# Arena

SUMMER 2025

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# Usdaw delivering for members

**As I come towards the end of my time as general secretary, I have been reflecting on the 36 years I've spent at Usdaw. It's been a privilege to lead Usdaw, the union that I joined at the start of my working life, and that I've been a part of ever since.**

We are living through a level of uncertainty beyond anything in living memory. A global pandemic. A cost of living crisis. International turmoil. The world, the country, and the union, have been battered by headwinds we could not have imagined.

Usdaw members keep the country going but so often, their contribution is overlooked. That's why we keep on challenging the lazy thinking of those who see our members' work as unskilled or unimportant, when we know that nothing could be further from the truth.

We know that our members can and should expect better treatment, better pay and better conditions. And we have fought for better, winning at the negotiating table, winning in court, like for our Tesco distribution members and winning in Parliament, with the Employment Rights Bill and protections against violence and abuse.

I've had the privilege of serving this union for the last 36 years. I'm pleased that it will be a strong and thriving union I leave behind. We have a fantastic new leadership team coming in with Joanne Thomas as Usdaw's first-ever female general secretary and Rab Donnelly as deputy general secretary. I wish them every success. It is my greatest hope, that in years to come, Usdaw will be even stronger. Still fighting, still growing and still standing up for its members.

Thank you for your support and solidarity.

**Paddy Lillis** General Secretary

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# Usdaw elects its first-ever female general secretary

**Joanne Thomas, currently the union's regional secretary for the North East, was elected unopposed as the only candidate to secure the necessary nominations. She will replace the current general secretary Paddy Lillis, who retires on 25 July 2025.**

The election of a deputy general secretary, to replace Dave McCrossen who also retires on 25 July, was announced. Rab Donnelly, regional secretary for the Southern region, has been elected having secured nominations from a large majority of nominating branches and being the only remaining candidate.

Joanne Thomas, 46, is a lifelong trade unionist, having started as an Usdaw workplace rep when working at wholesaler Makro. She was employed by Usdaw as an area organiser in Newcastle and then regional secretary for the North East. Joanne has served on the Labour Party National Executive Committee and chaired its organising committee, along with holding the presidency of the Yorkshire and Humber TUC.

Usdaw general secretary elect Joanne Thomas says: "It is a great honour to be elected the general secretary of Usdaw, the trade union I have been a member of all my working life. I am proud to be the first woman elected to this role. I'd like to thank all the members, reps and officials who have supported me over the years and have prepared me to take on the biggest role in our union."

## INDEPENDENT SCRUTINEER REPORT OF NOMINATIONS & UNCONTESTED ELECTION FOR POSITION OF GENERAL SECRETARY 2025

At the close of nominations at 5pm on 11 April 2025, the following candidate was the only valid nominee for the position and accordingly is deemed to be elected unopposed:
JOANNE THOMAS
As Scrutineers appointed in accordance with Section 49 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (as amended), we are satisfied as to each of the matters specified in subsection 52(2) with regard to the election.
The person appointed under Section 51A was Civica Election Services.
Section 49(3) requires the scrutineer to inspect the register of names and addresses of the members of the trade union whenever it appears appropriate to do so or when requested to do so under the conditions specified in subsection 3(A). It was not deemed appropriate, at this time, to inspect the register and no requests to inspect the register were received.
We would draw your attention to Sections 52(4), 52(5) and 52(6). Section 52(4) requires that a copy of this report be published and made available to all members of USDAW within a three-month period from today. This does not, however, mean that every member has to be notified individually.
Section 52(5) requires that the union will, on request, supply any member of the union with a copy of the report on payment of a reasonable fee.

**Alexander K Lonie Associate Director**
**Civica Election Services**

# Child Poverty Taskforce

**Usdaw gave evidence to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Minister Alison McGovern on issues facing working parents for the government's Child Poverty Taskforce.**

The Minister met Usdaw reps who work in retail and distribution to hear of their experiences in accessing childcare, dealing with Universal Credit and the need for improved workplace rights. The meeting took place on 19 May at the union's head office in Manchester.

During the meeting, reps had an opportunity to give the Minister detailed accounts of the issues that they face as reps and as parents in their workplaces, as well as matters that they have encountered while supporting other working parents.

Reps spoke about the challenges working mothers in retail can face around juggling caring responsibilities with the availability of hours, and how this can limit not only how much people earn, but can also hold working mums back from getting ahead and gaining promotions at work.

Financial support such as Universal Credit was also an issue raised by numerous reps in the meeting, particularly the issues for members who are paid four-weekly rather than monthly, and how this payment schedule does not fit with the calculation rules of Universal Credit.

Other topics covered included the cost of childcare, school uniforms and free school meals, and the impact that parents who work opposite shifts can have on family life. Reps spent an hour with the Minister and a team from the Department for Work and Pensions, who listened and will take the information back to the government as part of the Child Poverty Taskforce.

Usdaw general secretary Paddy Lillis says: "We very much welcome the Minister taking time to meet our members and hear their first-hand experiences of trying to balance work and home duties, while trying to make ends meet. The last government made life much harder for working parents, but never once asked to hear their issues and concerns, so it is a great step forward to have a Minister sitting down with our members and hearing their views when looking at developing this strategy that will support low-income families."

