

Arena

AUTUMN 2024

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Pregnancy and Redundancy

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Usdaw is well known as the campaigning union and has spent years lobbying politicians on behalf of its members.

Within weeks of sweeping to victory, the Labour Party has committed to issues that the union has long called for in its New Deal for Workers, Freedom From Fear and Save our Shops campaigns.

Labour has a plan to make work pay, with a new deal for working people that will end poverty pay and address insecure employment that holds so many people back.

They will tackle retail crime with a protection of shopworkers law, more uniformed police, town centre banning orders for repeat offenders and an end to the £200 threshold for prosecuting shoplifting.

And they will transform the high street by reforming business tax, investing in town centres and supporting small independent retailers.

The press has already started scaremongering about why working people shouldn't have improved pay and protections. The same tired arguments we heard when the national minimum wage was introduced 25 years ago. None of the doomsday scenarios ever materialised, but the minimum wage did lift millions out of poverty.

The government has ambitious plans to improve the lives of working people, and we will work with Labour to ensure this transformational change is delivered.

Paddy Lillis, General Secretary



Usdaw wins fire and rehire case

Usdaw has won a Supreme Court battle against supermarket giant Tesco over so-called proposals to 'fire and rehire' workers on less favourable terms. This was the final stage of a long-running legal battle in England; a similar case involving workers at the Livingston site has been stayed in the Scottish courts.

Usdaw took legal action over the supermarket chain's proposals to fire staff at Daventry and Lichfield distribution centres and rehire them on lower pay, in 2021. After the High Court ruled in the union's favour in 2022, Tesco successfully appealed against the decision the same year. The union then took the case to the country's highest court, with five Supreme Court justices ruling unanimously that Tesco should be blocked from dismissing the staff.

The case arose after Tesco planned to close some of its distribution centres in 2007 and offered staff 'retained pay' for them to relocate. In 2021, the supermarket wished to bring 'retained pay' to an end and told staff that the enhancement would be removed in return for a lump sum, or their contracts would be terminated and then reoffered on the same terms, but without the increased salary. Usdaw argued that 'retained pay' was described as 'permanent' in the staff's contracts, meaning it could not be removed.

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: "Usdaw has been determined to stand by its members in receipt of this valuable benefit that constituted a key component of their pay. We are therefore delighted to get this outcome, which is a win for the trade union movement as a whole.

Photo l-r: Tesco workers Mohib Ali and Navtej Singh at the Supreme Court in London



Spotlight Day

In June, Usdaw held its annual Supporting Parents and Carers Spotlight Day. Across the UK, thousands of Usdaw members and reps promoted this year's theme of 'Stand Up for Carers'. The aim of the day was to recognise the huge contribution that unpaid carers make to society.

Many Usdaw members are juggling paid jobs with caring for someone and while this can be a very rewarding experience, it can also be hugely demanding. Unpaid carers need, and deserve, to be recognised and supported with their caring roles, but too many of them are not.

Caring often puts household incomes under additional pressure as it can limit members' ability to work extra hours and brings extra costs with it that carers would not otherwise have. The work of unpaid carers helps hold society and families together and yet, due to a lack of recognition and support, many unpaid carers are facing financial hardship.



National Retail Workers' Day

Usdaw held its second annual National Retail Workers' Day on 13 July, which engaged with the public to highlight the value of retail workers in our shops and communities.

Activists across the country held regional events in stores and shopping centres asking the public to show their support for shopworkers and share the message that 'retail workers are at the heart of our communities'.

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis said: "On behalf of Usdaw, I want to thank retail workers for everything they do. Retail work is mentally and physically demanding, yet too often retail jobs do not reflect their true value and significance.

"The election of a new government provides us with new hope that retail workers and the wider industry will get the recognition they deserve.

"Labour has promised to reform business rates to help prevent job losses and shop closures, along with tackling the retail crime that blights the industry; both campaigns that Usdaw has promoted with the support of retailers. Plans for a new deal for workers will help end poverty pay and insecure work."



Labour Win

The hard work of the election campaign has paid off, and after 14 years we've won the Labour government that Usdaw members and working people across the country need.

