose work involves prolonged standing and sitting. Prolonged standing is undertaken by our members in warehouses, production lines and customer service desks. Prolonged sitting is undertaken by members in offices, drivers, assembly lines, call centres and checkouts.

## What regulations and guidelines are there to help?

There are no specific regulations or guidelines on standing or sitting at work. Employers do have a general duty to carry out risk assessments for any significant occupational health hazard and to put in place preventive measures based on their assessments. In selecting the measures, they should avoid risks if possible and adapt work to the worker.

The assessment must also take into account any individual workers who may be particularly sensitive to risk - for example, pregnant workers, the older workforce and reasonable adjustments for those with a disability.



## What guidelines do the reports recommend?

The reports emphasise that it is important to understand that the opposite of sitting is not standing - it is moving. Simply alternating between sitting and standing at the same workstation can be helpful but it is not enough, as you are still alternating between two static postures. Regular breaks and other changes to work to encourage some movement are still likely to be needed.

The reports do recommend some 'safe limits' for sitting or standing.

### ■ Standing at work

Avoid prolonged constrained standing for more than an hour continuously and a total of not more than four hours per day. When standing is necessary,

ING



standing on a fixed spot should be substituted by more active or dynamic standing. A minibreak to move around every 30 minutes is important.

#### ■ **Sitting at work**

Spend 50 per cent or less of your working day sitting; Avoid sitting for any length of time - aim to get up at least every 20-30 minutes; Always get up for at least 10 minutes after two hours of sitting - sit less whenever possible; Do not exceed five hours of sitting at work each day.

#### What can be done in the workplace?

The reports contain useful advice that you can share with colleagues and with your employer. Discuss if it can be considered in any risk

assessment that is carried out in the workplace. Often simple and low-cost solutions can be implemented:

#### ■ **Supermarket checkouts**

Allow operators to swap between sitting and standing when they need to; encourage workers to move rather than standing on a fixed spot, make sure seats are adjustable and work properly.

#### ■ **Petrol filling stations**

Allow workers to alternate between sitting and standing and provide an adjustable seat and screen.

#### ■ **Factory production line**

Introduce micro-breaks and task rotation.

The key is consulting with employers

### 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

and engaging with members. Worker involvement is essential in order to improve awareness and instil a permanent change. Remember, workers should 'sit when they need to, stand when they want to and move when they can'.  
**www.osha.europa.eu**  
search either **standing report** or **sitting report**

## HSE UPDATE THEIR GUIDANCE

# VENTILATION AT WORK DURING COVID



Experts now agree there are three routes of transmission for the coronavirus at work. Close contact with someone who is infectious as they exhale large droplets particularly if they cough or sneeze but also when speaking or breathing hard; contact with surfaces where the large droplets containing the virus may have settled or been transferred when someone touches their face and then touches the surface; and airborne transmission by aerosols particularly in enclosed, poorly ventilated rooms.

Early advice on controlling the virus focussed more on preventing close contact (with the two-metre distancing rule) and cleaning of surfaces.

HSE have now updated their guidance on ventilation in enclosed workplaces to emphasise this important route of transmission. The new guidance includes a helpful video which explains the need for good ventilation.

Covid-19 spreads through the air. Either as large droplets, when in

close contact (less than two metres) or as small particles (aerosols), which can stay airborne and build up over time in enclosed areas at distances beyond two metres. Good workplace ventilation is important as it helps with reducing aerosols lingering and building up in the air.

Good ventilation is best achieved through natural ventilation – letting in fresh air through windows and doors. If this is not possible, or inadequate, then mechanical ventilation may be needed – using fans and ducts to draw in a constant flow of fresh air. As a last resort, if neither of these is possible, particularly in smaller enclosed spaces, then employers may need to consider air cleaning systems, which filter the air. For example, in food manufacturing, workers often spend time in enclosed rooms where the air is re-circulated and fresh air is limited because of energy-saving and hygiene restrictions. Air filters using uv-light or HEPA filters can sterilise the air or trap the particles that carry the virus.

Ventilation is not the only control measure for Covid-19 at work. The other routes of transmission are still important so reducing close contact, maintaining two-metre distancing where possible and good hand hygiene and cleaning are still needed. Wearing of face-coverings to control the spread of the virus at source may also still be needed in some workplaces. For example, in a busy supermarket where the ventilation is likely to be quite good, customers and staff should still be advised to wear face-coverings if they can.