**Listen to what Usdaw members had to say about the meeting below.**

# Making policy

**Delegates gathered in the Winter Gardens in Blackpool for Usdaw's 78th Annual Delegate Meeting (ADM). ADM is the biggest event in the union's calendar with over 1,000 delegates, visitors and officials attending from across the UK.**

General secretary Paddy Lillis, deputy secretary Dave McCrossen and president Jane Jones hosted ADM, while national executive council member Susan Donaldson ensured the smooth running of ADM as the chair of the standing orders committee.

Over the four days, delegates took part in lively debates and voted on propositions to decide the union's policies and priorities from the next 12 months. Wages, education, crime, housing, health and safety, benefits and the environment were all debated by passionate speakers, many of whom were first-time speakers.

Delegates also heard from guest speaker Wes Streeting, secretary of state for health and social care.

***Arena* reports on a cross section of the main propositions and debates.**

**Contributions increase**
Delegates voted overwhelmingly to increase membership rates. This means that from 29 June 2025:
Scale A Members will pay £2.88.
Scale C Members will pay £2.04.

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**We caught up with first-time delegate Michael Whyne to find out why he chose to speak at ADM.**

# Wes Streeting

**Conference welcomed the secretary of state for health and social care, Wes Streeting, who delivered a keynote speech as part of the political debate. Wes Streeting set out the efforts Labour is making to rebuild the NHS, improve mental health services and make work pay. The following is an extract from his speech.**

"The NHS was broken," said Wes Streeting. "Broken by more than a decade of Tory failure. Broken, but not beaten. Because every day, there are amazing people delivering outstanding and compassionate care despite all those challenges. Not beaten, because as Nye Bevan is often quoted as saying: 'The NHS will last as long as there's folk with faith left to fight for it.' Well, every day since I became health secretary, I've gone into work fighting for our NHS. While Nigel Farage might not believe in a taxpayer-funded National Health Service and Kemi Badenoch says she wants a debate about the NHS, there's no debate where Labour stands. We will always defend our NHS as a publicly funded, public service, free at the point of use, so that when you fall ill you never have to worry about the bill."

Acknowledging that while much has already been delivered by Labour, there is still much more to do, Wes Streeting concluded: "People are really struggling at the moment. Not living, just surviving. It's not good for our health and it's not good for our country. We were elected with a simple promise: 'change'. It won't be enough for people to see it in the statistics, you need to feel it in your lives. Is my family better off? Is the NHS there for me when I need it? Do my kids attend good schools? Are my streets safe? Am I getting a fair wage for a hard day at work? Is our country better off than it was when I voted for change? Those are the questions people will be asking themselves at the next general election. In government, all of us feel that pressure to deliver the change people voted for. We don't want to let you or our country down. Day by day, week by week, step by step, we will rebuild our economy, rebuild our public services and rebuild trust in politics. Lots done, so much more to do. Britain voted for change. We'll deliver. Change has begun and the best is still to come."

**Wes Streeting celebrated the relationship between Usdaw and Labour.**

# Life on the retail frontline

**Usdaw welcomed the support of over 40 Labour MPs for measures to tackle retail crime and the abuse, threats and violence shopworkers often face as a result. MPs attended a drop-in on the Crime and Policing Bill, hosted by Usdaw on 4 June at Westminster, where they met general secretary Paddy Lillis and shopworkers to hear first-hand experiences of life on the frontline of retail.**

Usdaw members shared with MPs some of the shocking experiences they face on a daily basis, and how the Crime and Policing Bill will make a difference to retail workers' lives.

Connor Rand MP, who kindly hosted the event, said: "Retail workers are at the heart of our communities, delivering essential services. As key workers, they deserve respect and the protection of the law. Under the Tories, retail crime was rampant, doubling in the years since the pandemic. We know that is only the tip of the iceberg as many crimes go unreported.

"I am pleased to see so many of my fellow Labour MPs support the government's measures to tackle this growing problem. The Crime and Policing Bill will introduce Criminal Behaviour Orders to tackle persistent offenders and end the Tories' perverse £200 threshold for prosecuting shoplifters, which essentially gave a green light to theft. The Bill also creates a new standalone offence for assaulting a retail worker.

"Labour stands with retail workers. We know they do not go to work to be abused, threatened and assaulted. Labour's investment in additional police to patrol our streets, and projects to tackle the organised crime that is so often behind retail crime, will make a real difference."

# Celebrating key workers

**On 5 July this year, Usdaw will once again be promoting National Retail Workers' Day. The day will highlight the importance of retail workers to our economy and our communities. This day of appreciation adds to our year-round campaigning for improved workers' rights and negotiating for better terms and conditions of employment.**

The retail industry directly employs three million people, with a further 2.7 million jobs reliant on the success of the industry. Retail work is 24/7, mentally and physically demanding, multi-skilled, high-pressure, profit-driven and target-led. Retail workers have to be adaptable and dynamic, responding to rapid changes in a fast-moving consumer-driven industry. Despite this, retail jobs too often do not reflect their true value and significance. More needs to be done to ensure retail jobs provide decent pay, secure hours and respect for workers.

As the trade union for retail workers, Usdaw represents hundreds of thousands of workers across the UK retail sector. The union continues to make a crucial difference for retail workers by delivering better jobs and better terms and conditions within the sector.

**This includes the following actions:**

- Negotiating higher pay rates and more secure employment contracts.
- Calling for action to help revitalise high streets.
- Delivering for members in the workplace, including negotiating supportive policies on the menopause, greater support on mental health issues, and caring for children and family.
- Working with employers, government and the police to tackle abuse, threats and violence towards retail workers and deliver vital new legal protections.