Thank you to everyone who took part in the campaign. Thank you for knocking on doors, making phone calls, taking a leaflet round, putting up a poster or simply voting Labour. Every action had an impact on the results, and helped to secure a Labour government that will deliver the radical change we need.



This overwhelming mandate from the British people puts Labour in a very strong position in Westminster, meaning they will be able to:

- Deliver the New Deal for Working People: making the minimum wage a real living wage, banning exploitative zero-hours contracts, securing a contract that reflects the number of hours regularly worked, improved notice of shift changes and many more improvements to working life.
- Create a specific new offence for assaults on shopworkers, protecting Usdaw members at work from threats and violence.
- Tackle the Cost of Living Crisis, through delivering economic stability and long-term growth, as well as addressing rising energy bills and stagnating wages.
- Make our streets safer, by cracking down on anti-social behaviour, recruiting more neighbourhood police, tougher penalties for offenders and tackling shoplifting.
- Cut NHS waiting times, through offering more appointments and improving technology.

We know that the hard work has already begun. When people voted for Labour, they voted for change, and we know that this Labour government will deliver.



Violence doubles

This year, the union's Respect for Shopworkers Week will take place from 11 to 17 November and Usdaw wants everyone to get involved and show their support.

Udaw has been running its Freedom From Fear Campaign since 2002 and each year holds a Respect for Shopworkers Week in the run-up to the busy Christmas shopping period. Unfortunately, there's been a troubling increase in violence and abuse against retail workers in recent years. Usdaw's latest annual Freedom From Fear survey found that violence against shopworkers has doubled since last year.

Standalone offence

In August 2021, as a result of Usdaw's campaigning, a new ground-breaking law to protect shopworkers from violence, threats and abuse was introduced in Scotland.

For years, the Conservatives blocked similar legislation from being introduced in England and Wales. However, the new Labour Government has committed to delivering a new offence for assaults on shopworkers, which will go a long way in protecting Usdaw members from threats and violence at work.



Joined up approach

In order to properly protect retail workers, Usdaw wants to see better reporting procedures in workplaces, the police taking abuse, threats and violence against retail workers seriously and greater co-ordination between the police and employers.

What you can do to help

■ Report It. Sort It! The importance of reporting incidents

Udaw is encouraging staff to report all incidents of threats, abuse and violence. Ensuring all cases are reported will help send a clear message to colleagues, employers, politicians and police about the scale of the issue.

■ Fill in Usdaw's Freedom From Fear survey

Surveys provide the union with data that informs its campaigns as well as hard evidence that can be presented to employers and policy makers when calling for change.

[Complete the survey here.](#)

Share your story

Udaw is always looking for case studies. If you have experienced abuse or violence at work and want to share your story, get in touch at arena@usdaw.org.uk



Voices from the front line

Shocking statistics from Usdaw's Freedom From Fear survey found that violence against shopworkers has doubled since last year and that shoplifting was a trigger for abuse in 61 per cent of these incidents. The increase in assaults comes during an epidemic of retail crime, with official statistics and reports from retailers showing significant increases in thefts.

Members had this to say:

Retail worker in Glasgow

"We have gangs coming into the store to shoplift, and they can be quite aggressive. They know that no-one can touch them so they do as they please. And they're right. The police don't come out when we call them. In Scotland, we have the protection of shopworkers law but for it to work effectively, we need the police to take retail crime seriously."

Retail worker in Liverpool

"Constant verbal abuse, especially when we ask for ID for age-related sales. We don't tolerate it and will call the police. But the damage has been done. We have a cashier in tears who doesn't want to go back on the tills. Things will never change unless we have legislation to protect shopworkers that is enforced by the police and the courts."

Retail worker in Rotherham

"Things are difficult on the front line. It's gangs coming in to shoplift rather than someone stealing burgers to feed their family. They'll brazenly walk out with a case of cheese. Retail crime like shoplifting and abuse of shopworkers just isn't taken seriously. We need to crack down hard on this type of crime."

check out our new website

USDAW.ORG.UK

You may have noticed that we switched over to a new-look website, which has been designed to perform best on mobile phones and tablets.

