

NETWORK

THE BIMONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR USDAW ACTIVISTS – NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2020



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LOOKING FORWARD TO A NEW YEAR

Since March, Usdaw reps have been working throughout the pandemic as well as supporting their members during what has been an extremely difficult time. I want to thank every single rep who has put their members first, you have shown the real value of trade union membership.

It is unclear what 2021 will bring therefore planning union business is much harder when there is no certainty. However, I can reassure reps that the union will continue with its agenda of fighting for its members by trying to negotiate pay rises with employers, lobbying Government for the protection of shopworkers against abuse and violence, demanding a new deal for key workers, lobbying employers to give workers a proper break at Christmas, trying to save the Union Learning Fund as well as the day-to-day work of supporting and representing members when they need us.

We have also started planning for ADM in April 2021 however only time will tell whether this will be a virtual or face-to-face conference.

At the time of writing, most of the UK is under some kind of restrictions or lockdown and it is unclear which restrictions would be lifted in time for Christmas or extended into 2021.

I recognise that this means Christmas will probably look very different for all of us. Most work dos, Christmas parties



and New Year Eve celebrations have already been cancelled as employers and cities try to comply with the ever-changing regulations. The Rule of Six, social distancing and whether or not we can see our family and friends will make it a challenging festive period for all.

Amongst all the gloom, news of a potential vaccine has brought a ray of hope to people across the world. Until then, we can all play a part in helping us get through this crisis by working together to stop the spread of the virus and looking after one another.

I wish you and your family a safe and happy Christmas and New Year.

Usdaw General Secretary

Paddy Lillis

FOR YOUR
USDAW NOTICEBOARD

Usdaw

**YOUNG
WORKERS**



Supporting Young Workers

Being a member of Usdaw means...

- You will be protected at work.
- You'll have access to all the information you need on your rights at work.
- You'll get free legal advice if you have an accident - wherever that happens.
- You'll also get money off a range of services including theme parks and cinemas.

For more information about your rights at work speak to your Usdaw rep or contact your local Usdaw office on **0800 030 80 30** or visit www.usdaw.org.uk/youngworkers

To join Usdaw speak to your Usdaw rep or visit www.usdaw.org.uk/join

#YoungWorkers

f y t v i

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FREEDOM FROM FEAR SUMMIT 2020

Shopworkers shared their experience of abuse at online listening events hosted by Usdaw and Co-op in Wales, the North East, Scotland, the North West, London and the Midlands.

Each meeting was chaired by the Usdaw divisional officer for that region and was also attended by Police and Crime Commissioners and Police Chief Constables.

Shopworkers talked about their experiences of being on the frontline of the pandemic. All agreed that necessary Coronavirus safety measures are a key flashpoint and staff were really worried about contracting the virus when customers don't follow the rules. Most of the shopworkers agreed that that verbal abuse had become much worse during the pandemic.

They also talked about the adverse impact that daily threats and abuse had on their mental health and wanted higher profile policing around shops as well as consequences for those who threaten, abuse and assault staff.

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said:



"Usdaw and the Co-op organised this event to help engage with police and we were pleased to have representatives from across the country at the meeting. While we continue to work together on the ground to overcome these problems, we need Government intervention. However, the Government has offered little more than sympathy and rejected new legislation to create stiffer penalties for those who assault shopworkers."

Co-op head of retail risk health and safety Jenny Alleyne, said: "Shopworkers play an essential role serving

communities, yet they have to contend with unprecedented levels of violence and abuse daily. As a community retailer we see the impact of social issues in our stores, it affects all retailers and it's having a lasting impact on the lives of shopworkers. It should not be part of the job to be verbally abused, threatened or attacked and we will do everything in our power to ensure the Government puts greater legal protection in place so our colleagues can feel safer when they go into work."

Police and crime commissioner for Lancashire Clive

Grunshaw said: "Listening to shopworkers' experiences was a real eye opener.

"I look forward to working closely with Usdaw and the Co-op to tackle this important issue and make sure that the public are aware of what shopworkers face each day."

This issue is covered in more detail on p12-13. petition.parliament.uk/petitions/328621



NO MORE CASH FOR UPSKILLING

TORIES PLAN TO SCRAP UNION LEARNING FUND

The Government announced that it will be scrapping the Union Learning Fund in England, which delivers access to lifelong learning for around 200,000 workers each year. Usdaw, along with other trade unions and the TUC, is calling for the move to be reconsidered.

In a House of Commons debate the skills minister defended the government's decision to scrap the fund.

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: "It was deeply disappointing to hear the minister defend the closure of the much valued and unique UnionLearn, which shows that the Government fails to understand the value of what has been achieved over the last twenty years and the vital role union learning can play in delivering its own adult skills agenda.

"The minister wrongly described UnionLearn as 'niche', in fact it reaches the people other schemes do not, with workplace union reps supporting and guiding workers back into education.

"Many learners start with few or



no qualifications and have gone on to engage with higher level education, like an apprenticeship.

"Learning and re-skilling must be at the core of the COVID-19 recovery, so it makes no sense for the Government to end the Union Learning Fund next year. This unique scheme brings lifelong learning into many workplaces, pulling together the resources of employers, education providers and trade unions to give workers a second chance to learn.

"We welcome the cross-party support UnionLearn received in today's debate and note that not one Conservative backbencher turned up to defend the Government's decision.

"We urge MPs to support the Save Union Learn campaign and we continue to seek a change of heart from the Government."

Find out how you can help to save the Union Learning Fund on p20.

www.usdaw.org.uk/SaveUnionLearning

PROTECTING SHOPWORKERS

SCOTTISH ANTI-ABUSE LAW EDGES CLOSER

Usdaw welcomed protection of shopworkers legislation passing stage two in the Scottish Parliament, which would make it a specific offence to abuse, threaten or assault a shopworker.

The Protection of Workers (Retail and Age-restricted Goods and Services) (Scotland) Bill is promoted by Daniel Johnson MSP and will now move to the third and final stage.

Usdaw divisional officer Stewart Forrest said: "We welcome the

support of MSPs and congratulate Daniel Johnson MSP for the work he has done by introducing this Bill and driving it forward. Shopworkers have been on the frontline throughout the Coronavirus crisis, helping to ensure our communities remain fed, despite the risks of contracting the virus. As a result of the crisis, we have seen a doubling of abuse against shop staff.

"Traditional flashpoints, like shop theft, age-restricted sales

and serving alcohol, have now been overtaken by customer abuse because of social distancing measures and the requirement to wear face coverings. During this year's Respect for Shopworkers week Usdaw promoted the message that abuse is not part of the job. We are asking customers to understand that retail staff are key workers delivering an essential service and they deserve respect."

www.usdaw.org.uk/News

NATIONAL LIVING WAGE

CHANCELLOR ANNOUNCES 19p WAGE INCREASE

The chancellor's spending review in November announced an increase of 19p to the National Living Wage (NLW), a reduction of the qualifying age for the NLW to 23 and confirmed that the universal credit uplift of £20 will come to an end in March 2021.

Usdaw was disappointed that the increase did not meet its call for a minimum wage of £10 per hour and the chancellor did not take the opportunity to make the £20 uplift to universal credit permanent.

Usdaw general secretary Paddy

Lillis said: "We provided the Low Pay Commission with evidence of why we need a new deal for workers, which includes at least £10 per hour pay and an end to unjust rip-off youth rates. The chancellor missed the opportunity to fully recognise the huge efforts low-paid key workers have made through the pandemic.

"Millions of low-paid workers have provided essential services to ensure the country is fed through lockdown and will continue to do so. Usdaw members employed

in supermarkets, distribution warehouses, food processing sites and home delivery operations welcomed the key worker status, but that appreciation must not fade into the background when this crisis passes.

"There needs to be fundamental changes to the way society views its lowest paid workers. We need a new deal for the workers that includes a minimum wage of £10 per hour, the abolishing of youth rates and respect to ensure that retail jobs are no longer underpaid."

MPS' REPORT ON FLAWED SERVICE

CHANGES ADVISED FOR UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Usdaw has welcomed an MPs' report that addresses the universal credit five-week wait and calls on the Government to listen and act to help families out of poverty.

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: "The universal credit system has been plagued with problems and continues to be a failing project. The five-week wait period is not only unnecessary but makes life profoundly difficult for many claimants and their families

pushing them into debt, from which they struggle to recover.

"After completing their application, claimants must then wait for at least five weeks to receive their award. They can ask for an advance payment loan, which has to be paid back out of future universal credit payments. We welcome MPs' criticism of the current set-up and the call for change.

"We also welcome the committee recommending that the £20

increase in universal credit, introduced during the Coronavirus pandemic, continues beyond April. In these difficult times, it is astounding that the Government has not yet ruled out an income cut of around £1,000 for the poorest families.

"Usdaw has consistently called for the roll-out of universal credit to be halted, to allow a full review and overhaul of the Government scheme."

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at **WWW.USDAW.ORG.UK/WIN**

Sponsored by Usdaw Health and Dental Plan www.usdaw.org.uk/healthplan Closing date 15 January 2021. Terms apply.
Due to the current situation with Covid 19, the voucher will be despatched as soon as possible after the draw has taken place.

IN BRIEF

PIZZA EXPRESS

Pizza Express announced plans to close restaurants that could result in 1,100 job losses.

VIRGIN ATLANTIC

Virgin Atlantic is cutting a further 1,150 jobs and another 600 cabin crew have been placed on extended furlough beyond October. This was on top of 3,150 job losses previously announced.

COSTA COFFEE

Costa Coffee is to cut up to 1,650 jobs in its cafes – more than one in 10 of its workforce – as it said trading remained challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic.

PIZZA HUT

The owner of Pizza Hut restaurants in the UK will go ahead with plans to shut 29 sites, putting 450 jobs at risk.

WHITBREAD

The owner of the Premier Inn chain of hotels and Brewers Fayre restaurants plans to cut up to 6,000 jobs.

PENSION CROSSWORD WINNERS

The winners of the pension crossword published in the July/August issue of *Network* are Blanche Barnett (E045 Tesco Rugby) and Denise Edwards (H038 Morrisons Welling).

BCM FAREVA DISPUTE

INDUSTRIAL ACTION BALLOT



Usdaw is to ballot members on industrial action in a year-long dispute with BCM Ltd, which is part of the Fareva group and is based at the Boots site in Beeston, Nottinghamshire.

The company refused to make a pay offer for staff who have worked throughout the pandemic.

Usdaw national officer Daniel Adams said: "Following extensive dialogue with the company we have been unable to reach an agreement

"It is incredibly disappointing that we have found ourselves in the position where we feel we have no option but to ballot for industrial action. Having balloted our members on the company's final offer of a pay freeze, which was overwhelmingly rejected, the union had agreed to

pause discussions given the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic.

"When talks resumed the company continued to refuse to make any offer in relation to pay. We undertook a consultative industrial action ballot which showed a majority of members were willing to take action. The company maintain that they will not be making any investment in pay this year and as such, we are now looking to proceed to a formal industrial action ballot.

"We have confirmed to the business that we remain available for talks at any time and want to achieve a negotiated resolution to the current situation. However, for those talks to be meaningful we would need to see some willingness to compromise from the company."

CONSULTATION WITH SAINSBURY'S/ARGOS

BEST DEAL FOR STAFF PRIORITY

Usdaw is to enter into consultation meetings with Sainsbury's/Argos management over their proposed restructuring.

