

Usdaw

Campaigning
For Equality

Discrimination Older Workers



An advice leaflet
for Usdaw Members

Older Workers

Growing numbers of Usdaw members are working beyond State Pension age.

In many cases this is because members can't afford to retire when they want to. Sometimes it's because members make a positive choice to carry on working.

Usdaw wants older workers to get the right support at work so they can carry on working for as long as they want or need to but all too often this doesn't happen.

Older workers can face particular problems at work ...

Hours of work

Older workers, particularly women, are usually juggling their jobs with looking after family members and grandchildren. Changes to hours of work and working unsocial hours can make this more difficult.

If you need to change your hours of work to fit in with your caring commitments you can ask your manager to consider this. They don't have to agree but they do have to seriously consider whether they can accommodate the change you need.

You can find out more about changing your hours of work in the Usdaw leaflet called *Flexible Working ... Your right to have a say in the hours you work* (Lft 346).

Usdaw understands that many members need to change their hours of work and we can help you try and get the hours you need.

Your company may ask you to change your hours and this can make juggling work and family life difficult. Where your caring commitments make it difficult for you to agree to the new hours, your company should seriously explore whether there are other options that might work. You can speak to your Usdaw rep for help and advice or contact the Usdaw helpline number shown on the back page of this booklet.

Slowing Down at Work

Many older workers worry about slowing down at work because they think they will lose their job.

But employers should take into account the fact that people slow down as they get older. And getting rid of older workers isn't an option any more; the birth rate is falling so there are fewer and fewer young people coming into work. People are living longer and need or want to carry on working.

If you are slowing down at work, speak to your Usdaw rep as there is help available. It might be possible to change your hours, your job role or the shifts you work.

If you have a health condition that means you can't work as fast or as long as you used to, you may have rights under the Equality Act to extra support at work. You can find out more in the Usdaw leaflet *Supporting Disabled Members* (Lft 383).

Dealing with an Emergency

Sometimes you might need time off to deal with a crisis or unexpected problem at home involving someone who depends on you. In this situation you have the right to take a reasonable amount of time off work to deal with the problem.

This right is called Time off for Dependents and unfortunately, in most cases the leave is unpaid, but Usdaw may have negotiated better arrangements for emergency time off with your employer so it's always worth checking with your Usdaw rep.

You can find out more about Time off for Dependents in the Usdaw leaflet called *Time off for Family Emergencies* (Lft 349).

The Menopause

The menopause can cause a range of problems at work – women may struggle with workplace temperature, lack of proper rest and toilet breaks, tiredness, unsuitable uniforms, hot flushes – all of which can be made worse by being under pressure at work. Women are nearly half the workforce and yet the menopause is rarely seen as a workplace health and safety issue. Not all women working through the menopause have problems but the silence surrounding the subject means that when they do face problems at work, the issues are often not recognised or women are afraid to raise them.

Sickness absence policies can also cause problems when applied to women with menopause-related problems.

Udaw has a leaflet about the menopause in its Women's Health series (Lft WE WH 006) where you can find out more about your rights at work.

The menopause is an occupational health issue and women have the right to expect support. Many Usdaw workplaces have Usdaw Health and Safety Reps who can help you get the right support.



Grandparents

Most older women and men in Usdaw are regularly looking after their grandchildren as well as caring for other family members and going out to work.

Without the support of grandparents many parents could not work and so the economy as well as families would suffer.

Grandparents may need time off work to look after grandchildren when they are unwell or need to change their hours of work to fit round their caring commitments. Unfortunately the law does not support grandparents who need to juggle work and caring, unless you have been granted parental responsibility.

Usdaw believes this is wrong and has been campaigning for more support from the Government and employers.

If you are a grandparent your employer may offer help and Usdaw can also help you get the support you need at work. For more information see the Usdaw leaflet *Looking After Grandchildren* (Lft 422). The organisation Grandparents Plus can also help you find out more about your rights: www.grandparentsplus.org.uk

Pensions

Many Usdaw members are worried about their pension and whether they will be able to afford to stop working.

In 2012 the Government introduced auto-enrolment, which meant that for the first time every UK employer has a legal duty to start automatically entering qualifying workers into a pension scheme and the employer must also make compulsory contributions towards worker's pension savings.

For more information please request a copy of Usdaw's *Know Your Pension Rights – A Guide to Auto-enrolment* booklet.

Many Usdaw members are part-time workers, some have zero-hour contracts and some may now have self-employed contracts which means that they will not automatically be captured by auto-enrolment. These Usdaw members will be reliant on the State Pension when they retire, however many are not aware that the State Pension was totally reformed in April 2016. If you are a man born on or after 6 April 1951 or a woman born on or after 6 April 1953 you will be affected by the changes.

The State Pension provides a regular payment from the Government which you can claim when you reach your State Pension Age. Not everyone has the same State Pension Age and not everyone will receive the same amount of State Pension. Your State Pension Age depends on when you were born and how much you will actually receive will depend on your National Insurance record.

The Government has recently announced that the State Pension Age will be increased to 68 for everyone from 2037 onwards. If you were born between 1970 and 1978 you will now have to wait an extra year, until you are 68, to claim your State Pension.

For more information about the State Pension changes you can request a copy of Usdaw's *Pensions Guide* booklet, which has a section regarding the State Pension. Speak to a member of the Usdaw Pensions team on 0161 224 2804.

Visit the Pensions section on the Usdaw website where there are links to the Government Pension Service, which will enable you find out your State Pension Age and how to obtain a forecast of what your State Pension will be: www.usdaw.org.uk/Help-Advice/Pensions

Your experiences ...

Like so many women of my age I've been juggling work with looking after an elderly parent. My mum isn't well and I want to be there to care for her. She has a lot of medical appointments and when she doesn't need caring for she needs company. I was finding it all too much – juggling work with caring was wearing me down. You are just at that point in life when you think things should be getting easier but it seemed harder than ever. So I've taken early retirement so I can look after my mum. The main problem now is that I'm one of the women affected by the unfair changes to the State Pension age. I've worked for 41 years and am angry at what's been done to women like me.



Julie Keenan

I start work at 3am so that I can be home at lunchtime to cook and care for my father and mother in law who live with us. I have been encouraged to apply for promotions at work but I can never take them because it would mean working weekends and being fully flexible which I just can't do. As an older woman you have so much to offer and give your company but you don't get the chance. Sometimes it can be pretty exhausting – working during the night and then looking after my own children and elderly parents in the day – there's never any 'me' time.



Chayya Patel

Women are worried about admitting they are slowing down as they think the manager won't be sympathetic. Managers go on about targets all the time but we can't go as fast as we used to and they don't take this into consideration. It's hard on checkouts with all the heavy things you scan and when you're shelf filling – all that bending and stretching. Older women can feel like they just want rid of you and don't care. And the menopause makes it hard too. Women might need to come off checkouts at short notice and don't feel able to tell the manager why. It's embarrassing and because no one talks about the menopause that doesn't help you feel you can.



Lesley Jarvis

If any of these issues affect you then Usdaw can help. Talk to your Usdaw rep or if there is no rep in your workplace you can call the Usdaw Helpline on 0800 030 80 30