# Retiring after 36 years

**In his final interview as general secretary of Usdaw, Paddy Lillis reflects on his 36-year career at Usdaw, the union's recent triumphs, and the future of workers' rights in the UK.**

### What do you consider your most significant achievements during your tenure?

It has been a great privilege to lead Usdaw, the union that I joined at the start of my working life, and that I've been a part of ever since. Since I became general secretary in 2018, the union has faced some huge challenges, with the Covid pandemic, the last years of an anti-union Tory Government and the cost of living crisis impacting on our members and their families. I'm so proud of the way we have supported our members through those challenges together as a union.

We have returned to membership growth, putting us in a stronger position to get the best possible deal for our members. We have a Labour government that is delivering on its promises through the Employment Rights Bill, and we've had some important wins for our members, including the Tesco Supreme Court case, where we showed employers that fire and rehire tactics have no place in modern industrial relations. None of these things have been easily won, and none of them would have been possible without the commitment and support of our members and reps, who I'm extremely grateful to.

### What difference has a Labour government made for our members?

Labour has already tabled important once-in-a-generation legislation that will make a real difference to our members' lives. This is legislation we helped shape from the beginning by bringing our members' experiences directly to Labour's policy makers. The Employment Rights Bill will improve workers' rights and help achieve a fairer deal at work with more secure contracts that guarantee your normal working hours, the removal of three waiting days for statutory sick pay, and stronger protections against dismissal, redundancy and fire and rehire, to name just a few things. Labour has also mandated the Low Pay Commission to deliver a real living wage and end rip-off youth rates.

Labour has listened to us on retail crime and its impact on our members too. The Crime and Policing Bill will tackle theft from shops and anti-social behaviour, while providing additional protections for workers including a standalone offence in England and Wales of assaulting a shopworker.

The nature of government is that we will not agree with every decision Labour makes. They have inherited a very difficult economic situation, and they have made some difficult choices. Where we think their choices aren't the right ones, we aren't afraid of telling them so. But the big difference between this government and the Tories or Reform is that they actually listen to trade unions, as the voice of working people. So, it's essential that we keep engaging with Labour, and making a strong case for policies that will make a positive difference to our members. Some of those policies will take time, and we need to be thinking ahead to securing a second term for Labour to deliver them.

### What are your thoughts on the future challenges facing retail workers?

One of the challenges we are facing right now is the backlash against the Employment Rights Bill. The Conservative Party, whose record of broken promises on workers' rights is part of the reason they lost power, has now joined forces with Reform UK to try and tear it down. They describe the Employment Rights Bill as "red tape" and make completely unfounded claims about jobs being lost due to increased costs on employers. It's the same kind of scaremongering we saw when the minimum wage was introduced, which lifted millions of workers out of poverty. We need to stand strong against these attacks on workers' rights and keep making the case for improvements.

The Employment Rights Bill is a big step forward, but it takes more than changes in the law to deliver the best possible deal for our members. The cost of living crisis has had a long term impact on so many people, and there is important work to do on restoring people's living standards. I know that Usdaw will continue to lead the way with its approach to organising the workplace and giving our members a voice at work, whether it's improving pay and conditions, protection against violence and abuse, or keeping jobs secure.

### Any final thoughts as you step down?

When I took my first step as an Usdaw rep, as a shop steward in Abbey Meats in Newtonabbey, 43 years ago, I could never have imagined I would be leading this organisation.

This is a bittersweet moment for me, not least because I will not be sharing my retirement years with my beautiful wife, Jacqueline, who sadly passed away in March 2024. I will, of course, do what she would have wanted me to do and share them with our wonderful sons, their wives, and our 11 beautiful grandchildren, who I have no doubt will keep me busy.

It will certainly be hard to say goodbye to great colleagues and friends, but I'm proud that the union I'm leaving behind is growing, it's financially stable, it's thriving, and I'm pleased that we have a Labour government working closely with us, listening to us and listening to our members.

There are some great opportunities ahead for the union, and I'm leaving it in the best of hands, with the best reps, the best officials and the best staff in the trade union movement led by the incredible Joanne Thomas. The election of our first female general secretary is a huge moment for this union and having worked with Joanne for many years I know she is a great trade unionist, with the skills and passion to take our union forward. We have a fantastic leadership team with Joanne and Rab Donnelly as deputy general secretary. I wish them every success for this union going forward and I look forward to seeing what the union achieves.

As I said in my final speech at the union's Annual Delegate Meeting in May, while I may be leaving Usdaw, I know that Usdaw will never leave me. I will remain a member, a supporter and friend of Usdaw for the rest of my life. My final message is a very simple one - always stand together, always support each other and always remember, Unity is Strength.

# Stepping down

**Deputy general secretary of Usdaw, Dave McCrossen steps down after 36 years. Dave talks about the importance of role models and how he's looking forward to the next chapter in his life.**

Dave McCrossen, a former employee of the Co-op Group, started his Usdaw career when he became an area organiser in 1989. Sixteen years later he was promoted to deputy regional secretary in the Eastern region and was responsible for developing the organising agenda within the region and seeing it grow from 39,000 members to more than 65,000. In 2014, Dave was successful in securing the position of regional secretary. Four years later, he was elected as the deputy general secretary of Usdaw, and is responsible for the union's organising agenda. Dave is a member of the Labour Party's National Policy Forum as well as the TUC's General Purposes Committee.