Usdaw national officer Dave Gill said: "Sainsbury's/Argos propose the permanent closure of a number of Argos stores and counter services in Sainsbury's supermarkets that were closed in March 2020. We will now

enter into meaningful consultation to examine the proposals.

"Usdaw is confident of securing redeployment within the business for the vast majority of staff affected. Our priority is to safeguard their jobs and achieve the best deal possible for staff. In the meantime, we are providing Usdaw members with the support and advice they need."

SECOND LOCKDOWN LEAVES MANY WORKERS STRUGGLING

Usdaw is calling for the furlough scheme to be topped up to at least the National Living Wage to avoid low-paid workers paying the price for the COVID-19 pandemic

Across all of the UK's nations, non-essential retail has been closed at some point during the autumn/winter period. At the end of October, the Government announced that England would be entering a four-week national lockdown.

This followed a 'circuit breaker' lockdown in Wales. There were also increased restrictions introduced in parts of Scotland and a two-week circuit breaker announced from 27 November in Northern Ireland.

Guidance changes on a regular basis. For the most up-to-date guidance please go to [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) or www.usdaw.org.uk/Help-Advice/Coronavirus-Update

Essential retail remained open

Essential retail has remained open throughout the pandemic and when non-food retail has been closed, many of the shops that stayed open have been particularly busy.

Usdaw has made it clear to employers that if they are able to remain open, they should carry on implementing social distancing measures. They must also support Usdaw members when they are encouraging customers to follow social distancing.

Usdaw will continue to raise this with employers and is also putting out a clear message to the public, that they should keep following social distancing guidelines when shopping. All employers should have carried out a full risk assessment and taken measures to keep staff

safe. These measures should be reviewed to make sure that they are being properly implemented.

Job Retention Scheme

Where workplaces are closed due to restrictions employers may choose to place staff onto the Job Retention Scheme.

The Job Retention Scheme has been extended to March 2021. This means furlough pay will be available for those who need it throughout the four-week lockdown restrictions and beyond.

If you were unable to work due to the latest restrictions, you may still be 'furloughed' under the Job Retention Scheme for some or all of your normal hours. If you are on furlough status, your pay for any unworked hours may be reduced to 80 per cent of your average earnings.

The scheme was re-opened so new people could be placed on the scheme by their employers. To be eligible for the scheme, you must have been employed and paid through PAYE before 30 October 2020.

The scheme will continue to run until March 2021. Companies can furlough workers on a part-time basis and access the scheme to cover any unworked hours. The scheme will carry on paying 80 per cent of workers' wages, with the Government paying the full 80 per cent of wages, and employers paying pension and national insurance contributions. Employers can

choose to top-up this payment.

The contributions employers will need to make to the scheme will be reviewed in January, but workers will receive a minimum of 80 per cent of their pay until March 2021.

You must not do any work for your employer for any hours or periods where you are furloughed. Speak to your union rep or official if you need any further advice on this.

Paddy Lillis

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: "It is crucial that low-paid workers do not pay the price of fighting this appalling pandemic.

"Furloughed workers struggling to make ends meet face the prospect of only 80 per cent of the statutory minimum wage for the hours they usually work. Their wages should be protected and topped up to at least the National Living Wage for the normal hours they work. With many employers not topping up wages, around two million workers were paid less than the legal minimum wage last April.

"While we have understood the extraordinary measures the Government has had to take, we are concerned by their overall response. Too often the Government has chased the pandemic, rather than tried to get ahead of it. The early closure of furlough and the last-minute extension caused a great deal of uncertainty for business and we have no doubt that redundancy decisions were made because of this chaos."



Usdaw can help

If you are a member of Usdaw and you require any support because you are being placed on furlough, or if you are returning to work following a period of furlough, or if you have any concerns arising out of the latest lockdown restrictions please contact Usdaw at: contactus@usdaw.org.uk

For guidance on the restrictions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland please go to:

www.usdaw.org.uk/Help-Advice/Coronavirus-Update

CAMPAIGNS

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

400 SHOPWORKERS ATTACKED DAILY

Each year, in the run up to Christmas, the union holds a Respect Week. However due to the pandemic, this year's campaign could not run in the usual way but we still asked reps to get involved.

Petition for change

In light of the continued increase in violence and abuse towards shopworkers and the appalling situation they've faced leading up to and throughout the pandemic, Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis launched a House of Commons petition to lobby the Government to protect retail staff.

The petition gained widespread media attention with Usdaw officials and reps making over 80 appearances on TV and radio. The petition has already been signed by over 83,000 people and needs at least 100,000 signatures to trigger a debate in Parliament. petition.parliament.uk/petitions/328621

Encouraging colleagues to fill out the Freedom From Fear survey

Since 2007 Usdaw has surveyed between 1,500



and 7,000 shopworkers each year to gather first-hand accounts on the extent of violence, threats and abuse against shop staff. The union's Freedom From Fear campaign relies on this vital evidence to drive the campaign forward and reveal the true extent of what life is really like for those members who work in retail. In 2019, the union interviewed 6,457 shopworkers, one of the largest samples ever studied.

Based on the levels of violence and abuse reported in this survey, it is estimated that over 400 shopworkers are being

attacked every day.

Shockingly, the latest survey shows that:

- 68 per cent of workers reported they had been verbally abused at least once.
- 43 per cent said they had been threatened with physical violence.
- Over 5 per cent of shopworkers have reported being physically abused in the last year compared to 3.5 per cent in 2018.

These statistics show the extent of the problem and make a compelling case when we lobby politicians, employers and promote our message through the media.

If you work in retail, please complete the survey and encourage all of your colleagues to do the same.

www.usdaw.org.uk/respectsurvey

Sharing the message

You can also support the union and the campaign by telling people about Freedom From Fear and raising the campaign profile. Putting campaign posters and leaflets up on the Usdaw noticeboard, sharing the union's messages on social media and speaking to friends, family and colleagues. Publicity will help the union to lobby for change.

UNI GLOBAL UNION'S MESSAGE TO USDAW MEMBERS

SHOPWORKERS SHOULDN'T HAVE TO BE HEROES

Never has the Respect for Shopworkers Week taken on such a significance as this year, when COVID-19 has pushed demands on retail workers that go far and above the call of duty.

The pandemic has shown how much we rely on shopworkers for our essential and everyday needs, and while this has often led to genuine appreciation and gratitude from customers, in many cases the reverse is true.

The shameful increase in physical and verbal abuse against workers in retail is a reminder that shopworkers really are on the frontline, not just in the face of an invisible virus but abuse from customers too.

UNI Global Union affiliates representing retail workers around the world have reported an alarming rise in violence since the pandemic began. But, like Usdaw, they are pushing back.

In Australia, as the virus sparked a frenzy of panic buying, supermarket workers were coughed at and spat on by customers. SDA union, whose 'No One Deserves a Serve' campaign fights customer abuse, made sure that an on-the-spot fine of AUS\$5,000 (£2,750) for these types of vile assaults included attacks on supermarket workers. The union

also provided special badges to members with slogans such as "I am a mother", "I am a son" and "I am a daughter" which have had a major impact in reducing customer attacks.

In Japan, a survey by UA Zensen union found that 41 per cent of supermarket workers said they had been the victim of abusive behaviour from customers as a direct result of COVID-19. The union successfully lobbied Government to produce a poster campaign, and released videos reminding customers that abusing shopworkers could lead to a 500,000 yen (£3,600) fine and a prison sentence of up to three years.

In the USA, many retail workers have been forced by employers to act as 'mask police', leading to verbal abuse and sometimes violence from customers. The country's largest retail workers' union, RWDSU, has been able to negotiate the right for workers at Macy's and Bloomingdales to bow out of dealing with unmasked customers without fear of losing their jobs. Their Retail Action Project campaign is dedicated to ending violence against workers in stores.

Here at UNI, we are fighting for essential rights for essential workers and that includes safety at work.



Christy Hoffman

Shopworkers shouldn't have to be heroes – there is no magic uniform that protects them from violence and harassment from customers. As COVID-19 has pushed shopworkers to their psychological and physical limits, the very least they can expect is to feel safe on the job.

**UNI general secretary
Christy Hoffman**

www.uniglobalunion.org/news/no-store-violence-and-harassment-commerce

UPDATE ON LEGISLATION

Assault on Shopworkers

In March, Alex Norris MP launched a Private Members Bill which calls for shopworkers to be protected from rising levels of violence, abuse and assaults. It was heard in Parliament where it was given wide cross-party support. The Bill is due for a second reading. Alex Norris said: "The Bill appeals for a reset in

society. With a very clear message sent that it is not part of the job for shopworkers to suffer abuse and violence."

The Protection of Workers Bill (Scotland)

The Bill, introduced to the Scottish Parliament in October 2019 by Daniel Johnson MSP, aims to make

it a criminal offence to assault shopworkers, threaten or abuse them. The Bill has passed stage one and two and can now move to the third and final stage. Mr Johnson said: "The pandemic has exacerbated the confrontational situations faced by retail workers that led to my introducing the Bill."

**It's half an
closing on C**

**Christmas card
off the boss?
What's it say?**

CHRISTMAS IS NOT WORKING



Usdaw has been concerned for some time that retail workers are not receiving a sufficient break over the Christmas and New Year period.

The union's most recent member surveys on Christmas and New Year working received more than 18,000 combined responses, which is a big indication of how strongly Usdaw members feel about this issue.

Three-quarters of members felt that they spend too little time at Christmas with their loved ones and that working affects their ability to enjoy Christmas and New Year celebrations. In addition, most retail workers are put under pressure to work on Boxing Day, and this even happens in workplaces where it's supposed to be 'voluntary' – that's why 97 per cent of retail workers think that shops should be closed

on Boxing Day.

Usdaw's Christmas isn't Working campaign is seeking the longest possible break for retail workers over the Christmas and New Year period and will seek to negotiate the best deal available on paid time off for shopworkers.

New Year's Day Closing in Scotland

Usdaw launched a petition last year calling on the Scottish Government to launch a consultation on implementing legislation already in place to ban most large shops from opening on New Year's Day.

The Christmas Day and New Year's Day Trading Act (Scotland) Act 2007 prohibits trading in most large shops on Christmas Day and gave powers to the Scottish Government to stop the opening of those shops

on New Year's Day as well, which has never been enacted.

An extensive Usdaw survey of over 1,000 Scottish retail staff, found that:

- 98 per cent say that stores should be shut on New Year's Day.
- Three-quarters feel they spend too little time with friends and family over New Year.
- Only 4 per cent are happy to work on New Year's Day or 2 January.

In October 2020, the Scottish Parliament's Petitions Committee unanimously supported Usdaw's petition to end New Year's Day trading in large stores. The committee agreed to write to stakeholders with the retail industry and urge the Scottish Government to conduct the required consultation.

an hour before Christmas Eve...



**“Enjoy your day off.
You’re back in at 6am
on Boxing Day”**

USDAW MEMBERS SPEAK OUT ABOUT WORKING OVER THE CHRISTMAS PERIOD

“The children are all excited, you get them ready Christmas Eve and then you tell them you’re going to work. Heartbreaking”

“I just want to spend time with my family, not be worn out on Christmas Day and then have to be at work at 6am on Boxing Day”

FESTIVE WORKING CAMPAIGN AIMS

TIME TO PUT STAFF FIRST

The campaign is calling on retailers to put their hardworking staff first, and keep shops shut on Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year’s Day (and 2 January in Scotland) and early finishes on Christmas and New Year’s Eve.