Your feedback is invaluable in ensuring the site meets your needs.

Please take a few moments to explore **www.usdaw.org.uk** and let us know what you think **here**.

A hand is holding a smartphone. The screen of the phone is white and displays the text 'You can leave your feedback' in a bold, teal font. Below this text is a yellow rounded rectangular button with the word 'here' in a bold, teal font. Another hand is pointing at the bottom of the phone.

**You can
leave your
feedback**

here



Redundancy & Pregnancy

New legislation introduced under the Maternity Leave, Adoption Leave and Shared Parental Leave (Amendment) Regulations 2024 provides additional redundancy protections for pregnant women and new parents.

Background

Previously, employers had a legal obligation to offer suitable alternative employment, where a vacancy existed, to a parent who was on maternity leave (and shared parental or adoption leave), if their job was at risk of redundancy. This was limited to the duration of the relevant leave.

What has changed?

From 6 April 2024, the new legislation extends existing redundancy rights so that they apply:

- From the point an employee informs their employer they are pregnant.
- Until 18 months after the expected week of childbirth, the child's birth date or date of adoption, for employees returning from maternity leave, shared parental leave or adoption leave.

I'm pregnant; what does this mean for me?

Pregnant employees are protected during pregnancy (from the point they tell their employer they are pregnant), during their statutory maternity leave and for an additional protected period after they return to work, for a total of 18 months.

If I take 12 months of maternity leave, how long am I protected for?

If an employee takes their full 12 months of statutory maternity leave, they'll receive an extra six months of protection following their return to work.

Are employees who suffer a miscarriage protected?

The new rules also protect employees who have suffered a miscarriage, for a period of two weeks after the pregnancy ends.

However, if an employee suffers a miscarriage or stillbirth after 24 weeks, they are entitled to maternity leave and will have 18 months of protection.

Does the protection apply to parents who are adopting a child?

Yes. Employees are protected during adoption leave, plus an additional period, calculated from the day the child is placed for adoption with the employee for a period of 18 months.

Does the protection apply to employees who take shared parental leave?

Yes. Employees will be protected for 18 months from the date of birth or placement of the child. However, the employee must have taken a period of at least six continuous weeks of shared parental leave.



Scam Alert

Falling victim to a scam can be devastating, both financially and emotionally. Unfortunately, fraudsters are coming up with new ways of scamming us out of our money. According to the latest figures from UK Finance, there were nearly 3m cases of fraud in 2023, with almost £1.2 billion stolen from consumers.

Here are some of the scams currently doing the rounds.

Booking.com

Scammers send customers fake emails asking for a payment to secure their reservation. To avoid being scammed, be cautious of unsolicited emails or messages and avoid clicking on links to prevent malware downloads. Go directly to the hotel through known contact methods before taking any action.

Amazon

Watch out for fake automated phone calls claiming to be from Amazon, telling customers their Prime subscription is due to expire, and that payment will be automatically taken from their account to renew it. The recorded message asks the customer to press 1 to cancel, or 2 to speak to customer services. Both options go through to an individual who asks for their personal details to access their account, but the information is instead used to steal money from their account.

Vehicle Listings

Fraudsters are setting up fake listings on online marketplaces or social media for vehicles that don't exist. When a potential buyer gets in touch, they ask for a deposit to secure the vehicle and refuse to let them see the vehicle beforehand. After the money is sent, the customer is blocked, and the seller deletes their profile.

QR Code jacking

Fraudsters have started sticking Quick Response (QR) codes on parking meters, restaurant menus, leaflets and electric charging points. Anyone who uses the code will be directed to a fake website set up by the fraudsters that requests bank details for a payment. This information is used by scammers to steal money from bank accounts.

Fake Energy Refund

Scammers pose as an energy supplier and send customers an email saying they are entitled to a refund, with a link to enter their bank details. The details are then used to drain their bank account. Energy suppliers never contact customers to request their bank details, as they already have these for direct debit payments.

Fake WASPI compensation claim forms

The Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) campaign has warned women not to be taken in by fake compensation claim forms which are being posted online by scammers trying to steal personal information. Any form promising compensation to WASPI women is a scam, as compensation levels have not yet been confirmed.