"When I was a rep, I never once imagined it would be possible to get a job with this organisation let alone become the deputy general secretary," said Dave. "I'm immensely proud and grateful for the opportunity I've been given.

"In life, it is important to have role models, people that inspire us to be better versions of ourselves. For me, those role models are our incredible team of reps. Our members do not realise that out reps fulfil their role without pay, simply doing it because they are good people who want to helps others. In these really difficult times, with so much hatred in the world, it is heartwarming to know that there are people out there who do things because they care about others. Spending time with our reps continues to inspire and lift me, and it is this time that I will definitely miss the most.

"There have been so many highlights over the years that I have been working for Usdaw, but the most important to me is always the difference that we make to our members lives.

"I am delighted to have been part of history, to have been around to see the first woman elected as our general secretary. Joanne is a wonderful person, with the biggest of hearts and she will be an inspirational general secretary. She is a lifelong trade unionist with a wealth of knowledge and experience. I cannot think of anyone better to lead our union and be a strong advocate for our members. The future for Usdaw is filled with huge challenges but also countless opportunities. With Joanne and Rab Donnelly, our union is in safe hands and they will make a fantastic team.

"It's been a real privilege to serve Usdaw over the years. As I said earlier, I'm proud of what we've achieved together, and I leave knowing the union is in the safest of hands. I want to thank each and every one of our reps for what they do every day. Our members don't realise how lucky they are to have people like our reps standing up for them and fighting their corner.

"The people who are too often overlooked are our team in the background. Our incredible clerical staff in the regions, and all of the team at head office. Nothing works without them, and I want to say a huge thank you for all of the support they have given me over the years.

"There are far too many people to name check, but I do have to say a special thank you to Nicola Wilson, my secretary who has kept me on the straight and narrow, and Moya Jackson. I don't think that there is anything that Moya does not know, and Usdaw is incredibly lucky to have her.

"I, of course, also need to mention both Paddy and Brendan Duggan who will be leaving on the same day as me. Paddy and I met at our area organiser interviews in 1988, and started on the same day. It has been a delight to work alongside him and Brendan these past seven years.

"As many of you will know, I lost my wife Michelle almost two years ago, and this led me to look again at many things in life. In retirement I will be doing some voluntary work with the hospice that helped Michelle with her pain. I cannot tell you how incredible these people are, and how underpaid they are!

"I have three incredible children, Christopher, Alex and Abbie and two fantastic grandchildren in Max and Elijah. I look forward to spending lots more time with them, and also following my football team (super Chelsea) over land and sea!

"I will always follow the progress of our union. Usdaw may not always be perfect, but it is always there whenever it is needed. Making a difference to the lives of so many."

# Protect yourself from holiday scams

**With summer around the corner, millions of us will be packing our suitcases and heading out to our holidays. What should be a time for rest and relaxation can easily turn into a time of stress and turmoil as scammers target holidaymakers with fake deals, bogus accommodation listings and fraudulent tickets.**

These scams can lead to financial losses and theft of personal information. Over £11 million was lost to holiday booking scams last year, with July seeing the most scams reported, according to figures from the national fraud reporting centre Action Fraud.

## Look out for these common holiday scams:

**Fake accommodation listings**
Scammers create fake listings for hotels, villas, etc. offering them at incredibly low prices. They may instruct you to pay them directly, bypassing legitimate booking platforms, and then disappear after you've paid them.

**Discounted flights on social media**
Fraudsters will post fake ads for cheap flights or pretend to sell tickets they can no longer use themselves. They will offer a low price and ask for a fee to change the name on the ticket, but once you send the money, they'll disappear.

**Fake websites**
Scammers create fake websites that mimic legitimate travel companies, leading you to enter your personal and financial information.

**Phishing attacks**
Scammers use fake emails or text messages pretending to be from legitimate companies, asking you to click a link to provide information. The link is used to steal valuable information like usernames, passwords, credit card details etc.

**Holiday cancellation scams**
Fraudsters capitalise on the stress of cancelled flights or accommodation by offering fake refund support or claiming to be refund agents.

**How to protect yourself**

- Be cautious. If a deal sounds too good to be true, then it's likely a scam.

- Where possible, use a credit card when making purchases over £100 and up to £30,000 as you receive protection under Section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act.

- Verify the legitimacy of websites and companies by looking closely at links and website addresses. Have they been shortened or otherwise obscured? That's a telltale sign of a scam.

- Use reputable booking websites or travel agencies that are ABTA or ATOL protected.

- Don't click links in emails or texts. If in doubt, go directly to the website by typing in the website address yourself.

- Don't let yourself be rushed or pressured. Scammers may try to create a false sense of urgency in their attempts to trick you (e.g. 'you have 12 hours to save your account and reservation'.)

**What to do if you think you've been scammed?**
Report the scam via the Action Fraud website or by calling 0300 123 2040 (England, Wales or Northern Ireland).
If you're in Scotland, report a scam via www.consumeradvice.scot or 0808 164 6000.

Notify your bank immediately. Make sure you find your bank's contact details independently – for example, by calling the phone number on the back of your card or on your bank statement.

Use Section 75 if you've been scammed when paying for something costing more than £100 on a credit card. If you used a debit card or spent exactly £100 or less on a credit card, you could try to claim your money back under the chargeback scheme instead.