CHRISTMAS EVE

Usdaw will be urging retailers to close early on Christmas Eve to allow workers to get home before public transport stops for the Christmas break and to ensure they can spend the evening with their friends and family. The union is seeking a shop closing time of 4pm for all stores including large supermarkets and small convenience stores. Usdaw’s survey found that in 80 per cent of workplaces workers find it difficult to request or agree an early finish on Christmas Eve, and that a third of members have previously had to finish at 8pm or later.

CHRISTMAS DAY

Usdaw believes that all shops should be closed on Christmas Day. The Christmas Day Trading Act prevents shops, except for small convenience stores, from trading on 25 December. Although the legislation allows small convenience stores to trade, the union would urge retailers not to open any stores on Christmas Day.

BOXING DAY

The union will be calling for shops to remain closed on Boxing Day. If retailers trade on Boxing Day, then Usdaw believes that working should be voluntary and be paid at premium pay rates. Over 60 per cent of retail workers responding to Usdaw’s survey reported that working on Boxing Day was not voluntary, and two-thirds said that staff in their workplace were under pressure to work. A total of 97 per cent of

members agree that stores should close on Boxing Day.

NEW YEAR’S EVE

Usdaw will be urging retailers to close early on New Year’s Eve and staff to be allowed to go home when the store closes instead of shopworkers being expected to restock shelves and prepare for the New Year sales. As with Christmas Eve, the union would like shops to close at 4pm. Three-quarters of members say that it is difficult to request or agree an earlier finish on New Year’s Eve under previous trading arrangements.

NEW YEAR’S DAY (ENGLAND AND WALES)

Usdaw is urging retailers not to open on New Year’s Day. 96 per cent of Usdaw members agree that shops should be closed, and two-thirds of staff have felt under pressure to work under previous trading arrangements.

NEW YEAR’S DAY AND 2 JANUARY (SCOTLAND ONLY)

Usdaw is urging retailers not to open on New Year’s Day and 2 January 2021. Usdaw’s survey of members in Scotland found that only 24 per cent said that working on both these days was voluntary, and 99 per cent felt that stores should be shut on New Year’s Day. Usdaw is campaigning for the Scottish Government to implement existing legislation which would allow them to enforce closing of large shops on New Year’s Day.

Poundland has agreed that they will close on Boxing Day and New Year’s Day this year, as a thank you for their hard-working staff. Usdaw is urging all retailers to make sure that their staff get a decent break over Christmas.

www.usdaw.org.uk/Campaigns/Xmas-isn-t-working

A NEW DEAL FOR WORKERS

USDAW CALLS FOR £10 FOR ALL WORKERS

At the start of the pandemic, after lobbying from Usdaw, the Government recognised that retail workers were 'key workers' as they were instrumental in keeping the food supply chain going.

This crisis has shown that many low-paid workers are key workers carrying out essential work.

Too many key workers are trying to exist on low pay, facing abuse every day while trying to carry out their essential role and working under daily pressures that are not good for their mental health. For too long, the essential contribution of workers in retail, distribution, delivery, food manufacturing and the funeral industry has been undervalued and underpaid.

Ushaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: "After this crisis is over, we cannot return to the way things were before. The contribution of key workers cannot fade into the background.

"It is now time for the Government to recognise that these workers have been undervalued for too long. We need a new deal for the workers; a minimum wage of at least £10 per hour, an end to insecure employment, respect for shopworkers and action to ensure that retail jobs are no longer underpaid and undervalued."

USDRAW IS CALLING FOR A 'NEW DEAL' FOR ALL WORKERS BASED AROUND:

£10 Minimum Wage For All Workers

A £10 minimum wage for all workers, ending rip-off youth rates and providing a living wage.

A Minimum Contract of 16 Hours Per Week

A minimum contract of at least 16

hours per week, for every worker who wants it.

A 'Normal-Hours' Contract

If employees are regularly working over their contracted hours, these hours should be guaranteed in their contract.

A Ban on Zero-Hours Contracts

The Government needs to ban zero-hours contracts, once and for all.

Better Sick Pay

Better sick pay for all workers, from day one, at average earnings.

Protection at Work

Violence and abuse has doubled during the current crisis. That's why Usdaw is calling for a new law that makes it a specific offence to assault public-facing workers, with a sentence that fits the crime.

A Proper Social Security System

A fair system that protects families and treats people with dignity.

Job Security

Stronger protections against redundancy and dismissal, from day one of employment.

Fair Treatment and Equality For All Workers

Fair treatment and equality for all workers, including equal pay.

A Voice at Work

This crisis has shown that workers need their union more than ever. Usdaw has worked with employers to improve protections for workers, agree bonus payments to recognise their contribution, and protect those whose workplaces have had to close. It was the trade union movement negotiating with the Government that produced the Job Retention Scheme

which has saved so many jobs. We need stronger trade union rights so that all workers can benefit from a voice at work.

www.usdaw.org.uk/newdeal



SPOTLIGHT ON CARERS

UNPAID CARERS FACE FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

Usdaw has lent its support to Carers UK who are calling for the level of Carer's Allowance to be raised through their Fairer for Carers campaign.

Carer's Allowance remains one of the lowest benefit of its kind at £67.25 per week. The low level of the payment and other entitlement conditions, including an earnings limit, means it continues to be ineffective in stopping financial hardship.

Despite providing care that is valued at £132 billion a year, more than 1.2 million carers were living in poverty and financial hardship pre-Coronavirus, and the crisis has now only exacerbated an already desperate situation for many.

At least 81 per cent of carers are having to spend more since the outbreak – through higher bills, paying for additional care services, and buying equipment and technology to help with caring – further squeezing already tight budgets. Without urgent support, carers, their families, and those they care for, will continue to struggle.

In July 2020, 92 organisations led by Carers UK signed an open letter to the work and pensions secretary regarding this issue, to date there has been no response to the original letter.

Carers UK and 75 organisations including Usdaw have signed the latest letter.

To alleviate the financial hardship unpaid carers face, the campaign is calling for:

- An additional supplement to Carer's Allowance to match increases in universal credit that have rightly recognised the challenges people on lower income have during the pandemic.
- The earning limit for claiming Carer's Allowance to be raised

from £128 a week to at least £139.52. The earning limit should be linked to the national living wage in future years, to ensure those juggling work and care on low pay also receive support.

USDW'S PARENTS & CARERS CAMPAIGN

Usdaw's national Supporting Parents and Carers campaign aims to improve rights for working parents and carers. Established in 2006, the campaign reflects the fact that over eight out of 10 Usdaw members are juggling work with looking after someone.

The campaign has evolved and adapted over the last 11 years in response to the different challenges working parents and carers in Usdaw face and to the changing industrial relations and political climate. However, the campaign's primary objectives have remained the same, namely to raise awareness, improving rights through negotiation and campaigning for changes in the law.

Every year the union organises a Supporting Parents and Carers Spotlight Day. Over the last few years Supporting Parents and Carers Spotlight Days have raised awareness of a number of issues facing parents and carers; needing time off work to care, benefits and money worries, flexible working, mental health and maternity rights.

Although the theme of the Spotlight Day changes every year the aims remain the same namely, to reach out to members and to provide practical information about their rights.

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: "It is not too late for the Government to recognise the vital role that unpaid carers play, and to



CARERS SAY:

"We are permanently struggling financially and are in debt."

"Food shopping has gone up, most nights I don't eat so the children do, bills have gone up due to the children being at home more."

"Carer's Allowance is not anything like enough to pay my bills. Gas electric, water, spare bedroom tax, takes much more than what Carer's Allowance pays."

put in place much needed financial support ahead of this coming winter. It can only be right that we give back to carers who have done so much for others during this crisis. Without this help, many will continue to face real hardship and suffering."

For more information visit: www.usdaw.org.uk/SPC

INSPIRATIONAL ACTIVISTS

Celebrating the Usdaw reps who've played a key role in keeping the country going this year

Amazing Usdaw reps across the country have spent this year giving everything they've got and more to support their members, colleagues, neighbours and those struggling in the wider community.

In this issue of *Network*, we celebrate just a handful of the inspiring reps who have put the needs of others before themselves.

RICH STEPHENSON-EVANS

Tesco group lead community champion Rich has gone above and beyond looking after the most vulnerable people in society and supporting other community champions to do the same. His dedication to his work has even earned him an MBE nomination and a thank you letter from the Prime Minister.

"I start every day at 4.30am, usually working a few hours in the in-store bakery and then I'm off out into the community until late," said Rich, 39, who is also an Usdaw rep at Tesco Kidsgrove. "My main role is working with local charities and organisations, but I'm also lead champion so it's my responsibility to make sure other community champions in my area have the right training and are supported in their roles.

"This year we've been making hampers for those who are shielding and we've also set up free food schemes with charities like the Salvation Army by donating unsold fresh food from the store.

"What we do every day is challenging and a lot of hard work,

but there's satisfaction in knowing that you're helping people and making a difference.

"I've also found that my role as community champion goes hand in hand with my role as Usdaw rep. I've been out in the community and people have been struggling at work or have even lost their job and I've been able to offer them useful advice and signpost them to the right support.

"The main focus at the minute is making sure people have food. I've recently helped a lady who lives on her own and can't get out of the house. I'm taking her a food parcel once a week and I've also linked in with the Salvation Army to deliver her hot meals twice a week. It's little things that make a big difference to people's lives."

MICHELLE FLEMING

Co-op store manager and Sata rep Michelle is very new to the role of rep but has hit the ground running at her store in Heathcote Street.

As Sata rep Michelle looks after the managers who work in all the Co-op stores across Stoke-on-Trent. She also makes recruitment of new starters a top priority.

"I like to make sure things are done fairly, consistently and that everyone is treated correctly, that's why I wanted to become a union rep," said Michelle, 36. "In normal circumstances I would go around and visit the other stores to try and recruit, but that just hasn't been possible this year, so I've been phoning new starters and doing my



Rich Stephenson-Evans

best to catch them that way. What I'm really keen to do in the future is a recruitment video that can be shown to all new starters as part of their inductions."

Alongside being on hand for the Co-op staff in her area, Michelle has also been looking after the local community. "During the pandemic I've been going out delivering toiletries and food parcels to wherever they have been needed such as care homes, residential homes, police stations and fire stations. I covered all of Stoke-on-Trent. My two sons loved helping me with that.

"As a store our focus is now to help the vulnerable access food. Each Co-op shop is linked to their local food bank and will have a food share which they can donate.

"It's desperate times at the minute. It's all about helping and supporting each other."

JIM HUGHES

As a vulnerable person, Tesco dotcom rep Jim was forced to self-isolate for three months during the national lockdown, but that didn't stop him from supporting members in his Tesco Extra store in Llanelli.

Jim set up a Facebook page so



Michelle Fleming



Jim Hughes



Jena Gunn

that he could communicate with his colleagues, boost their morale and deal with any problems remotely.

"Our dotcom workers were starting at 4am at the height of the pandemic to meet public demand, so I got up with them and made sure I posted an early message every day to let them know they had support," said Jim, 68, who has only been a rep for a year. "It started out just for the dotcom workers but quickly spread throughout the store until we had about 80 members on the page. It was a fantastic way for everyone to stay in touch and a channel for members to message me about any problems which I could then feed through to management or my area organiser.