But good ventilation has other benefits as well. It can reduce the risk of other airborne viruses such as cold and flu and it prevents the build-up of any harmful gases or fumes in the workplace. Employers have a legal duty under the Workplace (Health Safety and Welfare) Regulations to ensure an adequate supply of fresh or purified air.

[www.hse.gov.uk  
search Covid Ventilation](https://www.hse.gov.uk/search/Covid%20Ventilation)



## RESOURCES AND RECORDINGS

## CATCH-UP WITH THE HAZARDS CONFERENCE



The Hazards Campaign has posted on their website the recordings and resources from their 2021 online conference - *Fighting for the fundamental right to safe and healthy work*.

Speakers included Sharan Burrow, general secretary of the global trade union confederation ITUC on the global challenges facing trade unions, Richard Wagstaff, New Zealand Council of Trade Unions President on their approach to the Covid-19 pandemic and Andy McDonald MP, Labour's shadow

employment secretary, and many more.

Resources are available from the workshops that cover a wide range of H&S areas including asbestos at work, work-related stress and safety reps organising creatively.

The recordings of the conference and the online resources are an excellent update on workplace issues for union health and safety reps. They highlight the value of the conference as the largest health and safety event in the trade union calendar and show how important it

can be for our activists to consider asking their branches for support in attending, if it's in person next year. The conference helps reps to gain new skills and learn innovative and practical solutions to many of the issues facing workers but also provides opportunities to network, exchange experience and information and learn from safety reps and activists from other unions, sectors and jobs across the UK. Hazards conference recordings and resources available at:

[www.hazardscampaign.org.uk](http://www.hazardscampaign.org.uk)

## RIDDOR UNDER-REPORTING CRITICISM

## WORK-RELATED FATALITIES INCREASE

The Health and Safety Executive has released its report on work-related deaths for 2021. Despite the closure of many workplaces because of the pandemic the figures show an increase from 113 in 2019/20 to 124 in 2020/21.

The figures do not include any deaths from Covid-19 that may have been work-related. The TUC and

others have been critical of the way that HSE has handled reporting of Covid-19 under the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR). Despite the fact that there have been over 15,000 deaths of people of work-related age, only 380 have been reported under RIDDOR and many fewer have been investigated

by the HSE:

[www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk) search RIDDOR

The most common causes of deaths at work in the reported statistics are falls from height and being struck by a vehicle – both are significant hazards for Usdaw members.

[www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/pdf/fatalinjuries.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/pdf/fatalinjuries.pdf)

# Member Offers

## CARS & TRANSPORT

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

## INSURANCE

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

## MONEY & FINANCE

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

## HEALTH & BEAUTY

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

## LEISURE & ENTERTAINMENT

Beer52  
Cinema at home: Chili.com  
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

## HOLIDAYS

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

## SHOPPING

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

## MISCELLANEOUS

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



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

[www.usdaw.org.uk/legal](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/legal)

# [www.usdaw.org.uk/offers](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/offers)\*

\*Terms and Conditions for individual offers on the website.

Find out more

[www.usdaw.org.uk/offers](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/offers)\*

★ AUTUMN OFFERS ★ AUTUMN OFFERS ★ AUTUMN OFFERS ★

**Save for the future**

Open a savings plan and get a shopping voucher worth up to £55. Our endorsed savings partner, Shepherds Friendly, is offering a Love2shop voucher worth up to £55\* when you open a savings plan with them, if you are a member of Usdaw. The friendly society offer savings plans for the whole family, ranging from Stocks and Share ISAs for yourself to Junior ISAs for your child, and more. To find out more about Shepherds Friendly range of savings plans call 0800 526 249 or visit:

[www.shepherdsfriendly.co.uk/usdaw](http://www.shepherdsfriendly.co.uk/usdaw) \*

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



**The Co-op Credit Union - take control of your money**

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: <http://bit.ly/joinccu> \*

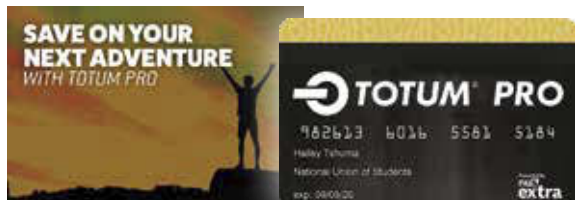


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# STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS

Two new deputy regional secretaries, three area organisers, two training officers and a senior research assistant start in their new roles with Usdaw

## JAMIE GULL

**Former area organiser Jamie Gull has started his role as deputy regional secretary of the Southern region and is based at the Morden office.**

Jamie, 43, was promoted to deputy regional secretary after cutting his teeth as an area organiser for over a decade.