# Dave's cycling odyssey

**Usdaw rep Dave Beal will be crossing borders and time zones in the summer as he cycles over 2,000 miles from Leeds to Istanbul, raising money for the British Heart Foundation, and in memory of his son Daniel. *Arena* spoke to Dave, from Huddersfield, about his motivation and preparation.**

"I took up cycling in 2017 after my son Daniel died suddenly," said Dave, 56. "I got the bug for riding my road bike and doing longer-distance rides, and on 20 June 2018, the first anniversary of Daniel's passing, I did a 75-mile ride in his memory.

"I've done a number of challenging rides since then, of 100 miles and more. It keeps me active and gives me a social circle; I really enjoy it. I've raised funds for a few charities since I started; but the reason I'm riding for the British Heart Foundation is that Daniel's organs were donated and his heart is still beating inside a boy, who was eight years old when he received it, and has been given a new lease of life. I really want to help the organisation that makes those little miracles happen.

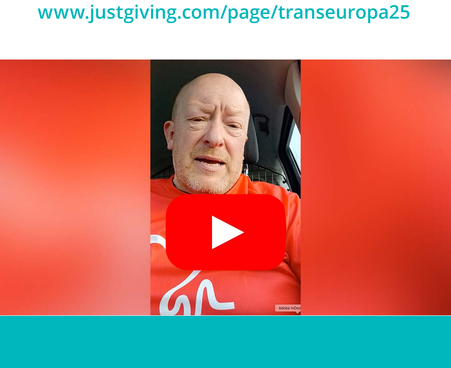
"I'm planning to set off on Daniel's anniversary, 20 June, and I've planned 26 days of riding which works out at about 85 miles each day. I'm following rivers as much as possible as the going will be flatter. That's important because I actually had a heart attack myself some years ago while out cycling. I had a stent fitted and I'm okay now; I just have to be mindful of my heart and have a rest if it starts beating too fast.

"I'm cycling from Leeds to Hull, where I'll get a ferry across to the Netherlands. From there, I'll follow the Rhine down into Germany, then a couple of hilly days in southern Germany and Switzerland before picking up the Danube. I'll be following the Danube for a good few hundred miles before making my way through Bulgaria to Turkey, then finishing in Istanbul. I picked Istanbul because there's so many iconic buildings and views, and you can walk across a bridge and be in Asia.

"There's a lot of places on the way that I'll be visiting for the first time. I've never been to Bratislava or Belgrade, and I'm particularly interested in visiting Bulgaria and seeing all the Roman ruins they have there. I'm not quite sure how I'm going to cross the border from Bulgaria into Serbia; from the research I've done, I'm not sure if the crossing on my route allows me to ride through it. But if I have to change plans and destinations, that's fine.

"I want to thank all my family and friends for their amazing support, and everyone who's donated to the British Heart Foundation. You're helping to fund important research."

You can support Dave by visiting:
www.justgiving.com/page/transeuropa25



# Reform UK oppose stronger workers' rights

**Reform UK likes to claim it is the party for "ordinary working people." But their actions in Parliament tell a very different story. When given the chance to back stronger protections for workers, Reform MPs joined forces with the Tories to vote against Labour's Employment Rights Bill – a bill that would have banned exploitative zero-hours contracts, introduced day-one sick pay, and strengthened rights around parental leave and flexible working.**

A poll by the Trades Union Congress (TUC), with over 21,000 responses, showed that these policies were hugely popular, even among Reform voters.

Instead of trying to improve the lives of Reform voters by tackling the cost of living and low wages, Reform is targeting public sector pensions. Richard Tice, Reform's deputy leader, multimillionaire, and one of its five MPs, has promised to take an "axe" to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). He blames local government pensions for the financial struggles of councils, while conveniently ignoring the 40 per cent funding cuts imposed by the previous Conservative government.

Tice told the Telegraph newspaper that Reform-controlled authorities would stop offering such generous terms to new recruits and staff on existing contracts would have to accept lower annual pay rises to balance out the cost of funding their retirement.

Reform UK is led by multimillionaires like Nigel Farage and Richard Tice, who together are worth over £44 million. Two men who have never had to worry about insecure shifts, low pay, or losing sick pay are attacking public sector pay and pensions and showing us exactly whose side they are on.

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Closing Date 31 August 2025. Terms apply.

# "I'm so glad I kept my membership after I stopped working"

**Pam Heather was thankful for her continued Usdaw membership after she was injured in the car park of her local supermarket. Expert solicitors took up Pam's case and secured her £10,000 compensation.**

The incident happened in September 2022, when Pam arrived on a Saturday morning at the shop where she had been employed before her retirement. She got out of her car and stood on a defective drain cover, which collapsed underneath her.

"I'd just popped out for a loaf of bread and a paper," said Pam. "Before I knew it, people were picking me up off the ground. My ankle and my arm were in pain afterwards; I had a doctor's appointment already booked for the Monday so I asked him to take a look, and he advised me to get checked at the hospital. It turned out I'd damaged the rotator cuff in my shoulder. At that time they weren't concerned about my ankle, although it was giving me pain; it wasn't until a couple of years later that I found out I'd damaged my ankle ligaments.

"Since sustaining my injuries I've had cortisone injections, paid for private physiotherapy and I've still got reduced mobility. The after-effects, combined with the rheumatoid arthritis that I suffered from already, really did make life difficult for quite some time. I've been told that neither my arm nor my ankle will ever be as strong as they were.