"It was an eye-opener for me too. I realised that Facebook Messenger is a powerful tool and another great channel of communication to support members.

"I became a rep because I wanted to help build a stronger union, but I also wanted to do more for my colleagues and be part of their support system. We're in uncharted waters and to go through a global lockdown is very frightening. People need to be able to reach out to someone and have

a support network around them. I think the Facebook page and Messenger did that for people, we became a big family and it gave me a lifeline too."

JENA GUNN

Customer service assistant Jena has worked at Tesco in Toton for the past eight years. She became a rep in 2015. Earlier this year Jena was forced to shield for 14 weeks due to health concerns and childcare during the pandemic but that didn't stop her providing a top-class rep service for her members back in store.

"It's been difficult this year for everyone," said Jena, 32. "It's been hard for people shielding and stuck at home, but also hard for those that were working through and facing a difficult time in store, worrying about their own health and safety.

"While shielding I kept in contact with the other reps, taking part in rep meetings and supporting and representing members remotely over the phone and video conferencing. It came with its challenges and not being able to see people face-to-face is not ideal. You can't tell if someone is getting upset or if they need extra support. But I

did my best to put members at ease and represent them to the best of my ability.

"I was also unable to attend new starter inductions so I wrote a recruitment script that could be delivered to new members of staff by other colleagues. I've now also created recruitment packs for new starters with leaflets about the union and an introduction to the reps.

"Since returning to work I've continued to support members and look after their health and safety in store, and I've also agreed to get more involved in the union learning side of things. I want to help where I can.

"I've struggled with my mental health all my life, so helping other people gives me a focus. I absolutely love my role, it can be frustrating and challenging, but when you get a good result for someone, that's when it's most rewarding."

We would love to hear more about what challenges you've faced and overcome this year. Please email to tell us your story. network@usdaw.org.uk

LEARNING FUND UNDER THREAT

Tories to scrap funding for union learning when upskilling and retraining is more crucial than ever

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

What is the Union Learning Fund?

The ULF was set up in 1998 to support workers in accessing learning and training in workplaces.

The fund is worth £11 million per year and around 200,000 workers are supported into learning or training with union support through the ULF and the TUC. These learners undertake all sorts of job-relevant learning and training, including basic literacy and numeracy, ICT skills, apprenticeships and traineeships, vocational training, continuing professional development and many other informal and formal courses.

How does it work?

At the heart of the model is the Union Learning Rep (ULR), a trained worker who understands the workforce, the nature of the business and the skills gaps that exist. The ULRs work with employers, their own union and with Unionlearn to broker access to relevant learning opportunities for workers in their workplaces. By doing this they provide a crucial bridge between the learner and the learning. There are more than 44,000 trained ULRs in England.

The Positive Effects of the Union Learning Fund

The ULF provides measurable benefits at individual level, company level and national level. It delivers an estimated net contribution to the economy of more than £1.4 billion as a result of boosting jobs, wages and productivity.

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

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

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

The ULF and Usdaw

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

In the last financial year, Usdaw engaged over 17,500 members



**200,000
WORKERS**

**will miss out on
vital training**

if union learning is cut

www.usdaw.org.uk/SaveUnionLearning

in some form of learning. For many Usdaw members, this will have been their first engagement with any form of learning since leaving school and these learning opportunities provided them with basic skills in English, Maths and IT. For this reason, Usdaw's projects have focussed particularly on 'non-traditional' learners without recognised qualifications or those with qualifications below level two. These learners are arguably the most vulnerable in terms of employability.

Innovative Learning

Usdaw has also used the resources provided by the ULF to drive innovative methods of reaching new learners.

SAVE UNION LEARNING



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Online Learning Gateway

Over the last three years, Usdaw has developed an Online Learning Gateway, which guarantees every member access to learning, much of which is subsidised. The Gateway currently offers over 1,000 online and distance learning opportunities ranging from informal learning to degree level qualifications. Last year, the Gateway attracted over 24,000 views from members and is on course to double that over the current year.

Bitesize Learning

Usdaw has developed an in-house bitesize learning offer of short introductory online courses. These have been a major success over the last two years.

Redundancy Support

This has been a growing area of importance for Usdaw's Union Learning Fund project given the recent economic climate. Last year Usdaw's project supported more than 2,000 individuals receiving support via the project including advice and guidance on training available as well as CV writing, and job-ready skills.

Mental Health

Usdaw's ULF project works jointly with key employers such as Tesco, Morrisons, DHL, Co-op Retail Logistics and Next to raise awareness around mental health issues inside and outside the workplace and provide training and interventions to support the

growing demand. Last year more than 300 learners accessed some form of mental health training via the project.

The ULF, Usdaw and Employers

Usdaw works collaboratively with over 20 major employers to jointly promote workplace learning across retail, distribution and food manufacturing. This collaborative approach has resulted in 60 plus learning centres up and down the country.

Many of those employers have been long-term supporters of the Union Learning Fund agenda and have committed to 'Learning Agreements' with Usdaw including Tesco, Next, DHL, Muller Wisemans, Argos/Sainsbury's, McVities and CRL.



LEARNER EXPERIENCES

Ultimately, the Union Learning Fund is all about the people that it helps through learning and training opportunities they would not otherwise have access to.

CHRISTINE

An Usdaw member with 30 years' service at her company, wanted to learn IT skills but she was reluctant and didn't know what to expect. Her ULR and learning centre co-ordinator supported her and calmed her fears, encouraging her to sign up for the course.

"It's been a long time since I did anything like this but I love the class," said Christine. "My tutor is fantastic, has real patience and understanding and makes the lessons fun and informative. I never thought I could gain so much from this course, not only in terms of my confidence around using computers but being in a class is so much fun."

HAZEL

A rep who hated maths, felt shut

out of education through bad experiences at school, which led to her failing her maths CSE. Her project worker supported her, reassured her that she was far from alone in her fears and experiences, and encouraged her to complete the bitesize maths course on the Usdaw Gateway.

"It had simple instructions to follow, and useful maths tricks," said Hazel. "I completed the addition and subtraction sections easily and discovered that teaching of maths has changed a lot since I was at school. I completed the next sections of the course which I dreaded and pushed myself through it using the maths tricks and techniques they provided. I feel I now have a better understanding of these topics and feel a little more confident to maybe go on and learn more."

JAMIE

Left school without any qualifications, and worked as a

cleaner to support her young family before getting a job in a supermarket. Jamie felt that without qualifications she would never be able to achieve her dream of working with children.

With encouragement from her rep and ULR project worker, Jamie did the National Numeracy Challenge. This led to Jamie enrolling in Essential Skills Maths, English and ICT, which she completed while her husband was diagnosed with an incurable brain tumour.

Jamie has since completed an Usdaw funded CMI Level 3 in Project Management and wants to study to become a Classroom Assistant. Jamie won the ICTU ES Learner of the Year Award in 2019.

"My daughter told me I was amazing to go back to learning at my time of life," said Jamie. "I encouraged four of my colleagues from nightshift to enrol for Essential Skills English, Maths and ICT during the Check Out Learning roadshow. I am sure my colleagues are tired of



me talking about courses, but it gave them the inspiration to do the same. This would never have happened if it hadn't been for Usdaw and my project worker."

MADHU

A nurse in her native India, Madhu found that her qualifications were not recognised in England. After working in a supermarket for 10 years, she felt she wanted to move on to a job where she could set her own hours, own wages and work from home. Madhu decided to pursue Accountancy by doing a maths course followed by an English course. Once she completes these courses she plans to do an accounting and finance course.

"I am absolutely certain that I would not have entertained the idea of re-training without Usdaw holding that Check Out Learning day," said Madhu. "I probably would have just carried on working in the supermarket until I was able to retire. I am grateful to Usdaw for

the opportunity they have given me. I can now work towards fulfilling my dream of providing a better life for my family."

UNION LEARNING FUND

The ULF is a vital, and extremely effective, tool for reaching learners who are not otherwise aware of or able to access Government supported training and learning opportunities.

Considering the current economic climate and the messages coming out of the Government about the importance of retraining and reskilling, the projects supported by the ULF will be even more critical in the short to medium term future.

**[www.usdaw.org.uk/
Campaigns/Lifelong-
Learning](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/Campaigns/Lifelong-Learning)**

HELP US SAVE THE FUND

SIGN THE TUC PETITION

Usdaw union learning rep Sean Dixon launched a petition on the TUC's Megaphone platform calling for Government funding to be maintained. Sign the petition and ask everyone in your workplace to sign it and share it on social media using the hashtag **#SaveUnionLearning**

**[www.megaphone.org.uk/petitions/
uk-gov-don-t-cut-union-learning](http://www.megaphone.org.uk/petitions/uk-gov-don-t-cut-union-learning)**

EMAIL YOUR MP

Email your MP and encourage your members to do the same by using this template. Direct correspondence from reps and members to their MP has proved to be an incredibly effective tool on previous campaigns and we hope that as many members as possible engage with the campaign.

www.usdaw.org.uk/ULEmailMP

GET SUPPORT FROM EMPLOYERS

Employers see significant benefits from their employees undertaking lifelong learning opportunities. Upskilling workers can be directly linked to gains in productivity. Ask your employer to write to Gavin Williamson, secretary of state for education or local MPs to talk about the benefits.

TELL US YOUR STORIES

Tell us how trade union learning has helped and supported you. You can do this by emailing **network@usdaw.org.uk**

RAISE AWARENESS

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

www.usdaw.org.uk/ULFnewspapers

FOR YOUR
USDAW NOTICEBOARD

SAMARITANS

- Whatever you're going through, a Samaritan will face it with you.
- 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
- via phone or email.

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take a
photo
of this
poster

Stepchange
Debt Charity

www.stepchange.org/contact-us

- Free, confidential and expert debt advice and money

Citizens Advice

● If you can't pay your bills.

● If you're struggling to pay your rent, want to end your tenancy or are worried about being evicted.

● If you have no money for food.

● Check what benefits you can get.

Citizens advice can advise you on benefits, money, housing, family, health and more.
Contact via phone/email/live chat at:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/contactus

guidance.

● Find the best solution or service for your individual circumstances.

● Support while you deal with your money worries, for as long as you need their help.



ACTIVIST IN-DEPTH CHRISTINE MITCHELL

Usdaw rep and line dancing champion Christine Mitchell has worked at Tesco bank in Glasgow as a customer service rep for 23 years. Over the last four years she has worked hard to successfully introduce union learning into the site despite facing many ongoing challenges and barriers. Christine tells *Network* her story.

Why did you become active with Usdaw?

I've always been a trade unionist, I think it's the influence of my grandfather who worked in the steel industry. I've been a member of a union since the age of 16 when I

worked in the office at a dairy. The day I joined Usdaw (in 2011) there was a stall and a big sign saying 'Join Usdaw Today' in the canteen. I walked right over and said 'sign me up'. The Usdaw rep was shocked at my directness. She asked if I had ever thought about becoming a rep and by the end of the day I had signed up for that too. I'm now part of a busy team of 13 reps at the bank. We have about 60 per cent density, which is fantastic for the finance sector.

How did you introduce learning into the bank?

