



Breaking Down Barriers

Black Members' Development Programme
Information for Applicants

Breaking Down Barriers

This booklet is designed to tell you everything you need to know about Usdaw's Black Members' Development Programme and how to boost your chances of making a successful application.

If you're thinking about applying (and you fit the selection criteria) then why not apply? You've nothing to lose and everything to gain!

We've included some tips on how to fill out the application form which you might find helpful to read in advance.

If you need this guidance and/or the application form in an alternative format, please contact breakingdownbarriers@usdaw.org.uk or call the Equalities Section on **0161 224 2804** to specify your requirements.



The guide and application are also available online at: www.usdaw.org.uk/BMDApply



Selection Process

Application Form

This should be returned to Joanne Thomas, General Secretary at Usdaw's Head Office to arrive no later than **Monday 13 July 2026**.

Selection

The General Secretary and the Development Programme Steering Group, in consultation with Regional and Deputy Regional Secretaries, select suitable candidates for the programme.

Selection is based upon the information provided on the application form. Each application form is marked against the selection criteria set out on the application form and under the heading 'Selection Criteria' on page 3 of this briefing.

Role Description

The principal aim of the Black Members' Development Programme is to encourage Black members' greater involvement in Usdaw and address their under-representation in the Union's structures and events.

The programme gives you the opportunity to broaden your skills and build your knowledge and experience.

What Will You Be Doing?

Successful applicants will each set their own personal development goal.

Development goals differ but might include learning about how to organise and campaign in the workplace or the community, standing for a place on Usdaw's Regional Councils or getting more involved in local politics.

The Development Programme combines classroom sessions run by the Union's Education Department with other learning opportunities that are tailored to your own, individual personal goal; for instance, spending time at a union or labour movement conference or organising a workplace campaign.

Experienced Usdaw Black reps will act as buddies, known as mentors, providing support in between classroom sessions.

Who Should Apply?

Usdaw welcomes applications from Black* reps who are keen to step up into new roles within Usdaw and/or the wider labour movement.

*By Black, we mean anyone who is at risk of racism on the basis of skin colour. It is used to describe people in Britain with a shared history of colonialism and enslavement in the past, and who continue to experience racism and discrimination on the basis of skin colour today.



Selection Criteria

To apply, you must have*:

1. Completed the basic Usdaw rep training and be registered for, or have completed, the advanced Usdaw rep, Health & Safety Rep or Union Learning Rep (ULR) training.
2. Experience of workplace campaigning, representation or organising and/or local community involvement.
3. Ability to commit to the programme (20 days - 12 classroom and 8 non-classroom sessions).

*Participation in the programme is conditional on the basis of your employer agreeing to release you from work. It will also not normally be possible to combine being on the Black Members' Development Programme with taking part in the Union's Organising Academy 1 and 2.

Tips for Filling in the Application Form

You have been sent two copies of the application form so you can practice on one copy before submitting your final version. You can also fill in the form electronically and return it by email, or online.

Talk to a friend, a colleague, a fellow rep or your Area Organiser about what you plan to say on the form and get their advice.

Try to answer the questions by giving real-life examples.



Personal Details

Please provide up-to-date contact details so that we can get in touch with you about your application.

Current Employment Details

We are asking for these details because if you are selected to take up a place on the programme, we will need to contact your employer to secure your release from work.

Trade Union and Community Involvement

It would help to know about any union positions you currently hold or have held in the past. You might, for example, have been a member of a national joint negotiating committee like the Tesco National Forum, you might be or have been a member of your Regional Equality Forum, be involved with your regional TUC or regularly attend branch meetings. If you haven't held any positions within the Union, don't worry - we'd still really like to hear from you.

Please also use this space to tell us about any Usdaw or union campaigns you have supported. You might, for example, have themed your noticeboard during Respect Week, organised activity to support Show Racism the Red Card on Wear Red Day, have handed out surveys and leaflets on Usdaw's Day of Action on Mental Health, run a No Room for Racism campaign in your workplace or organised a campaign stand on Supporting Parents and Carers Spotlight Day.

Please also use this space to tell us about any work you've done to support members in your workplace, anything you've done to raise the profile of Usdaw in your workplace or any steps you've taken to promote equality.