"I registered the incident with Injury Assist soon after it happened. My case was passed to Slater and Gordon, who were excellent. Faisa, my solicitor, was incredibly kind and helpful and made sure we were kept up to date throughout the process. She had to push the company to accept liability; their attitude towards the circumstances that caused my injuries wasn't great. The case took a little while to be concluded, but I was happy with how it was handled and with the settlement I received.

"I always felt safe at work knowing I had the backing of the union, and when I needed them after I retired, they were there. I'm so glad I kept my Usdaw membership after I stopped working."

# Age appropriate

**Usdaw welcomed delegates to its 34th Retired Members' Conference.**

The conference was organised by the union's pension section and chaired by national executive committee member Simon Vincent.

The conference welcomed three excellent guest speakers this year.

**Recognising Scams**
Pete McEvoy, a volunteer with Greater Manchester Police, Cyber and Economic Crime Awareness Service (CECAS), highlighted the current scams which are circulating, targeting older people and the most vulnerable in society. There are many ways in which the fraudsters are getting people to part with their hard-earned cash and the result of losing your life savings can be devastating.

Pete explained the importance of reporting these crimes, but advised that all too often they are not, as many victims are too embarrassed and ashamed at being caught out.

The delegates were provided with invaluable information on how to recognise a scam, how to protect themselves and who they should approach if they believe they may have been a victim.

**National Pensioners Convention (NPC)**
NPC general secretary, Jan Shortt addressed conference about several key areas which the NPC is concerned about for pensioners.

Jan explained that the withdrawal of the Winter Fuel Allowance has been devastating for many older people. The NPC is challenging government about the lack of consultation on this issue - and the fact that it has provided no alternatives. The withdrawal of this allowance is causing real hardship and there is evidence that many are having to not only turn off their heating but are also skipping meals.

Jan talked about the impact of freezing the Personal Allowance and the possibility that the State Pension could very soon be subject to taxation. The NPC is raising awareness that changes to the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) are going to indirectly impact carers, and expressed the need for a commissioner for older people in all parts of the UK.

**Independent Age**
Independent Age's policy and influencing director, Morgan Vine, explained how the charity has been reformed over the past three years. The charity's main aims are to put more money in people's pockets; they help people claim the benefits they are entitled to and provide reports to decision makers in Parliament to advise on systemic issues for older people and how they can be addressed.

MEMBER STORY

# IVF inequality

**Many adults in the UK suffer from infertility and require IVF to start their family. The process of diagnosing infertility and seeking IVF can be a very distressing experience.**

The inequalities surrounding the criteria around who can and can't qualify for treatment can compound this distress. Factors such as age, weight, smoking status, existing children and underlying medical conditions can affect whether someone qualifies for IVF.

Four women share their stories about the unjust barriers they faced in accessing IVF. *(Names changed to protect identities.)*

**What is IVF?**
IVF (In Vitro Fertilisation) is a fertility treatment where eggs and sperm are combined in a laboratory to create an embryo, which is then transferred to the woman's uterus, bypassing the need for natural conception.

**Linda**
I have had five miscarriages. The criteria in my area to receive free IVF include both parties must live in the county, be in a stable relationship, be under the age of 42, have a healthy BMI and have no living child from a previous relationship. I met almost all the criteria, but I am stepmum to two wonderful children, which disqualifies me.

**Sarah**
In 2002, my infertility journey began, and continued throughout 2003 and 2004, which involved intrusive, at times painful and degrading tests. During my final appointment, the consultant, without looking at me, told me that my fallopian tube was blocked. Because I was so "vastly overweight", there was no point in doing anything until I'd lost weight. I felt like my heart had been ripped out of my chest. The consultant never considered the fact that I had hypothyroidism. When the thyroid doesn't work, you put on weight and once that weight is on, you can't get it off – even if you live on bread and water.

**Anna**
In 2015, I applied through the NHS for IVF, but didn't qualify because of my age and the fact that I was suffering from polycystic syndrome. I then paid for the first round of IVF, and it failed. The second round worked for a few weeks until I started bleeding. Emotionally, the whole experience was draining and traumatic. It's taken me years to recover from it.

**Jane**
In 2001, after struggling to conceive, we went for various tests. The consultant said that the only way forward was IVF. However, because I had a stepson, I would not be entitled to treatment on the NHS. We were fortunate because we were able to pay for it. After three rounds of IVF and a great deal of money we were blessed with a little girl.

# Discounts&Offers

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

Virgin EXPERIENCE DAYS

MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS

Alton Towers · Thorpe Park · Chessington World of Adventures Resort · LEGOLAND Windsor Resort · Warwick Castle & Granada Studios · LEGOLAND Discovery Centre · The Blackpool Tower · the Dungeons · Madame Tussauds · SEA LIFE · The Sanctuaries Gwerin | Oran

life:style

Save 6% at the UK's top retailers

Shop online from over 150 of the UK's top retailers and brands

150+ CHOICES

PRIMARK · Argos · River Island · H&M · Just Eat · M&S · Hotel Chocolat · wagamama · Red Letter · Moss Bros · Feelunique · asos · Waterstones · Nando's · life:style Gift Cards

Virgin wines

## BROWSE OFFERS

- Cars & Transport
- Holidays
- Health & Beauty
- Insurance
- Leisure & Entertainment
- Students
- Shopping
- Money & Advice
- Legal Advice
- Gas & Electric
- Special Offers

**Terms and conditions apply**

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.