Loved one 'in need' scam

Scammers will send a WhatsApp message supposedly from a family member, saying that they've got a new phone number and need money to pay a bill urgently. Messages often start with 'Hello mum' or 'Hello dad'. They will then provide bank details for money to be transferred across to them. Always speak to your family member, preferably in person, before transferring money.

Who to contact if you're a victim of fraud

Contact your bank immediately if you think you've fallen for a scam. If you have been defrauded or affected by cyber-crime you must report it to Action Fraud:

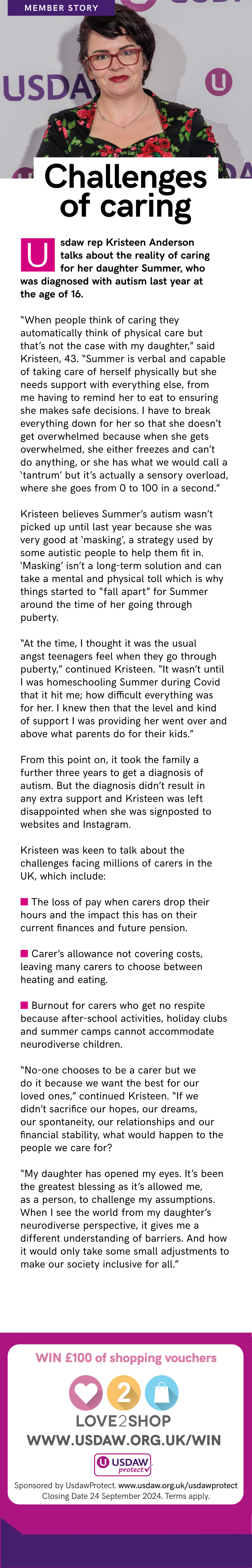
www.actionfraud.police.uk

or 0300 123 2040.

Do you have a story to share?

If you've been scammed and want to share your story, please get in touch.

arena@usdaw.org.uk



Challenges of caring

Usdaw rep Kristeen Anderson talks about the reality of caring for her daughter Summer, who was diagnosed with autism last year at the age of 16.

"When people think of caring they automatically think of physical care but that's not the case with my daughter," said Kristeen, 43. "Summer is verbal and capable of taking care of herself physically but she needs support with everything else, from me having to remind her to eat to ensuring she makes safe decisions. I have to break everything down for her so that she doesn't get overwhelmed because when she gets overwhelmed, she either freezes and can't do anything, or she has what we would call a 'tantrum' but it's actually a sensory overload, where she goes from 0 to 100 in a second."

Kristeen believes Summer's autism wasn't picked up until last year because she was very good at 'masking', a strategy used by some autistic people to help them fit in. 'Masking' isn't a long-term solution and can take a mental and physical toll which is why things started to "fall apart" for Summer around the time of her going through puberty.

"At the time, I thought it was the usual angst teenagers feel when they go through puberty," continued Kristeen. "It wasn't until I was homeschooling Summer during Covid that it hit me; how difficult everything was for her. I knew then that the level and kind of support I was providing her went over and above what parents do for their kids."

From this point on, it took the family a further three years to get a diagnosis of autism. But the diagnosis didn't result in any extra support and Kristeen was left disappointed when she was signposted to websites and Instagram.

Kristeen was keen to talk about the challenges facing millions of carers in the UK, which include:

- The loss of pay when carers drop their hours and the impact this has on their current finances and future pension.
- Carer's allowance not covering costs, leaving many carers to choose between heating and eating.
- Burnout for carers who get no respite because after-school activities, holiday clubs and summer camps cannot accommodate neurodiverse children.

"No-one chooses to be a carer but we do it because we want the best for our loved ones," continued Kristeen. "If we didn't sacrifice our hopes, our dreams, our spontaneity, our relationships and our financial stability, what would happen to the people we care for?"

"My daughter has opened my eyes. It's been the greatest blessing as it's allowed me, as a person, to challenge my assumptions. When I see the world from my daughter's neurodiverse perspective, it gives me a different understanding of barriers. And how it would only take some small adjustments to make our society inclusive for all."