A few years ago, we decided that it

was important to promote Lifelong Learning and introduce members to the learning opportunities available through Usdaw. So, I signed up as the learning rep. The bank has their own learning opportunities for staff and they were worried that union learning would clash with their learning agenda. The bank host an annual 'opportunity day' to promote their courses and one year, after much pleading on my part, they allowed me to have a stall to promote union courses. It was a very successful day with a lot of interest from members and non-members. I was really proud, all the hard work and perseverance had paid off. Now

we work hand in hand. Management understand that the union are there to help staff by working with the company. What's also great is that I get a lot of managers asking for courses that will help them support their staff. It's wonderful.

Are the courses online or classroom based?

At the moment it's mainly online courses. A couple of years ago we held a Sign Language course in one of the training rooms. It was very well received and a lot of people would like to see that back up and running, including me. It's something I've become quite passionate about and I wrote an ADM proposition in 2018, delivered by my colleague Stewart Walker, to lobby the Government to increase funding for learning Sign Language. Aside from the challenges faced this year, it's very difficult to organise classroom-based courses because we're a 24/7 operation and we all work shifts. So arranging a time that would suit everyone would be difficult. The online courses are available at any time of day and achievable in a short space of time which works for everyone right now.

Have you struggled to promote learning this year?

The Coronavirus pandemic has made things difficult this year and on top of that I fell and broke my arm, so I was out of action for three months. I'm back on it now though. I'm currently working from home, but when I was in the office I would test new courses out on my team to get a feel for what they were like. I would also update the union noticeboard and send out regular emails which would generate lots

Have you got an experience or advice that would inspire other reps? *Network* would love to hear about your union journey. Email: network@usdaw.org.uk

of enquiries. I also held 'book days' where members could come and chat to me about learning and the different courses on offer. I'm still doing as much as I can from home. Members can still contact me and I'm in touch with my team online via google teams.

Has Lifelong Learning changed the environment at Tesco bank?

More people approach the union now and are more interested in what it's got to offer based on the learning opportunities. It's good that people see another side to the union. I had a young lady who felt like she was being discriminated against because she had dyslexia. As a result of this case I actually got several managers asking if there was a course to learn about dyslexia and other learning disorders to support their staff.

When do you find time to relax?

Line dancing is my other passion. I'm a qualified teacher and run classes three times a week. I've always wanted to be a dancer. I was brought

up by my grandparents because I lost my mum when I was seven, and I always used to ask them if I could go to dance lessons. But we couldn't afford it, so I would just dance around the living room. As soon as I saw a line dancing class advertised – that would be twenty-five years ago now – I joined. I was taught by a lady who was the only internationally qualified judge in Scotland, so I was learning from the best. She took me under her wing and trained me to become the Scottish champion for line dancing five times. This qualified me to go to the world championships but unfortunately I could never afford to go.

What makes you motivated and passionate about learning?

I just love to learn, and I want people to feel as passionate about learning as I do. I'm proud and happy to be in a position where I can help people access learning opportunities. Education is so important in all its forms, whether it's English, Maths or line dancing!



Christine taking part in her first line dancing competition

VIRTUAL REALITY

Online communication has been a lifeline for many people this year and an excellent tool for reps

Government restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic have had a huge impact on the way we all communicate. As we are forced to stay at home and see less of our friends, family and work colleagues, we are turning to different channels of communication such as social media, instant messaging and video calls to stay in touch.

Online communication is an excellent way to keep in touch and during the last year it has been a vital resource for Usdaw reps, enabling them to continue to provide the best service for members despite the challenges they've faced.

VIDEO CONFERENCING

Although it may be a new concept for a lot of people, video conferencing has actually been around for a long time.

There are many different video conferencing software programs but for this toolkit we'll look at Zoom because it's free and easy to use.

Lots of Usdaw reps already use Zoom for branch meetings, one-to-ones, representing members and keeping in touch with other reps and

Membership for week ended 14 November 2020

South Wales & Western	46,349
Eastern	57,092
Midlands	54,046
North Eastern	57,577
Scottish	41,176
Southern	58,739
North West	85,395
Total	400,374

Usdaw uses Zoom to run learning workshops and courses.

You will need a smartphone, tablet, PC or laptop with a camera and a microphone (usually built in).

GETTING ZOOM

Where to find it: If you're on a computer or laptop visit **zoom.us** and follow the instructions to download the program. Alternatively, if you are using a phone or a tablet the Zoom app is available on the App Store and Google Play Store.

Host a meeting: Once you've downloaded the software, starting your own meeting is easy. Just click the **New Meeting** button. You will then see a page showing the details of your meeting including the passcode and the meeting link. To invite others you can use the **Invite Others** button and add the email addresses of your participants. Or you can just copy the meeting details and send them to your participants.

Schedule a meeting: You've also got the option of scheduling a meeting. Just click the **Schedule** button on the home page and then fill out the details of when you want to host your meeting. You can then share the details with your participants.

Joining a Zoom meeting: You can join a Zoom meeting directly from the email link you have been sent or manually by clicking **Join** on the Zoom home page and typing in the meeting number and password from the email.

Once the Zoom meeting is active



it will ask you to join with Audio and wait for the host. You may well be muted automatically and your video may be off. You will see options on your screen to mute your audio and turn your video on and off.

TOP TIPS AND GOOD ZOOM ETIQUETTE

■ Turning on Gallery View (in the top right corner) lets you see everyone in a meeting at once, instead of just the person speaking.

■ When you're not talking make sure you are on MUTE. When you make noise the camera will switch to you and may cut out the current speaker. Get into the habit of muting yourself when you're not speaking if



CASE STUDY MARC ELLIOTT

Like a lot of people, Usdaw rep Marc would probably describe himself as a bit of a technophobe, but this year he wouldn't have been able to fulfill his role as rep if it wasn't for a computer.

"At the beginning of the year when we realised we wouldn't be able to do face-to-face meetings we decided to use conference calls," said Marc who has been a rep for over 10 years. "It was difficult because you had little control over the meeting and it wasn't easy to support the member. Then we got Zoom and Tesco Teams up and running and that made things so much easier. "I'm not a big technology person, and it's usually something I would avoid, but this year I gave it a go as I wanted to continue to support my members.

"It was a learning curve, but like anything you do a lot, it becomes almost second nature. I look after members in a group of stores and sometimes it's difficult to travel between them. Zoom allows me to attend meetings even if I can't physically get there.

"One of the other unexpected bonuses that's come out of using Zoom is branch meetings. Our branch is quite widespread, so getting people to attend before this year was quite difficult. As soon as they became virtual the attendance levels shot up. We are seeing far more members, and reps who ordinarily we might only see once or twice a year.

"As great as it is, Zoom isn't always a substitute for face-to-face. Some meetings are complicated, or members need extra support, and you just can't do that to the best of your ability over the internet. But it's certainly filled a gap this year. It's an excellent communication tool that we should all be embracing."

it is a meeting with lots of people.

- Use the chat feature to make comments or ask questions without interrupting the speaker.
- If you're the host you can share your screen with your participants. This tool is useful if you are discussing particular documents.
- Be aware that in the free version of Zoom, meetings with more than two participants will be limited to 40 minutes.

KEEPING ZOOM SECURE

Hopefully see, it's very easy to use Zoom. All you need is a link or a meeting ID number. However, because of this, we need to make sure we protecting our Zoom

meetings from people randomly joining. Here are a few tips:

- Don't share the link or ID anywhere that people you don't want to attend could see it.
- Make sure the meeting has a password, this will stop people from joining by guessing the meeting ID.
- If you're hosting the meeting you can set up waiting rooms. This will let you see people as they join and you can allow them to enter.

DATA PROTECTION

Remember to protect people's data by using the BCC function when emailing your participants where appropriate.

RESILIENT REPS CONTINUE TO BOOST MEMBERSHIP

Despite the challenges of a worldwide pandemic, recruitment and organising has remained at the top of the agenda for many reps as they continue to build the union

Usdaw reps have faced an incredibly challenging year, but their resilience, commitment and hard work has ensured that their members have continued to receive top-class advice, support and representation from the union in the face of a global pandemic.

WENDY LEWIS

Usdaw rep and health and safety rep Wendy has worked in the petrol station at Sainsbury's in Didcot for the past four years. She's been a member of Usdaw for over 20 years and has always been keen to get more involved. She signed up to be a rep as soon as the opportunity arose four years ago.

"Protecting workers' rights and ensuring people are treated fairly is very important to me," said Wendy, 60. "I used to work at Tesco and I wanted to be a rep but there weren't any vacancies at the time. Then my family and I moved to Oxfordshire in 2016 for my husband's job and I started working at Sainsbury's. Another rep, Michelle Harris, visited the store and that's when my rep journey began. Michelle is my mentor and continues to be a big support to me.

"Over the past few years I've completed Academy1 and Summer School1 and I actually started Academy2 this year but it was cancelled due to the pandemic. It was heart wrenching because we knew people needed our support and advice. Fingers crossed we can pick up where we left off next year.

"In my store there are currently

two reps but there will be a third joining us soon. She's an online shopper so that will support the night shift workers which will be great. We'll be covering all shifts then. We've taken on a lot of new starters this year, mainly online shoppers and drivers to meet customer demand, so I've been going back into store in the middle of the night to recruit and make sure they know the union is there because otherwise they'll get missed. It's important to look after everyone in the store.

"As reps we communicate every day. It's so important, especially this year. We talk through WhatsApp, or over the phone or I go over to the store and we have meetings. We've obviously had to adapt for social distancing but the café has been closed so we have our meetings there as it's a big space.

"My focus this year has been to ensure that my members are safe and that the company are following government guidelines and putting the health and safety of staff first. There's been a few issues but we're getting there. Recruitment has also been a priority. Every time I see a colleague come into the petrol station, especially the drivers, I talk to them about the union and highlight what it is we do and how we can support them. I'm actually quite proud that I've managed to sign up 44 people in store since March.

"I'm desperate to get out in the field too. I know there are a lot of stores nearby that need my help in

recruiting. I'm hoping that's another area I can concentrate on next year,

"What I've noticed this year is colleagues pulling together, looking out for each other and talking more about the union. Where I've represented members successfully they've told their colleagues, and that in turn has boosted recruitment. I think it also helps if people see a union presence too. I always make sure that I am vocal, people know who I am and how they can find me.

"I'm motivated by my passion for the union and because workers need their rights protecting. They need someone on their side they can trust, and that's the union."

CHRIS WELLS

Usdaw rep Chris has worked as a driver at Alliance Healthcare in Chessington for nearly four years. His job involves delivering vital medicines to pharmacies and hospitals, already a very important role but one that has been highlighted as key this year in light of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Chris has only been a rep for 18 months but has achieved great strides with his company in that time even doubling membership at his site. Despite being the only rep looking after upwards of 900 staff, Chris never complains and always has his members at heart.

"When I first started working at Alliance Healthcare there were a few things I wasn't happy about," said Chris, 54. "I kept complaining to get things put right and from that I just

naturally fell into the role of rep.

"In my first six months I secured a big win. I managed to get the drivers a combined £34,000 of pay which they didn't realise had been withheld. That was paid out to us just before Christmas last year.

"I think the biggest struggle this year has been the lack of face-to-face meetings. Ordinarily we would have a rep meeting once a month where all the reps from all the depots would come together. We've managed a few through Zoom but it's not quite the same. But we're doing our best to stay in touch.

"I've also been busy with representations. As Government rules kept changing, the company kept changing its rules, so we were always playing catch up and having to make sure everyone was being treated fairly and getting what they were entitled to.