Jamie took on the role of night rep when he worked in logistics for the Co-op and was in this role for the four years he worked there. As an Usdaw rep Jamie successfully completed both Academy1 (in 2008) and Academy2 (in 2009). In 2010 he was appointed area organiser in the Eastern division.

“When I was an area organiser, I looked after members in central London. Logistically this was a really challenging patch because stores in central London are largely convenience which means you have to get round lots of small stores to meet with reps and members. However, the challenges served as a

great apprenticeship.

“I’ve only been in post for a couple of weeks but already I’m loving the role. We’ve had a successful Freedom From Fear campaign and it’s been great seeing the area organisers and meeting with the rep teams.

“My remit is the recruitment and organising agenda and I want to focus on driving this forward post-pandemic. I also want to focus on rep engagement by ensuring they have the training and coaching they need to really excel in their role.”

## PHIL WAITE

**Former area organiser Phil Waite has started his role as deputy regional secretary of the Eastern region and is based at the Waltham Cross office.**

Phil, 54, started his career as a technician in the theatre industry where he joined BECTU and became a rep. He then worked in Tesco retail, in the warehouse, before becoming a LGV driver, a role he did

for 18 years.

“I have always been active in the labour and trade union movement,” said Phil. “Before becoming an official, I was an Usdaw rep for 10 years, served on the Tesco European Works Council and Usdaw’s Divisional Political Committee. I was also a Labour councillor up until the May elections.

“As an area organiser I had responsibility for various companies in west Essex and north London. I did this role for seven years and absolutely loved it, I especially enjoyed working with the reps to help them develop and gain confidence in their role.

“I’ve only been in the deputy regional secretary role for a couple of weeks but it’s been very busy. We’ve just had the Freedom From Fear campaign and I am already planning for membership week later on in the year. I’m looking forward to getting out into workplaces and meeting our reps. My focus will be on covid-recovery and ensuring our



Jamie Gull



Phil Waite



Stevie Cassidy

members don't pay the price for this crisis."

**STEVIE CASSIDY**

**Stevie Cassidy, former Tesco rep, becomes an area organiser within six years of getting involved with the union. Stevie has started her new role and will be based at the Redditch office.**

Stevie worked in Tesco Corby for eight years and was an Usdaw rep for five of those years. Since becoming a rep in 2015, she has completed a number of Usdaw training programmes including Academy 1 (2016), Academy 2 (2017) as well as the Lay Tutor Programme (2019).

"I became a rep because I don't like unfairness. When I see unfairness, I want to challenge it. And the best way to do that was by becoming a rep. Being a rep was really interesting as well as rewarding. People come to you when they are having the worst time so it feels good when you can help them.

"I only started yesterday so I don't know what area or employers I'll be covering. But I do know that I want our reps to be more politically engaged. I want to help them see the direct link between politics and their lives.

"My interest in politics was probably triggered when my nephew, who is a wheelchair user,

was struggling to get funding to make his house accessible. The council that was Tory-led was appalling. However, when my sister approached her Labour MP, he helped her get the funding she needed. This showed me that the people we vote for can directly influence our everyday lives."

**CRAIG MILLER**

**Craig Miller has started his role as the training officer for Scotland and will be based at the office in Glasgow.**

Craig, who trained in drama and education, worked in the education department of Scottish Opera for several years before working as the campaigns and communications officer for Dr Richard Simpson, Scottish Labour's shadow public health minister and then leader of the Labour Party Richard Leonard.

"I worked for the Labour Party for more than a decade and had many dealings with Usdaw over those years," said Craig, 35. "I was really impressed with the work Usdaw was doing particularly around the Freedom From Fear campaign.