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Last year, the union coordinated its first Day of Action on Mental Health to coincide with World Mental Health Day. The day was a huge success with over 700 workplaces taking part on the day, as well as positive engagement by reps and members on social media.

This year, the union will be coordinating another Day of Action on 10 October. The Day of Action gives the union the opportunity to put the focus on work, with the theme "It's Time to Prioritise Mental Health at Work."

Usdaw members may not realise that they can talk to the union about these issues. If work is impacting your mental health or where your mental health might be affecting you at work (for example, attendance or performance), then Usdaw can help. Although the union can only help with problems at work, reps can signpost members to independent support organisations where their mental health is affecting their life outside of work.

Speak to your rep to find out if your workplace is taking part in the Day of Action. The contact details of reps can be found on the Usdaw noticeboard.

Mental Health Courses

A number of mental health related courses can be accessed via Usdaw's **FREE Litmos learning platform** available for all Usdaw members.

The sign-up code is **Usdaw1**

Our **Looking After Your Mental Health** course has been developed to help reps and members look after their mental health.

You can also take our **Mind Your Head** course.

WEAR RED DAY²⁴

SHOW
RACISM
THE
RED
CARD

On Friday 18 October, Usdaw is once again joining forces with the anti-racism football charity 'Show Racism the Red Card' to support the 10th anniversary of 'Wear Red Day'.

Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC) was established in 1996 when the then Newcastle United goalkeeper Shaka Hislop had racist abuse hurled at him by four young teenagers. When they realised it was Shaka Hislop, the football player, they started singing his name and then asked him for his autograph. This left a big impression on Shaka, who realised he could use his status as a professional football player to educate people about racism. 28 years on, the campaign delivers workshops, produces educational resources and helps teachers and trainers deliver training in their schools and workplaces.

Listen to Shaka Hislop tell his story in his own words



Last year, hundreds of reps and members were amongst the 615,000 people in the UK who got involved by wearing red and making a £1 donation to raise vital funds for SRtRC so that they can continue with their work.

If Usdaw reps in your workplace are supporting **Wear Red Day** this year, then please get involved by wearing something red to work and making a donation.

Even if Wear Red Day isn't happening in your workplace, you can still show your support by making a donation. Every person and every penny counts!

TEXT 'RED' TO 70470 TO GIVE £1

TEXT 'RED5' TO 70470 TO GIVE £5

TEXT 'RED10' TO 70470 TO GIVE £10

TEXT 'RED20' TO 70470 TO GIVE £20

*TEXTS COST DONATION AMOUNT + STANDARD RATE MESSAGE



Had an accident or injury?

If you have an accident or suffer an injury, whether at work or outside of work, FirstCall Usdaw is on hand to help – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Thousands of members every year use FirstCall Usdaw to secure the justice and compensation they deserve – and unlike private solicitors, using FirstCall ensures you keep 100 per cent of the compensation you receive. *Arena* takes a look at some of the cases FirstCall has won recently.

Road Traffic Collision

An Usdaw member in Hampshire was lucky to be alive after sustaining multiple broken bones and internal injuries when she was knocked off her motorcycle by another vehicle. She contacted FirstCall Usdaw, who ensured that the level of her compensation reflected the severity of her injuries, and at the conclusion of her case, she was awarded almost £300,000.

Assault at Work

FirstCall secured a member in Bristol almost £20,000 after he was assaulted by a colleague at work. The incident left the member with bruising to his arms and shoulders and exacerbated his blood-pressure issues, as well as having a negative impact on his mental health. FirstCall solicitors worked closely with the member and kept him informed and up to date at every step of the process.

Fall from height

An Usdaw member in Cornwall was tidying a shelf in her workplace when the stool she was using failed and collapsed underneath her. The member crashed into some adjacent shelving on her way down, causing her to damage her shoulder and knee. A quick call to FirstCall Usdaw started the process, which concluded with the member being awarded £6,000 in compensation.

Burned in the staffroom

A lunchtime Pot Noodle turned into agony for a member in West Yorkshire. She prepared her food and set it down on the staffroom table, which, unbeknownst to her, was faulty. When the member sat down to enjoy her lunch, the table collapsed and spilled boiling water over her leg, causing extensive burns. FirstCall Usdaw took up the member's case and secured her £4,400.