# Becoming a rep changed my life

**Twenty-five-year-old Ash Clark talks about their experience of being a young rep and how it has empowered them to shape union policy.**

"I've worked at Tesco for eight years and became a rep a couple of years ago," said Ash. "I have a degree in social policy and social justice is close to my heart. I was looking for a way I could make a difference in the real world when someone suggested I get involved in Usdaw."

Taking on the suggestion, Ash threw themselves into reading about the Miners' Strike, the Equal Pay Act and even watched films like Made in Dagenham and Pride. They saw how trade unions had played a huge part in social change, and Ash knew they wanted to be a part of that movement.

"I have been very fortunate because I have some brilliant people in my branch who have supported and mentored me. When you're a young rep, sometimes it can be hard to be taken seriously. But the training I've received has helped me gain the confidence I need to effectively represent my members, which has been the best way to gain respect."

Being a rep isn't just about representing members; the role has allowed Ash to play an active part in shaping union policy and campaigns through their involvement in the Standing Orders Committee and the Young Workers' Committee. "Being elected to Standing Orders was incredible because I got to see how union policy was made. I've also seen our ideas become reality. Last year the Young Workers' Committee pushed for a campaign on neurodiversity. As an autistic person, it is something that's very close to my heart. When I heard Usdaw was running a 'Celebrating Different Minds' campaign this year, I felt like the union was really listening to us.

"I've grown so much as a person. I used to be anxious and struggle with talking to people. Now, I've got the confidence to challenge when something doesn't feel right, and to help others do the same.

"If you're a young worker thinking about becoming a rep, do it. You'll gain skills, confidence, and knowledge. But more importantly, you'll become part of something bigger: a global movement fighting for working people."

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

EDUCATION

# 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?

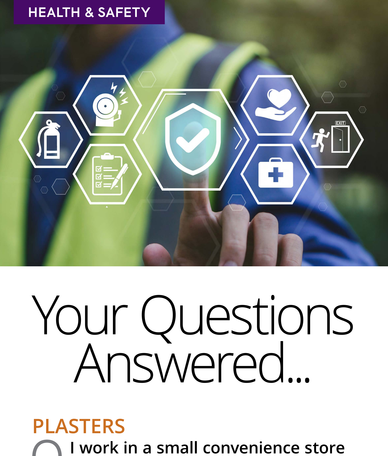
A wide variety of courses to help you improve your English, Maths or ICT skills, study a new language, take an NVQ or apprenticeship, and even take a degree. There are over 20 different categories on the Learning Gateway for you to check out.

## 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...

## PLASTERS

**Q I work in a small convenience store with four other people. Last week, I cut my hand and we didn't even have a plaster to put on it. The manager said we aren't required to have one, but I thought there were laws covering first aid in work?**

The Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 state that employers have a legal duty to provide first aid. The minimum requirements in most workplaces are a suitable first aid box and basic arrangements to provide assistance if a worker is injured or falls ill at work. That does not mean there has to be a qualified first aider in a small store such as yours. But it does mean that there should be an 'appointed person' who takes care of the first aid box, and who would take charge if one of you was injured or fell ill.

There is no mandatory list of contents of a first aid box, but HSE guidance suggests that it should include things like individually wrapped sterile plasters, sterile eye pads and wound dressings, and disposable gloves. More information can be found on the HSE website.

## SHIFT WORKING

**Q On Sunday night, I finish at 10pm and then start again at 8am Monday morning. Because of travel to and from home, I seriously struggle with this as I only get a few hours' sleep. I thought I should get an 11-hour break between shifts?**

Under the Working Time Regulations, the normal daily rest break should be 11 hours. However, this can be reduced to eight on some occasions, through a trade union-negotiated collective agreement. Travel time to and from work does not count as working time so even on the Sunday/Monday changeover, as far, as the law is concerned, you get 10 hours' break. If this causes you problems, raise it with your manager and speak to your Usdaw rep.

## DIESEL ENGINE EXHAUST FUMES

**Q I work in a warehouse and when delivery trucks start unloading at the delivery bay, they leave their engines running to keep their fridges cool. The diesel engine exhaust emissions (DEEE) make my eyes sore and I can taste the fumes. I have spoken to my manager and they said there is nothing that can be done. Is this right?**

No. DEEE contain a cocktail of dangerous particles and fumes. Short-term effects of exposure include eye irritation and lung irritation. Long-term effects can include an increased risk of lung and bladder cancer. It would be best if your employer found a way to keep the fridges working without running the engines – such as providing electric power points for the vehicles. If engines do need to be kept running, vehicles should be moved to a more open area or local exhaust ventilation should be installed. If your manager continues to ignore your concerns, speak to your safety rep or contact your local Usdaw office.

## CHEMICAL IRRITANTS

**Q I work on the hygiene team in a food factory. Recently, the chemicals we use for cleaning down the machines were replaced. The new chemicals make my eyes water and make it difficult to breathe. Are they safe to use?**

Your employer should have done a risk assessment under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations, using information from the suppliers' safety data sheets.

They should share that information and the COSHH risk assessment with the union safety reps. The risk assessment should identify the precautions that are needed.

If your safety rep at work needs help in checking the employer's risk assessment, the health and safety section at head office can provide technical advice.