"I'd never been a union member before so being a rep was a learning curve for both me and the company. Part of it has been teaching the company how a union works and building a relationship of trust. It's not been easy but I feel things have really improved.

"Recruitment often takes care of itself. Every time you get a win for a member there's a boost because that member will spread the word, and I've just been really lucky with success after success this year. We've gone from 15 per cent to up to 50 per cent and it's all come from members trusting me and my experience.

"Even though I'm a new rep, I think the advantage I have is my age, I've got life experience to draw upon. I haven't completed my rep training yet, I only managed the first stage before everything was shut down. I've still got that to finish which feels bizarre given all the experience I've gained this year. But I'm looking forward to that and getting more involved in union events in the future, and hopefully the opportunity to meet other reps. We'll see what next year brings."



"PROTECTING WORKERS RIGHTS AND ENSURING PEOPLE ARE TREATED FAIRLY IS VERY IMPORTANT TO ME."

Wendy Lewis



"I'D NEVER BEEN A UNION MEMBER BEFORE SO BEING A REP WAS A LEARNING CURVE FOR BOTH ME AND THE COMPANY."

Chris Wells



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURGES DURING LOCKDOWN

It has been widely reported that domestic violence has surged to even higher levels during the pandemic.

Research by Women's Aid published in August found that 91 per cent of respondents currently experiencing domestic abuse said the COVID-19 pandemic had negatively affected them in at least one way.

Of those living with their abuser during lockdown, 61 per cent said the abuse had worsened. More than two-thirds (68 per cent) said they felt they had no one to turn to during lockdown.

The National Domestic Abuse

helpline has reported a 25 per cent increase in calls since the Coronavirus lockdown began, as well as a 150 per cent increase in visits to their website.

COVID-19 does not cause domestic abuse, only abusers are responsible for their actions. However, the pandemic can escalate abuse and close down routes to safety for survivors to escape as local and regional lockdowns mean they are left with no choice but to spend more time at home alone with their abuser, isolated from family, friends and their support networks.

Individuals who have remained in work during lockdown are likely to

have contact with their line manager, co-workers and trade unions reps. Now more than ever we all have a role to play in supporting those at risk of domestic abuse.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS A WORKPLACE ISSUE

Domestic violence at home can cause problems at work. Some of the most common problems survivors face are:

- Being disciplined for needing time off sick.
- Often being late for work because of something that has happened at home.
- Being asked to change hours of

TUC ONLINE RESOURCE: www.tuc.org.uk/Covid19domesticabuse

The union doesn't expect reps to be specialists in domestic abuse but there are some practical things reps can do to support members who are experiencing domestic violence. These are outlined in a new short online course for reps the TUC has put together that is aimed at helping reps develop the awareness and skills to give the best support and advice they can to members. It includes the following advice:

Spot abuse

If you think someone's behaviour is unusual, it is better to ask than to assume. Consider the use of closed questions (questions to which they can answer "yes" or "no") in case someone else may be listening.

It isn't always physical

It's a pattern of controlling and intimidating behaviour that can be emotional, economic, psychological or sexual. It can happen in same-sex and heterosexual relationships.

Support

The most important thing you can do is listen and believe. Keep in touch. This could be through regular video or phone calls, or if it is safer, via emails or text messages. Be careful and sensitive. Keep checking in with them, even if they don't want to seek help yet.

Stop abuse

Encourage them to call the National Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0808 2000 247. The helpline will put them in touch with local services who can help them make a plan to get safe. People experiencing domestic abuse are allowed to leave their home to seek help during lockdown. If serious domestic abuse is disclosed, you should encourage them to call 101, or 999 if the situation is critical.

- **The Bright Sky mobile app:** free to download, provides support and information to employers and anyone who may be experiencing domestic abuse.
- **Respect charity:** provide confidential advice to perpetrators of violence to help them choose to stop, **0808 802 4040** or www.respectphoneline.org.uk
- **Women's Aid:** Survivors Handbook has practical advice and information on seeking support. www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/

Ending domestic abuse

If you know or suspect someone is at risk of perpetrating domestic abuse, you should encourage them to stop. Respect phoneline helps perpetrators of violence and abuse to end their behaviour. Their message is: 'When the world is unsafe, do not make home unsafe. Get help to manage your behaviour.'

work but not being able to.

- Struggling to concentrate at work and worrying about being disciplined for this.

Employers have an important role to play in preventing and tackling domestic abuse.

By negotiating with employers to introduce workplace policies on domestic violence, we can change attitudes and help people who experience domestic violence to get the support they need.

Public Health England estimate domestic abuse costs businesses £1.9 billion every year through lost productivity and absence so it's clear that having a domestic violence

workplace policy is not only the right thing but it makes good business sense too.

COMPANY POLICIES

Usdaw has had some success in recent months working with employers to negotiate good workplace policies on domestic violence including:

Pladis

The company will explore all opportunities to support colleagues including requests for flexible working and five days paid leave to address issues such as attending court.

Poundland & Dealz

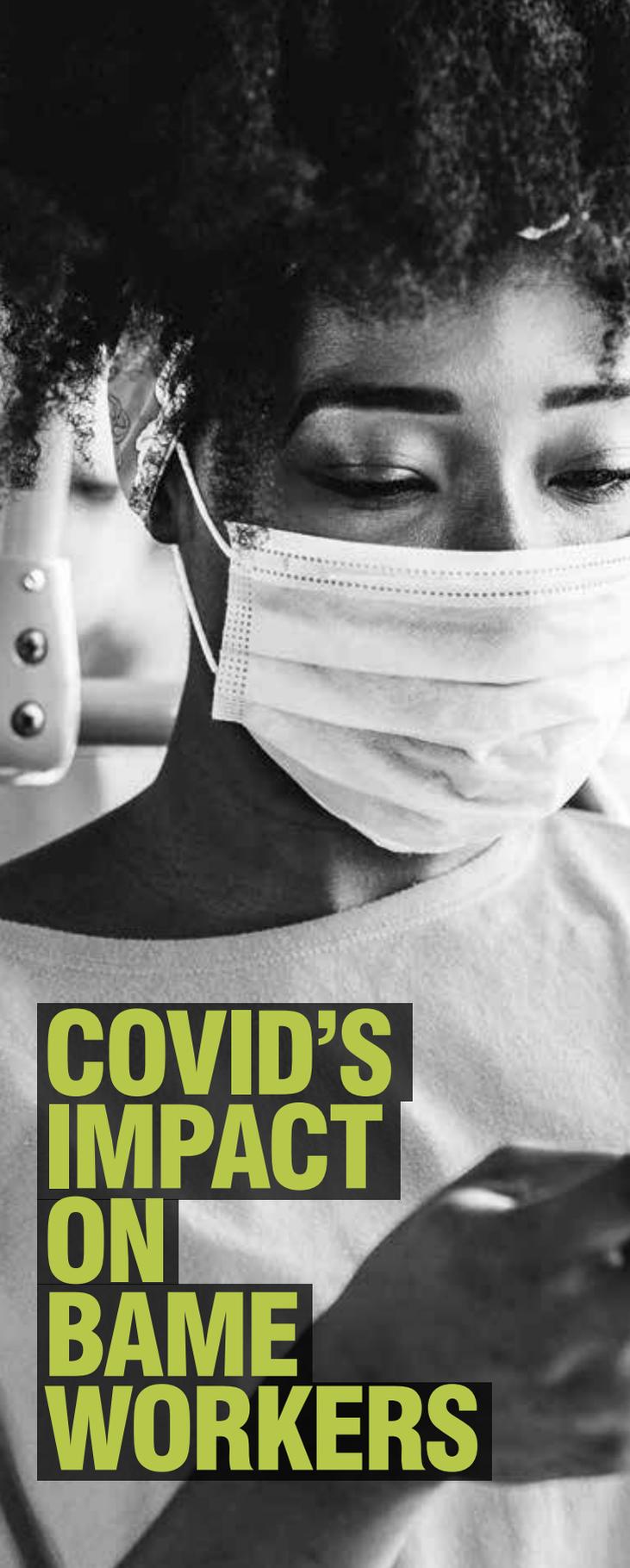
The company will explore all opportunities to support colleagues including requests for flexible working and temporary changes to hours.

Sainsbury's and Argos

The company will discuss with colleagues any requirements to change work patterns or workload and allow flexible working or time away from work to facilitate any practical arrangements.

IMPACT OF COVID ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURSE

www.usdaw.org.uk/CovidAndDV



COVID'S IMPACT ON BAME WORKERS

Usdaw organised a gathering of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) members via Zoom in October to give them the opportunity to share their experiences of living and working through the pandemic.

Over 20 activists took part in the online event where they discussed the reasons for the disproportionate impact of the Coronavirus on Black, Asian and Ethnic minority workers and their communities.

There is no doubt that Coronavirus has led to a greater loss of life in BAME communities.

After accounting for factors such as sex, age and region, people of Bangladeshi ethnicity are at most risk, about twice the risk compared with people of white British ethnicity.

People of Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, other Asian, Caribbean and other Black ethnicity are between 10 per cent and 50 per cent higher risk when compared with white British.

In online breakout rooms, members discussed the reasons for the disproportionate impact and agreed that in the early days of the pandemic, the debate in the press and Parliament focused on reasons that tended to be ones that blamed BAME people themselves. Things like BAME workers were less likely to wear a face covering or more likely to ignore social distancing measures emerged as reasons. It was also suggested that something about being Black or Asian, something about a person's ethnic origins, put them at greater risk.

COVID-19 AND INEQUALITY

However, members concluded that the real reasons were to do with the types of jobs BAME workers do and the fact that they are less likely to have access to statutory payments like Statutory Sick Pay and employment rights because of their concentration in low paid, high risk, temporary and insecure work.

Research bears this out:

- There are around 3.9 million BAME working people in the UK who are far more likely to be in precarious jobs than white workers.
- BAME workers are more than twice as likely to be on agency contracts than white workers.
- BAME workers are more likely to be on zero-hours contracts – one in 24 BAME workers are on zero-hours contracts, compared to one in 42 white workers.

- One in 13 BAME workers are in temporary work, compared to one in 19 white workers.

Usdaw's Coronavirus survey, which was completed by over 7,000 members, echoes these findings. It shows that BAME members are much more likely to work in jobs and sectors where the union is less well-organised and also that they were less likely to have access to company sick pay, risk assessments and the right PPE.

This makes it clear that it is inequality and not a worker's ethnic origins, their genetics or their 'cultural practices' that are at the root of the disproportionate impact.

This has been confirmed in a report published at the end of October by Doreen Lawrence, the mother of Stephen Lawrence who was murdered in a racist attack in 1993.

Doreen Lawrence's review commissioned by Labour and to which Usdaw gave evidence, found BAME people are over-represented in public-facing industries where they cannot work from home, are more likely to live in overcrowded housing, have less access to PPE and are more likely to work in frontline jobs that heighten their risk of exposure.

In the report's foreword, Lawrence, a Labour peer, said minority ethnic people had been "overexposed, under-protected, stigmatised and overlooked." The report makes 20 immediate and long-term recommendations to Government to protect those most at risk from the virus and reduce inequalities in society including:

- Government should remind employers they have a legal duty to record COVID-19 deaths caused

by exposure at work.