"Thanks to Usdaw's sustained lobbying the Scottish Government brought in new legislation to protect retail workers from violence and abuse, following a Members' Bill by Scottish Labour MSP Daniel Johnson.

"The training officer's role gives

me the opportunity to go back to the education side of things so, I'm really looking forward to meeting our reps and helping them develop the skills and knowledge they need to recruit, organise and represent their colleagues effectively."

**CONNOR RAND**

**Former research assistant Connor Rand started his role as senior researcher in the Research and Policy Department in May.**

Connor graduated from the University of East Anglia in 2014 with a degree in history. As a student he was active in the Labour Party and was elected as student union officer for two terms following his graduation, before starting work for the Labour Party in 2016 and becoming an organiser for the party in the Eastern region in 2017. He started working at Usdaw in 2018 as the politics research assistant in the Research and Policy Department.

In August 2019 he became the research assistant to a national officer and worked on a number of sector agreements. In 2021 he was promoted to senior researcher.

"When I was active in the Labour Party I worked closely with trade unions, therefore coming to work for Usdaw's politics section was a natural move," said Connor.

"In my new role I have been given responsibility of preparing



Craig Miller



Connor Rand



Martyn Warwick

Usdaw's evidence for the Low Pay Commission and working with officials on industrial disputes, as well as working on our New Deal for Workers campaign. I'm looking forward to using my experience to deliver for reps and members."

**MARTYN WARWICK**

**Martyn Warwick, project worker for the North East will be relocating to Manchester to take up his new role after being redeployed as a training officer at head office.**

Martyn began his career in Tesco Bridlington and worked in the petrol filling station for nine years. During his time there he became a committed union learning rep. He also completed a degree in humanities and classical studies through the Open University which further fuelled his interest in learning and education.

"I got involved with the union through the Union Learning Fund (ULF). The project worker role was really exciting as the ULF was new back then and I got to work with my colleagues to build it from the ground up. My favourite part of the job was helping reps develop and grow so they could take ownership of their projects and deliver learning themselves.

"In my new role, which I started last week, I will be responsible for delivering training in summer schools, the academies as well as area organiser and staff training. I'm also looking forward to developing the learning offer to see where I can take it. I love coaching and mentoring so I'm hoping I'll get to do more of that in this role."

**RACHEL GOODWIN**

**Usdaw activist Rachel Goodwin has started in her role as area organiser in the Eastern region and will be based at the Bury St Edmunds office.**

Rachel, 53, started working for Tesco in 1998 and has been an

Usdaw activist since 2005. She's held a number of union positions including shop steward, health and safety rep, union learning rep and branch secretary. During her 16 years as an activist, she also completed several periods of stand down.

"I don't come from a trade union background so learning to become a rep was a steep learning curve. It was challenging as well as being deeply gratifying.

"I've done quite a bit of stand down and found that I loved recruiting. My last bout of stand down focused on recruiting reps rather than members.

"My patch is a good mix of everything and will include Cambridgeshire and a little of West Suffolk. I have the 'big four' supermarkets in all the different formats as well as small independents. My priority will be building rep teams that are sustainable, self-sufficient and capable of confidently growing the membership."

**STEVE NEWMAN**

**Former Tesco National Forum rep, Steve Newman, starts his new role as area organiser and will be based at the Cardiff office.**

Steve worked at Tesco Cheltenham for 18 years and became an Usdaw rep in 2007.

He was also the health and safety

rep for six years, branch chair for 12 and sat on the Tesco National Forum, the body responsible for negotiating pay, for 11 years. Steve completed several periods of stand down during his time as Usdaw rep.

"I became a rep because we had no active reps in my store," said Steve, 38. "I'm quite outspoken so I knew I could help my colleagues and voice their concerns.

In my various trade union roles, I gained a huge amount of experience on how to deal with member queries, representation and recruiting. Being on stand down gave me a good understanding of recruiting in different companies and working with different agreements.

"My patch is mostly retail and will cover Newport, Cwmbran and a bit of the Valleys.

I only started last week so I'm still finding my feet but I am planning on running some campaign days in stores particularly Legal Plus days. Most non-members don't know Usdaw provides a legal service and when they see a solicitor in store, they tend to sign up right away. Long-term I want to use my experience of recruiting and organising to help reps gain the skills they need to recruit in their workplaces and help grow the union."



Rachel Goodwin



Steve Newman





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