FIRSTCALL



USDAW

If you have an accident, whether it's at work or outside work, call **FirstCall Usdaw** on **0800 055 6333** to start your claim.



Save now, play later

When we are younger, we tend not to pay too much attention to the subject of pensions but the earlier you start to pay into a pension, the better the outcome will be.

Pensions are a long-term investment. Anyone joining a pension scheme at age 22 (or earlier) will potentially be contributing to a workplace pension scheme for 40 years or more.

Ordinarily you are not permitted to withdraw the money from the pension until you reach a minimum age. This is set by the Government and known as the Normal Minimum Pension Age (NMPA), which is currently age 55 but will rise to 57 in 2028.

When a group of young people were surveyed recently, they believed their pension pot was the same as a savings account, however, a workplace pension is much better as your employer will also pay a contribution on your behalf, and you receive some generous tax concessions - including a contribution from Government known as tax relief. Your money will also grow tax free.

What happens to my pension payments?

Contributions made at the earliest periods of an individual's working life have the potential to provide the greatest return on the money invested, as the money remains invested for a longer period and will benefit from compound growth (compounding).

The analogy is with a snowball rolling downhill and gathering more snow as it continues to roll; it becomes ever larger the further it rolls.

This is why you're never too young to start your pension savings.

Have I left it too late to join a workplace pension?

It's rarely too late to start saving for a pension or increasing the amount of money you save after you pass your twenties.

If you haven't ever saved into a pension, speak to your employer about joining your workplace scheme. Your future self will thank you!

If you have a pension question, get in touch with Usdaw's pension team on 0161 224 2804 or [ask a question here](#).

Usdaw believes pensions are an important part of your employee benefit package, and we want to ensure that you do not lose out by not taking advantage of your pension rights. This article contains general information and guidance but does not constitute financial advice. Visit www.unbiased.co.uk for details of independent financial advisers (IFAs) in your area. Usdaw has an affinity partnership with a group of IFAs but is unable to endorse any individual advice provided and is not liable for any subsequent business transacted directly with Usdaw members. Usdaw has endeavoured to ensure the information provided is accurate but cannot guarantee that the information is free from inaccuracies or typographical errors.



Hi-vis to high office

Usdaw member Gareth Coates is one of the youngest mayors in Tamworth's history. The 41-year-old was elected Mayor in May when both Labour and Conservative councillors believed he was the best person for the job.

"Being called Mr Mayor is really strange," said Gareth. "But I'm thrilled to be elected and I'm looking forward to representing my town and community."

The former Co-op employee and double Usdaw Academy graduate believes that being a union rep helped him get to where he is today. "The training I received from Usdaw was excellent. It was classroom based and designed for people like me who struggle to sit exams," said Gareth.

Gareth left school at 16 and completed a diploma in animal care. He was a zookeeper for 11 years and even worked with the renowned Australian zookeeper, conservationist and television personality Steve Irwin. In his late twenties, he gave up zookeeping because the pay wasn't enough for him to start a family.

"After zookeeping, I started working for Co-op distribution and I really found my passion when I became a rep in 2014," said Gareth. "The more involved I got in the union, the more I wanted to do."

During Covid, Gareth realised that to develop further as a rep, he would need to improve his knowledge of politics. After the pandemic, he started attending his local Labour Party meetings which ignited his enthusiasm for political activism.

"Tamworth was a Tory stronghold and in the 2023 local elections I was asked to put myself forward as a 'paper candidate', because no-one thought Labour could win. But I was convinced I could win the seat, largely because I was already very active in the area. And I did win, to become the first Labour councillor in my part of Tamworth since 1998!

"The experience I gained as a rep helps me in my role as a councillor because being a councillor is very much like being a rep; you have a lot of people asking you for help. And it's very rewarding when you can help your constituents with issues that might not sound big in the grand scheme of things, but make a huge difference to their lives."


During his tenure as Mayor, Gareth will be championing and raising money for his local mental health charity Changes and the Hygiene Bank of Tamworth, which supplies items like deodorant and soap to people struggling to make ends meet.