- Employers should be legally required to publish their COVID-19 risk assessments and must provide appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

- In the longer term, the Government should remove barriers to accessing health services, collect comprehensive data on ethnicity and reform the immigration system.

Usdaw welcomes the recommendations and will continue to work with the TUC and the Labour Party to push for real and practical action to tackle racism at work and in society.

Further information on the union's equality work can be found at:

www.usdaw.org.uk/Help-Advice/Equalities
www.usdaw.org.uk/Help-Advice/Equalities/Ask-a-Question

USDRAW HELPING TO OVERCOME BARRIERS TO UNION INVOLVEMENT

One of the ways in which Usdaw has sought to tackle racism is to organise events such as the recent online one to bring BAME members together so that they can share their experiences of racism and discuss how we fight it. This approach, where groups of members who are under-involved in the union come together to discuss the issues that matter to them, is called positive action. Positive action means doing something to tackle the fact that some groups of members may find it more difficult to become involved in the union than others. For example, we know that around 17 per cent of our members are BAME and it would therefore be sensible to expect that around 17 per cent of reps, delegates to Usdaw

conferences and branch officers would be BAME but that isn't so. Less than 5 per cent of branch officers are BAME and just over 10 per cent of reps are BAME.

Positive action is about taking steps to help overcome the fact that some members – BAME, women, disabled and LGBT members are under-represented in the union.

In practice this might mean organising an event for women members to talk about the menopause or an event that is just for BAME members like the recent online event.

Here is what one BAME member said about the experience of going to Usdaw's Black Members' Weekend Workshop for the first time – an event that is a positive

action measure.

"I was very nervous about going to Black Members' Weekend Workshop as I had never been to a union event before. I hadn't realised the union held a conference for Black members and it was the first time I'd been anywhere where I wasn't in a minority.

"At the event we discussed our experiences of racism. I don't think I would have been as open as I was had I been at a conference where I was the only person of African heritage but because everyone there was from a BAME background this gave me confidence to speak up.

"I left feeling positive and confident and determined to get more involved in the union."

Usdaw is always looking for reps and members to get more involved in the union. If you want to find out more about the union's equality work then please speak to your area organiser or contact Usdaw's equalities section (phone **0161 224 2804** or email equalitiesmatters@usdaw.org.uk). You never know where you might end up. From attending an event like Black Members' Weekend Workshop, many members have gone on to become reps, divisional councillors and sit on the union's equality forums.

USDAW HOSTS AN ONLINE YOUNG WORKERS EVENT

Usdaw's online Young Workers Event brought together a number of reps to talk about the importance of organising and the impact of lockdown on mental health

At the beginning of November Usdaw united a group of young workers to talk about mental health and why young workers need to join trade unions.

The event was hosted online by Usdaw's education department and attended by Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis, deputy general secretary Dave McCrossen and president Amy Murphy.

PADDY LILLIS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUNG WORKERS IN USDAW

"Usdaw believes that it's important to focus on young workers as they can be some of the most vulnerable workers," said Paddy. "The main reason for their vulnerability is that many do not join a trade union and lose out on that vital protection at work. This isn't because young workers are inherently hostile to unions, on the contrary, many are strong supporters of trade unions. The reason they don't join is because they haven't been asked.

"Usdaw has always had a lot to offer young workers and was at the forefront of tackling the issue of youth rates through collective bargaining and political lobbying. This was a hugely successful campaign which resulted in young workers in companies that Usdaw organises being paid the same amount as their older colleagues.

"Over the last 10 years things have become even harder for young workers. The global recession of 2008 decimated millions of jobs in almost every industry. This in

turn impacted the job prospects of young workers and for the first time in decades the standard of living that improved with each generation stalled as young workers grappled with insecure work, low pay, tuition fees and a lifetime of renting due to soaring house prices. That's why, more than ever, it is important for trade unions to recruit young workers and to represent their interests and concerns."

DAVE MCCROSSEN ON ORGANISING

"The Coronavirus pandemic has affected every aspect of our lives including how we recruit and organise," said Dave. "Social distancing measures will have enforced changes to the way businesses operate, and as a result induction processes are likely to look a little different for a while. This will undoubtedly make recruiting in the workplace far more challenging than normal.

"However, it's more important than ever that reps continue to recruit new members so that they have access to the benefits of Usdaw membership. It is vital that we maintain our membership levels so that we can continue to be a strong and influential voice for our members.

"Workplaces with unions tend to have better pay, a safer work environment and advice and support when you need it. During the pandemic Usdaw lobbied both Government and employers to ensure the needs of

Usdaw members were taken into consideration when policy decisions were made. We managed to win 10 per cent bonuses, sick pay from day one and improved health & safety in many workplaces including plastic screens and limiting the number of customers in store at one time."

MENTAL HEALTH

Usdaw has been campaigning on mental health for a number of years by raising awareness, holding It's Good to Talk days and producing a number of leaflets on how reps can support members with mental health issues. Talking about mental health helps to tackle some of the stigma and prejudice that surrounds the issue.

Mental health issues have always been significant for young workers but the effects of the pandemic are causing greater stress and anxiety for some. Young workers are worrying about the virus, changes at work, unemployment and lack of contact with friends and family.

There is a real role for young workers in their workplaces to support other young workers and let them know it is okay to talk about these issues and signpost them to where they can get help.

With some recent research indicating that as many as 48 per cent of workers aged 18-30 having experienced suicidal thoughts it's vitally important that these issues are highlighted and the help offered by organisations such as the Samaritans, MIND, SAMH and others is widely promoted.



VIRTUAL WORKSHOP CONNECTS YOUNG MEMBERS

Delegates broke out into workshops to discuss ways of maintaining good mental health including eating properly, exercising, limiting time spent on social media, and getting enough sleep. Some delegates talked about what they did to cope during the lockdown including how their car became indispensable as it allowed them to go for a drive in a safe environment, others talked about their pets providing comfort and companionship and some talked about the benefits of online gaming and the community it provided during lockdown.

Young reps tell us what they thought of the event:

JAMIE HARPER

Jamie Harper has worked for the Co-op as a customer team member for three years and became an Usdaw rep just over a month ago. In that short time Jamie has started his

rep training and attended the Young Workers Event.

"I haven't been a rep for very long, so this was my first ever Usdaw event. I was pretty nervous at first but everyone was really friendly and I soon settled into the session. I was interested in the discussion around mental health because I think this is a big issue for a lot of people particularly young workers. It was interesting to hear some of the statistics around it and the root causes.

"Attending this event made me realise that I wanted to get more involved in the work the union does with young workers."

RYAN GIDDY

Ryan Giddy has worked at Tesco for over five years and has been an Usdaw rep for about 18 months. Ryan attended the Young Workers Event because he passionately believes that young workers should be treated the

same as older workers.

"This was the first event I attended as an Usdaw rep and I loved it. It was great to meet other young reps during what has been a really challenging time for everyone working in retail but particularly young workers who've had to step up when older colleagues have been off.

"Having the general secretary Paddy Lillis attend this event made me feel like the union was actually interested in listening to what young workers had to say and was serious about addressing our concerns.

"I know lots of young workers who feel it's unfair that they get paid less for doing the same job as their older colleagues, especially when many of us live on our own and have rent and bills to pay. That's why Usdaw campaigning for £10 per hour for all workers is a campaign I can get behind.

"I will definitely put myself forward for other events."



WINTER DRIVING GUIDANCE

Network provides a short guide for drivers on how to keep safe during the winter months including training on defensive driving, pre-shift checks and alert systems

One change that has become clear as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the massive increase in online shopping. To meet the demand, employers have increased their number of home delivery drivers. For lots of new drivers going into winter it will be their first experience of driving a delivery van in adverse weather conditions. Strong winds, heavy rain, fog, snow and ice can pose serious risks for drivers. So now is a good time for drivers' health and safety reps to check that employers are making preparations for these conditions.

Employers should provide refresher training on defensive driving in winter.

Drivers and managers should:

- Check the weather forecast and road conditions.

- Consider other routes in bad weather.
- Allow extra time for the journey.
- It should be clear that the final decision to travel or to attempt to deliver at any location lies with the driver. If the weather deteriorates once they have left the depot or if a delivery location is unsafe, there should be a clear procedure for the driver to follow.
- Pre-shift checks on tyres, windscreen washers, brakes, lights, etc. are even more important in winter.
- Winter tyres can make a big difference to driving on snow and ice or on wet roads when the temperature is close to freezing.
- Spare warm clothing, a blanket, hot drinks, a torch, a shovel and suitable footwear are all essential survival kit for winter weather.

- Uniform jackets, trousers etc. should be suitable for winter conditions. If hi-vis jackets are worn over other clothing they should be big enough to fit over bulkier winter wear.
 - There should be a system to alert the depot if a driver fails to arrive at expected delivery points and to check that all drivers do return to base.
- For other members who are still going into work rather than working from home, travel to and from work can be a problem when snow and ice is around.

Members are advised to follow Government advice on whether it is safe to travel at:

www.gov.uk/driving-adverse-weather-conditions-226-to-237/
[icy-and-snowy-weather-228-to-231](https://www.gov.uk/icy-and-snowy-weather-228-to-231/)

HAZARDS CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS COVID-19 RISKS



Around four in 10 people testing positive for COVID-19 identified 'a workplace or education event' as their activity in the days prior to onset of symptoms, ahead of all other causes, an analysis of official figures has revealed.

Research by Hazards Magazine, the health and safety journal for trade union safety reps, shows a correlation between calls by the UK Government for a return to work and education and a rapid rise in clusters in both settings according to official figures from the Office for National Statistics.

The report contrasts the much lower levels of cases and fatalities reported to HSE under the RIDDOR regulations. Hazards argues that this fact 'sits

uneasily' with the 25,000 positive test results in work and education.

This suggests that HSE may be missing thousands of work-related COVID-19 deaths.

Hazards Campaign argues that the figures show the need for Government to do more to control workplace outbreaks by setting up an effective test and trace system, providing support for workers who need to self-isolate and stronger enforcement of workplace COVID-19 precautions.

Further information can be read in *Laid bare: The scandal of expendable workers before, during and after Covid* www.hazards.org/coronavirus/laidbare.htm

HAZARDS CAMPAIGN VIDEO

VIRUS SPREADS THROUGH AIR IN ENCLOSED WORKPLACES

Hazards Campaign has released a new video *COVID Transmission and Killer Workplaces*.

The film describes the growing evidence about the importance of the airborne spread of COVID-19 particularly in enclosed indoor spaces where workers spend time working closely together.

It explains why good ventilation is needed in addition to the other controls

against the spread of the virus in the workplace.

There are also examples of the ways that some unions have been working to protect their members by making sure workers are able to self-isolate when they need to and by ensuring that control measures are followed at work. reelnews.co.uk/2020/11/04/coronavirus/covid-transmission-and-killer-workplaces/

Health
& Safety

TUC H&S REPS SURVEY

The TUC runs a survey of H&S Reps every 2 years. The first half of the survey asks about health and safety work in general over the period from September 2018 to December 2020. The second half of the survey is specifically about the COVID-19 pandemic. Contributions from as many H&S reps as possible will help the TUC to set targets for future work on H&S and to show others the great work that union Respondents will have the chance to be added into a prize draw: It takes 15 minutes and it is important that reps complete the entire survey.