You can also use this space to detail any activity or involvement you have in your local neighbourhood, community or local politics.

Your Proudest Achievement

This is personal! It might be anything from:

- Recruiting or supporting a member.
- Chairing a branch meeting.
- Speaking at a union event or conference.
- Organising a social event.
- Taking part in a union demonstration.
- Raising funds for a charity.

Or it might be something entirely different - only you know the answer to this question!

Please Tell Us Why You Are Applying

Use this space to explain what you feel you would gain from taking part in the programme.

This may range from building your rep skills, to gaining a better understanding of what more you can contribute to the Union and what other roles you might want to take up or events you want to participate in.

You might want to use this space to tell us about what you care about, what prompted you to become a rep or your commitment to promoting fairness and equality.

This section gives you a chance to tell us more about yourself, what matters to you and what your personal goals are.

Remember!

You need to make sure your application form shows that you meet the 3 selection criteria listed opposite.

Development Programme - What Can I Expect?

Breaking Down Barriers is a programme for Black reps that aims to address their under-representation in Union roles and at events by developing their skills and understanding of the Usdaw and the wider trade union movement. It aims to act as a stepping stone or a bridge for Black members' greater involvement in Usdaw.

Training

There will be a total of 20 days' training spread out over the course of the 11 months you spend on the programme. These will be a blend of classroom and non-classroom sessions, working together with others on the programme and working alone.

Classroom

It is expected that 12 of these days will be spent in the classroom. Classroom sessions will be split into 6 learning blocks of two days, on the following dates:

<u>2026</u>	<u>2027</u>
15 - 16 Sept - Session 1	26 - 27 Jan - Session 3
17 - 18 Nov - Session 2	16 - 17 March - Session 4
	18 - 19 May - Session 5
	20 - 21 July - Session 6

These sessions cover a wide variety of issues, including planning and running campaigns, understanding and navigating union structures, public speaking and leadership skills.



The classroom sessions take place at Usdaw's Head Office in Salford Quays.

Non-Classroom Sessions

You will be asked to work together on achieving a common goal. Last year, members on the programme organised a reception at Usdaw's annual conference in Blackpool, and the year before, they scripted and appeared in a short film promoting the programme: www.usdaw.org.uk/BMDPpromo2024

Non-classroom sessions include things like a trip to Parliament, attending a TUC event or conference, or taking part in local political campaigning.

Coaching

You will be buddied up with an experienced Black Usdaw activist and rep who will act as a 'mentor'. Their role is to offer guidance and support to you throughout your time on the programme and signpost you to other sources of support within Usdaw and the wider union movement.

Release from Work

If selected, Usdaw will approach your employer to seek to get you paid release from work for the 20 days needed to participate in the programme. If your employer refuses paid release, the Union will cover any loss of earnings you might incur.

Your participation in the programme is conditional on your employer agreeing to release you from work.

Childcare

Usdaw should be able to help if you incur any additional childcare costs as a result of taking part in the programme. We will discuss these arrangements with successful candidates.

Reasonable Adjustments

The Union will make all reasonable adjustments to ensure successful disabled applicants are able to fully participate in the programme.

Travel

Travel costs will be reimbursed as will any out of pocket expenses. All expenses will be met by the Union's central funds. You will not have to ask your branch to fund your expenses whilst you are on the programme.

Any Further Questions?

Please contact us in the first instance by emailing your questions to: breakingdownbarriers@usdaw.org.uk

More Information

Usdaw Nationwide

Wherever you work, an Usdaw rep or official (Area Organiser) is not far away. For further information or assistance, contact your Usdaw rep or local Usdaw office. Alternatively, you can phone our Freephone Helpline **0800 030 80 30** to connect you to your regional office or visit our website: **www.usdaw.org.uk**

You can also write to the Union's Head Office. Just write **FREEPOST USDAW** on the envelope and put it in the post.

Join Usdaw

You can join online at:
www.usdaw.org.uk/JoinUs



Scan to
join today

What Happens Next

Once we process your application, you will receive a membership card with our Helpline telephone number and a New Member's Pack giving details of all the benefits and professional services available to you.



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