"My goal as Mayor is to encourage young people to get interested in politics and show them that it's possible for a regular, hardworking person to become Mayor."

Gareth left the Co-op when the cost of living hit and his 52-mile commute from his home town Tamworth to Coventry became unsustainable due to skyrocketing fuel prices. He is currently employed by The Works (distribution centre in Birmingham) and juggles working full-time alongside his Mayoral duties.

Discounts & Offers

Usdaw members are entitled to great offers and savings from a variety of companies.

 **Shepherds Friendly**

 **ISA BOOST**
Up to £105 cashback

Kickstart your investment journey with up to £105 cashback paid into your new Stocks and Shares ISA

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Capital at risk. T&Cs apply.



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working with Usdaw

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COMPARISON**



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Terms and conditions apply



Cover for your holiday

If you're travelling this summer, either in the UK or abroad, be aware that you're covered by FirstCall Usdaw if you have an accident that wasn't your fault.

What is covered?

Members and their family who live with them are covered for any accident, anywhere in the UK and for package holidays outside the UK.

You will be connected to a trusted union solicitor who will provide you with free, no-obligation advice on an injury claim.

If your claim is successful, you will keep 100 per cent of your compensation, compared to high street solicitors or insurance companies, who will take around 25 per cent in fees.

What is a package holiday?

Essentially, when you book and buy two or more travel services together, such as transport, accommodation, car rental etc.

How to register an injury with FirstCall Usdaw

Call 0800 055 6333 to register the injury, or use the online form [here](#).

Do I still need travel insurance?

FirstCall Usdaw doesn't replace travel insurance. It is always best to purchase travel insurance for any trips or holidays, as it can give you extra protection if your holiday doesn't go as planned. For example, if luggage is lost or stolen, or if you miss transport for reasons beyond your control - travel insurance could reimburse you or help with immediate medical expenses.



Remember – we've got you covered

- Accidents at work
- Outside of work
- On package holidays
- Violence and robbery
- Work-related conditions/diseases
- Family members for non-work-related accidents.

Free, no-obligation advice from a trusted union solicitor.

Keep 100 per cent of your compensation – a private solicitor will take 25 per cent.

JOIN USDAW



Tell a friend...

Union membership is your insurance at work

In these uncertain times, it's more important than ever to join a union.

Union members get better pay, safer workplaces, representation in grievances and disciplinaries, access to a variety of learning opportunities, free legal and accident cover, discounts and offers, and much more.

Make sure your family, friends and colleagues are also protected at work by encouraging them to join Usdaw.

More information [here](#).



What is a rep?

Usdaw rep Rhianna Ross works at Tesco Inverness and became a rep at the age of 19. She explains why she got involved in the union and the benefits of being a union rep.

"One of my fellow reps asked me to consider becoming a rep because I was enthusiastic and had an interest in politics," said Rhianna, 20. "At the time, I was considering putting myself forward for a shift leader position but when this opportunity came up, I put that on the back burner. I was keen to become a rep because it would allow me to help my colleagues.

"I was a bit nervous about the training because I tried further education and didn't like it. Thankfully, trade union training is completely different. It's a very supportive environment and you're in a class with lots of like-minded people who end up becoming your friends. The tutors are great and there are no exams.

"As a rep, your remit is to help your colleagues with issues in the workplace, recruit new members and encourage people to think about becoming reps. People have different reasons why they don't want to become reps. Young people think they're too young, older colleagues say they lack confidence and some people think that being a rep will adversely affect their career.

"I want to reassure people that you're never too young to become a rep, I was 19 when I put myself forward. If you lack confidence, Usdaw's training will give you the knowledge and skills you need to do your role. Also, you're not alone. You have fellow reps you can turn to and a dedicated Usdaw official who will coach, mentor and support you all the way.

"Being a rep hasn't adversely affected my career. I work for an employer that is supportive of unions and I have a good working relationship with my managers because my training taught me how we can work together to find resolutions.

"I would recommend being a rep to anyone who wants to help their colleagues while also receiving a huge amount of training and development."

What is a rep (also known as shop steward)?

