



# Late-Night Working

Preventing Violence to Staff



# Retail Workers on the Front Line



**Violent crime continues to increase and retail workers are often on the front line. Usdaw's annual survey of retail staff shows that every minute of every day another shopworker is abused, threatened or assaulted. Extended trading hours have increased the exposure to risk. Reduced staffing levels for late-night trading and problems with drunken customers make things even worse.**

## When is the Risk Greater?

Opening and closing of the store have been identified as particularly risky times. Closing a store late at night is much worse than closing in the early evening. It also means that night-shift staff such as shelf fillers have to travel to or from work at later hours when access to public transport or even use of their own cars may be more risky.

24-hour operation of petrol filling stations, often with single staffing, is a further area where the risk is greater, particularly where the petrol station attendant is required to sell other goods apart from petrol.

Women workers feel particularly vulnerable and the stress that this causes can itself be a problem, even when they are not a victim of an attack.

Staff who are keyholders and are called out in the middle of the night if the store alarm has gone off also feel particularly vulnerable, especially if they are expected to enter the premises on their own.

## Bristol

At several stores, many reports of verbal abuse, physical assault, including three armed robberies. Worst time for incidents was between 8pm and 10pm.

## Swansea

Knife, gun and arson attacks and intimidation by gangs of youths when closing up late at night. Workers frightened when waiting for buses late at night or where public transport is not available. Fewer staff on duty during late-night trading when incidence of shoplifting and vandalism is more common.

## North Wales

Assault in store car park led to the following measures: car park lights to be left on all night, bushes and shrubs cleared away, system of escorting staff to their cars when leaving store at night, offering staff personal attack alarms at £5 each.

## Enfield

24-hour petrol station staff having to deal with abusive and aggressive customers. Kiosks being kept open until midnight to maximise sales. Staff having to walk alone across the car park to collect stock during the night. CCTV only being provided where there is concern about theft rather than staff safety.



### *Leeds*

Abusive language, bottles being thrown and threats of being 'waited for' when leaving store. Staff arranged lifts home together. Management allowed parking in yard at back of store, which is poorly lit. Problems are worst between 7.30pm and 8pm. Abuse from drug users. Earlier incidents about 4pm involving shoplifters. All late staff live within walking distance and no transport provided. CCTV and panic buttons fitted.

### *Glasgow*

Following a number of violent incidents after extension of trading to 10pm, the company has laid on transport home for staff.

### *Swindon*

Armed robbery at petrol filling station by masked man with a 10" knife.

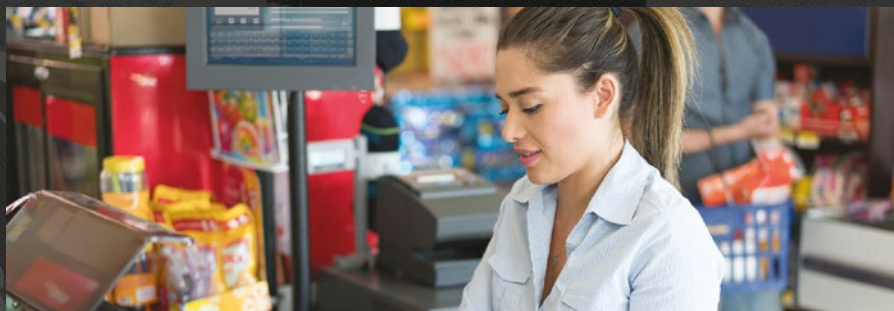
### *Manchester*

A member turns up for work at 4am and has to wait outside the store for Night Manager to let her in. A member working alone at night in a petrol filling station was threatened by two men wielding machetes.

# Reducing the Risks



- Employers should ensure that they have a system for reporting all incidents, including threats or intimidation and incidents which are work related but happen outside of work (for example, when travelling to or from work).
- Risk assessments, required under health and safety law, should cover the issue of violence and, where late working causes particular problems, the risk assessment should recognise this.
- Employers should provide well-lit access to stores for staff who have to enter or leave the store during the night.
- Car parks should be well lit at all times that staff are expected to use them. Where possible, night staff should be allowed to park where there is easy access to the store and where their cars can be monitored by security staff. Bushes, shrubs and other obstructions which may provide a hiding place for assailants should be removed.
- If there are problems with public transport for staff who finish late, the employer should lay on transport.
- In high-risk areas, individual workers should not be expected to open or close stores on their own. Staff who have to leave the store during the night should be escorted to their transport home. Staff who are expected to open/close stores should be trained so they know what to do if they see someone suspicious hanging about.
- Where possible, staff should not be expected to work on their own at high risk times; for example, in late opening stores, off licences or petrol filling stations. If it cannot be avoided then extra precautions will be needed to make sure they are protected and can call for assistance in an emergency.
- Staff who are keyholders should be trained in what to do in a call-out and should not be expected to enter the store on their own.



# Support Available

## Your Company

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Your company has a duty of care to protect you from violence and threats at work. If you are suffering intimidation and abuse, ask for support and a risk assessment.

## Trading Standards

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Ask the Trading Standards department at your local Council to come and give you advice about preventing under-age sales. Check which local ID card schemes they authorise.

## Police

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Contact the police for support in dealing with persistent offenders.

Ask what evidence you will need to keep for them to take anti-social behaviour measures against those who abuse and intimidate staff.

## Legal Support

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If you're a victim of violence and you suffer serious injury in the UK, call FirstCall Usdaw on **0800 055 6333** to start your claim. Usdaw Legal Plus can help members claim compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority, a state-funded scheme.

To qualify for compensation, your injuries must be sufficiently serious to justify the minimum amount of compensation (£1,000); you must personally report the incident to the police within 48 hours and get a crime reference number; and you must see a doctor immediately for treatment of physical injuries as well as psychological ones such as stress or shock.

Subject to qualifying criteria, Usdaw also offers an Assault at Work Grant. Further information can be obtained from your local office.

## Usdaw

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If you are subject to abuse, threats or violence, contact your Usdaw rep or Area Organiser for support in doing a risk assessment and ensuring practical measures are taken to protect you.

## *Usdaw's Freedom From Fear Campaign*

Freedom From Fear is Usdaw's award-winning campaign against abuse, intimidation and violence against shopworkers.

To help our campaign, or for support, advice and practical measures you can take to make your store safer, visit:

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

# How Joining Usdaw Can Help

- Usdaw National Officers work with companies to agree clear policies that support and protect retail workers.
- Reps and Area Organisers are available to offer advice and support for workplace issues.
- Usdaw offers support through FirstCall Usdaw for accidents and injuries sustained while at work.
- The Retail Staff Survey helps Usdaw make a better case to employers and politicians to secure stronger protections. Share your experiences online at: [www.usdaw.org.uk/fffsurvey](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/fffsurvey)



Scan to take the survey

## Join Usdaw

Usdaw understands the issues that retail workers face in the workplace and the more members we have, the stronger our case is with companies for better policies and better protections.

Simply complete a membership form and return it to Usdaw's Head Office. Just write FREEPOST USDRAW on the envelope and put it in the post.

You can also join online at:

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



Scan to join today

For further information, call our Helpline on **0800 030 80 30** or visit: [www.usdaw.org.uk/fff](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/fff)



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