Everyone loves a cute pet photo! Share yours and you could win a **£50 shopping voucher**

LOVE2SHOP

# PET PAWTRAITS

spring
**WINNER**
**Gavin**
& Robert Minter

Email your entry along with the title **'Pets'** to:
**arena@usdaw.org.uk**

***Don't forget your pet's name*** *and* ***your name and address****. Closing date: 8 August 2025*

# Help & Advice

Workers' Rights

Legal Help & Advice

Accident and Injury Claims

Equalities

Pensions

Money & Benefits

Health & Wellbeing

Health & Safety

Parents & Carers

Retired Members

Road Transport

Contact Us

**update your details here**

**STATEMENT TO MEMBERS ISSUED IN CONNECTION WITH THE UNION'S ANNUAL RETURN FOR PERIOD ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024 AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 32A OF TRADE UNION AND LABOUR RELATIONS (CONSOLIDATION) ACT 1992**

The total income of the union for the period was £67,337k. This amount included payments of £39,867k in respect of membership income of the union. The union's total expenditure for the period was £37,945k. In respect of the union's political fund, its total income was £1,511k and total expenditure was £2,688k. The General Secretary of the union was paid £134,593 in respect of salary and £42,738 in respect of benefits including employer pension contributions and the provision of a car.

**Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of USDAW for the year ended 31 December 2024**

**Opinion**
We have audited the financial statements of USDAW for the year ended 31 December 2024 which comprise the Summary of Financial Results, Statement of Comprehensive Income, Statement of Other Comprehensive Income, the Balance Sheet, the Statement of Changes in Equity, the Cash flow Statement and the notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:
- give a true and fair view of the state of USDAW's affairs as at 31 December 2024 and of its transactions for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1992.

**Basis for opinion**
We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the union in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

**Conclusions relating to going concern**
In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the National Executive Council's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the union's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the National Executive Council with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

**Other information**
The National Executive Council is responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

**Matters on which we are required to report by exception**
We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1992 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- proper accounting records have not been kept;
- a satisfactory system of control over its accounting records, cash holdings and receipts and remittances has not been maintained; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns.

**Responsibilities of officers**
As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities of the National Executive Council, the National Executive Council is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the National Executive Council determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

We have been appointed as auditor under section 33 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1992 and report in accordance with section 36 of that Act.

In preparing the financial statements, the National Executive Council is responsible for assessing the union's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the National Executive Council either intends to liquidate the union or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

**Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements**
Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Details of the extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations are set out below.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

**Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud**
Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We identified and assessed the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements from irregularities, whether due to fraud or error, and discussed these between our audit team members. We then designed and performed audit procedures responsive to those risks, including obtaining audit evidence sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks within which the union operates, focusing on those laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The laws and regulations we considered in this context were the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1992 together with the financial reporting standards. We assessed the required compliance with these laws and regulations as part of our audit procedures on the related financial statement items.

In addition, we considered provisions of other laws and regulations that do not have a direct effect on the financial statements but compliance with which might be fundamental to the union's ability to operate or

to avoid a material penalty. We also considered the opportunities and incentives that may exist within the union for fraud. The laws and regulations we considered in this context for the UK operations were health and safety legislation, employment legislation and taxation legislation.

Auditing standards limit the required audit procedures to identify non-compliance with these laws and regulations to enquiry of the officers and other management and inspection of regulatory and legal correspondence, if any.

We identified the greatest risk of material impact on the financial statements from irregularities, including fraud, to be within the timing of recognition of income and the override of controls by management. Our audit procedures to respond to these risks included enquiries of management and the National Executive Committee about their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities, sample testing on the posting of journals, reviewing accounting estimates for biases, reviewing regulatory correspondence and reading minutes of meetings of those charged with governance.

Owing to the inherent limitations of an audit, there is an unavoidable risk that we may not have detected some material misstatements in the financial statements, even though we have properly planned and performed our audit in accordance with auditing standards. For example, the further removed non-compliance with laws and regulations (irregularities) is from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, the less likely the inherently limited procedures required by auditing standards would identify it. In addition, as with any audit, there remained a higher risk of non-detection of irregularities, as these may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal controls. We are not responsible for preventing non-compliance and cannot be expected to detect non-compliance with all laws and regulations.

**Use of our report**
This report is made solely to USDAW's members as a body. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to union's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the union and the union's members as a body, for our audit work, or for the opinion we have formed.

**Crowe U.K. LLP,** Statutory Auditor
London UK

**Irregularity statement**
A member who is concerned that some irregularity may be occurring, or have occurred, in the conduct of the financial affairs of the union may take steps with a view to investigating further, obtaining clarification and, if necessary, securing regularisation of that conduct.

The member may raise any such concern with such one or more of the following as it seems appropriate to raise it with: the officials of the union, the trustees of the property of the union, the auditor or auditors of the union, the Certification Officer (who is an independent officer appointed by the Secretary of State) and the police.

Where a member believes that the financial affairs of the union have been or are being conducted in breach of the law or in breach of the rules of the union and contemplates bringing civil proceedings against the union or responsible officials or trustees, he should consider obtaining independent legal advice.

**Political Fund Notice**
Every member of the Union has a right to be exempt from contributing to the Union's Political Fund or, for those members joining on or after 1 March 2018, the right to withdraw their opt-in to the Political Fund. A form of exemption notice can be obtained by or on behalf of any member either by application at, or by post or email from, the head office of the Union or from the Certification Office for Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, 8th floor, Windsor House, 50 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0TL. This form, when filled in, or a written request to the like effect, should be sent to the Central Treasurer at the Union's head office or emailed to

**politicalfundnotification@usdaw.org.uk**