A rep (short for representative) is an employee of the company who is also a member of a trade union. The role of the rep is to represent the interests of colleagues to management. The rep is a voluntary position and is elected democratically by the colleagues they will represent.

What do reps do?

A rep's main role is communicating information to and from members to management or the union (or sometimes both). Reps are also vital in helping Usdaw members get advice or assistance, recruiting and organising their members and promoting the benefits of being an Usdaw member. The level of activity will depend on the rep's experience and skills, and the time they are able to commit.

What skills or qualities do I need?

A bit of common sense, the ability to talk to people, and more importantly, the ability to listen. The union provides local training courses for new reps which will increase their confidence in dealing with things that come up.

What do I get out of it?

Most people who become reps say it's a life-changing experience. The training they receive boosts their skills and confidence and opens doors to many opportunities such as promotions, further education or even a career change. In the last few years, Usdaw has had reps who've influenced company policy, helped negotiate pay rises, stood as local councillors, visited Parliament, talked about their experience of abuse on the radio and TV, and had the confidence to address hundreds of people at conferences. Being a rep allows you to make a positive difference to people's work lives, learn new skills, meet new people and create a fairer society.

I'll give it a go. What do I do next?

For further information go to:

www.usdaw.org.uk/bearep



Your gateway to learning

Usdaw members enjoy exclusive access to a brilliant variety of learning opportunities. If you want to join over 100,000 members who have returned to learning through their union, our Online Learning Gateway is a great place to start.

What's included?

A wide variety of courses to help you improve your English, Maths or ICT skills, study a new language, take an NVQ or apprenticeship, and even take a degree. There are over 20 different categories on the Learning Gateway for you to check out.

How does it work?

When you access the Learning Gateway, tap on a subject you're interested in and once you find the right course, you can start learning straight away.

Many of the learning opportunities are completely free. If anything does come with a charge, that will be made clear at the outset.

Start your learning journey now at
www.usdaw.org.uk/learninggateway



Your Questions Answered...

SHELVING

Q I think the shelves in my store are too high. It's difficult to take stock off them and after an hour my back is killing me. Are there any rules on how high shelves can be?

Regular handling of any items above head height is likely to cause injury, so employers have a legal duty to reduce the risk. If stock does have to be handled at such heights, then the employer should plan the store so that heavier items are only stocked on lower shelves, and should provide aids to workers who do have to handle items on the top shelves (eg kick stools or steps). The equipment needs to be well maintained, and training should be provided on safe handling practices. If you are struggling to reach items on higher shelves, talk to your Usdaw health and safety rep at work.

LED

Q On the loading bays where I work, the new LED lights get in our eyes when we are unloading from the trailers. They are very bright and dazzle you so you can't see where they are driving their truck. I also get headaches from the glare. What can I do?

In areas with lower ceilings, it is important that the diffusers and light fittings protect workers from direct eye contact with the LEDs. There is guidance from lighting experts on the angular exclusion zone which should shield workers from direct line of sight with bright light. It is even more important to provide such shielding in the situation you describe when moving a truck from the dark interior of the trailer to the brightly lit warehouse.

Q MENOPAUSE AT WORK

I am suffering from menopausal hot flushes and am finding it very difficult to concentrate at work. Should I inform my manager?

Yes. Menopause is a workplace issue and you do not need to suffer in silence. The law requires employers to consider the risks to their employees and introduce reasonable measures to take into account the difficulties that women may experience during the menopause. Informing your manager will let them know what symptoms you are suffering so that they can introduce reasonable measures that will help.

The Chartered Institute for Personnel Development has a [helpful guide](#) for managers that explains how employers can meet their obligations under equalities, and health and safety law.

Q REST BREAKS AT WORK

I work in a small convenience store and I am often working an eight hour shift alone with no breaks. Is this right?

No. Workers have the right to one uninterrupted 20-minute rest break during their working day if they work more than six hours a day. Your contract of employment may indicate that you are entitled to an even longer break and whether it is paid or not. If you are working alone, then your employer may need to close the shop while you take your break. Your break should not be given at the start or the end of your shift and should be somewhere in the middle.

COMPETITION

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