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/HSReps2020

CONTACT

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Health and safety assistant

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General health and safety enquiries email: healthandsafety@usdaw.org.uk

COVID-19 ENFORCEMENT



HSE STATISTICS

The Health and Safety Executive has published the latest statistics on accidents and ill health at work. The figures do not include absences due to COVID-19. Over 1.6 million workers suffered work-related illness last year, nearly 700,000 were injured at work and there were 111 recorded workplace deaths.

More than half of Britain's working days lost in 2019/20 were due to mental health, 828,000 workers reported work-related stress, depression or anxiety accounting for 17.9 million working days lost.

www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/

STRESS

In a timely blog, Shelly Asquith, the TUC H&S Officer, wrote that training workers to become more resilient to deal with stress is not the answer. These strategies are usually an example of organisations failing to tackle the problem of stress at its root cause as this requires a change to work structures. You can read Shelly's blog at:

www.tuc.org.uk/blogs

REGULATORY CUTS HAMPER CONTROL OF COVID-19 AT WORK

Two recent reports show how the extent of cuts to regulators including the HSE and local authorities mean that they are struggling to meet the demand for enforcement of COVID-19 controls.

A Resolution Foundation report, *Failed Safe* uses results from a YouGov survey of 6,061 people. It found that nearly half of workers that spend time in the workplace rate the risk of COVID-19 transmission at work as fairly or very high. Despite 90 per cent of employers taking multiple steps to mitigate risks – such as providing hand sanitiser or enforcing social distancing – over a third (35 per cent) of workers are still worried about catching COVID-19 on the job.

The report notes that the HSE entered the pandemic severely under-resourced as a result of budget cuts over the last 10 years. Lindsay Judge, research director at the Resolution Foundation, said: "Given many workers' limited ability to get employers to address COVID-19 concerns, the UK needs a strong enforcement regime to ensure that workplaces are as safe as can be. But instead health and safety

resources have been cut, inspections have been slow, and COVID-related enforcement notices are few and far between."

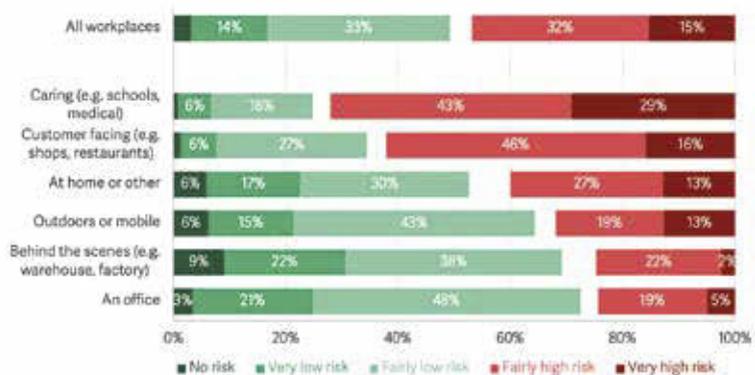
The report recommends: "More weight should be placed on the employee voice as a source of intelligence to inform enforcement targeting." The report found workers were twice as likely to seek advice on workplace COVID-19 concerns from their union as from HSE, far higher than for any other source of information. *Failed Safe* report available at: www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/failed-safe/

A report from the campaign group Unchecked UK 'The UK's Enforcement Gap 2020' shows that funding cuts to regulators have resulted in loss of around a third of inspectors and a 40 per cent reduction in checks on health and safety at work, food safety and environmental safety. www.cieh.org/ehh/food-safety-integrity/2020/october/cuts-strangle-regulators-so-they-cannot-enforce-rules/

From the *Failed Safe* report

Nearly half of employees in the workplace rate the risk of Covid-19 transmission as high

Proportion of employees reporting risk to health and safety in the workplace due to transmission of Covid-19, by workplace type: UK, 17-22 September 2020



BRINGING MENTAL HEALTH TO THE FOREFRONT

Network speaks to customer experience assistant and veteran activist **Sara Farrar** about her roles as rep and health and safety rep at Sainsbury's in Derby

Q. When did you become active?

I've been working at Sainsbury's for the past 14 years and before that I was a mental health outreach worker, so my background is helping people. I became a rep in 2010 because I don't like to see injustice. I wanted to help people and ensure everyone is treated fairly. I'm also health and safety rep and national rep which involves representing my colleagues at a national level. I enjoy the challenge and love meeting people. Being active with the union also provides many opportunities. I've been out on stand-down, completed Academy 1 and 2, both Summer Schools, I'm on the federation committee and I've just applied to be on the equalities forum.

Q. What's this year been like?

Mental health has been a big concern during the Coronavirus pandemic and I wanted to do something to recognise that. I spoke to a team leader and we came up with the idea of a Wellbeing Room. We wanted to create a space where staff could go for a cuppa and a chat. Somewhere they could get support and access information about professional advice if they needed it. We managed to secure a little room and made it really nice and comfortable. We added a couple of chairs and a bookcase. There's also flowers and some positive quotes on the wall. It's a really nice place to be. I also made sure there was lots of information about the union available and I put my phone number on the leaflets so colleagues could make contact.

Q. How's it going?

It's working really well. I've supported lots of people from

colleagues to store managers, and it actually turned out to be a good union recruitment tool too. We're continuing to highlight different issues in the room, like support for minority groups such as LGBT and different obstacles that people might come across that can cause anxiety and stress. I think the room gives people an outlet for their anxieties and I'm really pleased it's making a difference.

Mental health awareness is something I've been keen to promote while out on stand-down too. It's just about bringing the issue into the forefront. I'll give managers all the relevant Usdaw publications so that they can pass the information on to their staff and support them.

Q. Any advice for reps who want to do something similar?

Work with your manager. They already know about mental health issues and in most cases will be keen

to support their staff. People will be surprised at how supportive store managers can be because they have a responsibility for the wellbeing of their staff. If people feel better in themselves and feel like they've got somebody to talk to then they're more inclined to come in to work.

Q. What motivates you?

I just feel that we shouldn't give in or give up. We've got to keep pushing to support each other. It's going to become increasingly difficult as the evenings get darker earlier and for longer, and Christmas is going to be very different this year. So, people who were feeling it before are really going to feel it now. We won't be having the social get-togethers like we usually would, but I will be trying to do something for colleagues to make sure they're supported through this difficult time. Sometimes it's just nice to be nice and find five minutes for somebody else.



Usdaw health and safety rep Sara Farrar

MemberOffers

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

CARS & TRANSPORT

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

HEALTH & BEAUTY

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

SHOPPING

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

INSURANCE

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

LEISURE & ENTERTAINMENT

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Cinema at home: Chili.com
Cinema at home: Rakuten TV
Cinema Tickets
Discount Card
English Heritage
Go Ape
Golf Membership
Magazine App: Readly
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STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS

Southern divisional officer Sue Merrell reflects on her career as she approaches retirement and *Network* pays tribute to former deputy finance officer Les Horsfield

SUE MERRELL

Southern divisional officer Sue Merrell will be retiring at the end of December after 23 years on the union's staff.

Sue initially joined the Croydon office (now Morden) in 1997 as an area organiser. In 2010 she was promoted to deputy divisional officer, and then three years later became the union's fourth female divisional officer in April 2013. Before her career with the union began, Sue was an active Usdaw rep and health and safety rep at Sainsbury's in East Grinstead.

As an area organiser, Sue instigated a case that successfully secured payment for thousands of Sainsbury's workers who had not been paid unsocial hours premiums when they were on holiday.

"The Working Time Regulations had not long been law in 1998, when I was alerted by one of my reps that premiums were not being paid when staff took holiday, which had been lawful prior to the WTR but

subsequently had to be paid when a worker took leave," said Sue. "We raised the matter at our Sainsbury's National Consultative meetings but the company prevaricated for over a year until I lost patience and took it to a tribunal.

"When the cases were finally settled Sainsbury's had to repay their staff several millions of pounds.

"No day is the same at Usdaw and being able to make a difference for members brings its own rewards. Our members have never had enough recognition for the jobs they do, but during the pandemic they have kept the country going.

"My retirement plans may have to be put on hold until the Coronavirus pandemic subsidies but I intend to finish my Open University degree which I started when I was working for Sainsbury's and I would like to travel to places I have not had a chance to visit yet. I also have seven grandchildren who will keep me very busy!"



Sue Merrell

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: "I would like to thank Sue for her 23 years' service with Usdaw. Sue should have retired in the summer, but due to the pandemic agreed to stay until the end of the year, and I wish to place on record my thanks and appreciation for that. I wish Sue all the very best for her retirement."

OBITUARY LES HORSFIELD

Les Horsfield, former Usdaw deputy finance officer, died in October. He was 84.

Les started work as an accounts clerk at Central Office in 1958 at the age of 22. In 1985 he was promoted to deputy departmental head of Accounts. He met his wife Pat at Usdaw – a supervisor in the typing section – and the pair got married in 1965.

Les and Pat retired together in 1999 after more than 77 years of loyal service between them.

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis paid tribute: "Les was a loyal servant to the union who gave many years of reliable and dependable service.

"Our condolences go out to Pat and the rest of Les' family and friends at this difficult time."



Les and Pat Horsfield



YOUR ONLINE SAFETY AT HOME AND WORK

An essential online course for anyone trying to get to grips with staying safe and secure online

The Coronavirus pandemic has made digital platforms more important than ever for helping us stay in touch with friends and family, get work done, and support members. So, it's vital that we know how to keep ourselves safe online.

Good online safety is about more than having a strong password or using anti-virus software – it's also about being careful with the personal information we share online, being aware of workplace social media policies, and taking

steps to keep children safe from bullies and other predators.

That's why Usdaw has produced this online bitesize course. Delivered in conjunction with Digital Skills Education and the Safeguarding team at West Yorkshire Police, all members will find useful advice on how to ensure they and their families can enjoy the benefits of the Internet while being aware of the dangers and how to protect themselves. Register for the course at: www.usdaw.org.uk/safeonline

NEW IN!

Leaflets

Usdaw the Trade Union for Professional Drivers
(Leaflet 289)

Pensions – Understanding Your State Pension
(Leaflet 428)

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

Puzzled By Pensions – Guide to Auto-Enrolment

Survey of Violence and Abuse Against Retail Workers - Survey Results 2019

Online Courses

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

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

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

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

Getting Started: The Role of the Rep
www.usdaw.org.uk/gettingstarted

Organising and Recruitment Part 1
www.usdaw.org.uk/RecruitOrg1

Organising and Recruitment Part 2
www.usdaw.org.uk/RecruitOrg2

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

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

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

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

Media Monitor



Cllr Kate Walsh

Kudos to [@Tesco](#) started back at work this evening after maternity leave but I'm still breastfeeding. They made sure I have access to a room with a lock on the door (and it's not a toilet) to express! How it should be done! [@UsdawUnion](#) [#breastfeeding](#) [#breastfeedingawareness](#)



Usdaw Eastern

Great recruitment day with an excellent team of reps over 20 new members, back again on Thursday.



Email your thoughts and pictures to us at: network@usdaw.org.uk or tweet us at: [@usdawunion](#)



Currie.Peter

@UsdawUnion

It's good to talk campaign table at Sainsbury's Whitehouse Farm.

All smiles from Claire

Area organiser Debby Hudson wishing long serving rep Claire Vincent (right) from Tesco New Milton a happy retirement.



Diversity champion

Area organiser Sarah Hughes presents Rob Parry (Sainsbury's Stafford) with an Usdaw equalities award.

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