

# NETWORK



JUL/AUG  
2014

The bimonthly magazine for Usdaw Activists

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**Rep teams  
help build a  
bigger union**

**WAREHOUSE WORKERS MEET UP**

**LGBT ACTIVISTS CENTRE STAGE**

**ACTIVIST-IN-DEPTH: IZZY JOHNSON**

... PENSIONS ... MEMBERSHIP WEEK ... COUNTDOWN TO 2015 ...



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# Comment

**General secretary John Hannett**

Usdaw has always had a political voice both as an independent union and as a supporter of the Labour Party.

The trade unions understood more than 100 years ago that working people needed a voice in parliament and that's why the Labour Party was established. That political voice is as important now as it was at the turn of the 20th century.

We've seen the damage done by the Coalition since 2010 with working people having to pay the price for the mistakes of the bankers after the 2008 crash.

However, next year we have the chance to replace the Tory-led Coalition with a Labour government committed to ensuring any recovery is for everyone not just the few. Labour has committed to abolishing the bedroom tax, freezing energy bills, tackling zero-hours contracts, regulating the rented sector and redrawing the political landscape in favour of working people.

However, our voice is stronger when we are at the heart of the debate not shouting from the sidelines. I have always believed our reps have the talent to succeed in the political world, and some already have taken the step up to get elected as councillors, but we need more to get involved so working people's views and aspirations are reflected in the political corridors of power.

If the Tories get back in next year it will be disastrous for Usdaw members with more austerity, more cuts to in-work benefits, fewer employment rights and a tax system to reward the very rich at the expense of workers at the lower end of the pay scale.

We can't leave it to others to speak up for us, that's why being active in the political arena is so important. Local councillors and national politicians are making decisions affecting all of us everyday on health, education, housing, workers' rights, transport, crime, in fact on all issues important to our members.

We all have a role to play in re-electing Labour and that campaign starts now. You can register as a Labour supporter, or join the Party or get involved in the many local campaigns to drum up support for Labour. Don't leave it to chance, get involved now.



*John Hannett*



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**John explains**  
**why he thinks**  
**politics is**  
**important to**  
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FOR THE PEOPLE  
AND THE NATION

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THE TREASURY IS LOSING  
BILLIONS EVERY YEAR IN REVENUE

## Shady businesses

The Treasury is losing £40 billion a year in VAT, income tax, national insurance and corporation tax due to a shadow economy where firms and individuals deliberately hide information from the taxman, according to a leading tax justice campaigner, Richard Murphy.

His findings would make the scale of tax evasion from sales going unreported to HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) four times larger than official figures suggest.

His report *In the shade* said only a minority of the estimate for tax lost to the shadow economy related to self-employed workers. The lion's

share, the report said, was from 1.1 million companies that tell HMRC they trade in the UK at an average loss of about £10,000, and from a further 400,000 companies who trade in the UK, but that do not file a tax return.

Murphy said: "What this report shows is that HMRC is not trying to collect the tax that is due in the UK. "Rather than tackle the tax fraudsters who undermine all honest small business in this country our tax authority would rather impose cuts and sack its staff.

"The fact that they seem happy to collect tax returns from only just over half of all companies in the UK is the

surest sign of that."

Civil service union PCS said: "It is clear that HMRC needs to stop cutting jobs and start investing properly in staff and resources to enable it to fulfil its important role, which is central to all the other public services that we all rely on."

Murphy estimated that the £40 billion figure, which covered 2011-12, may now have risen to £47 billion. In 2012, PCS estimated the amount of uncollected, evaded and avoided tax was much higher — at more than £120 billion a year.

More at:  
[www.taxresearch.org.uk/ Documents/Intheshade.pdf](http://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Documents/Intheshade.pdf)

## Crunch at Co-op



Usdaw has pledged to support its members at the Co-op Group as it embarks on its retail turnaround strategy 'S3' following 12 months which have been very difficult for the UK's biggest Co-op.

National officer John Gorle said: "We understand the difficulties faced by the Group and we are just as keen to ensure it remains a big player on the high street.

"But we have to ensure a fair approach is taken. We have concerns about the impact of changes to availability and the way that it may be managed at a store level.

"Usdaw and representatives from the Co-operative have been working together over the last few months to address the challenges the business faces.

"Usdaw and the Group are committed to supporting their members and colleagues throughout the S3 project. Should reps require any support they should contact their local area organiser."

## Delegates make the case for equality

In June Usdaw delegates spoke up at the TUC national LGBT Conference.

Diane Howard from the North West moved Usdaw's proposition on 'Encouraging involvement'.

She explained how attending a local Usdaw LGBT get-together last year had helped to improve her confidence. "One year ago I wouldn't have felt able to get up and speak in front of 250 delegates but that's changed

thanks to Usdaw," she said. Robert Ingelby from the Midlands, another first time delegate spoke in support of HIV awareness.

Robert spoke persuasively about the need to halt cutbacks to specialist HIV services, drawing on his own experience of losing a partner to AIDS within a few months of diagnosis in the early 1980s. Robert's heartfelt and moving speech was followed by a standing ovation.



THE DELEGATION AT  
THE TUC LGBT CONFERENCE



# Celebrating the very best in Usdaw

All Usdaw reps are being urged to fill in the Organising Awards nomination form now – either for themselves or a colleague – so the union can celebrate their success.

Once again the union is looking for divisional nominations across eight categories to go forward to the national event held in Manchester next January.

You can self-nominate or recommend a colleague to compete for: Most Promising New Activist, Health and Safety Rep, Union Learning Rep, Equalities Rep, Individual Recruitment, Individual Organising, Team Recruitment and Organising, and Campaigns.

The nomination forms are available from your branch secretary, divisional office or the website and should be returned to your divisional office by

Friday September 26. Your divisional council will then consider all applications and recommend eight from each division to go forward to the national event.

The executive council will choose the national winners from the divisional submissions.

General secretary John Hannett said: "This is all about celebrating the hard-work, commitment and dedication of our reps who are without doubt the best in the UK."

"This prestigious event is now in its tenth year and has gone from strength to strength in promoting our biggest asset – our activists."

"I always look forward to it, it's a great night, and I'd encourage all of our reps to think seriously about nominating themselves or one of their colleagues."



@UsdawUnion  
#UsdawAwards



Watch  
John Hannett talks Organising Awards on the UsdawUnion YouTube channel

## Morrisons job losses

Usdaw moved quickly after Morrisons announced plans to overhaul its in-store management structure with the potential loss of 2,600 jobs.

National officer Joanne McGuinness said: "We will be using the statutory consultation period to look in detail at the company's business case."

"Our priority will be to safeguard as many jobs as possible, maximise employment within the company and get the best possible outcome for our members affected by this restructuring."

"These are worrying times for our members and we will do everything possible to support them."

## Asda to cut management

Asda has announced plans to radically restructure its store management teams that could result in 1,360 redundancies.

It also said, while 4,100 roles are affected as part of the restructure, it is creating 5,670 roles - up on the 5,000 positions it had initially expected to create when it floated the plans in May.

The positions will comprise 4,008 section leader roles and 1,622 section manager roles.



## Discounter marches on

Lidl claims it will create 2,500 UK jobs as it expands its store portfolio.

It plans to open 20 new stores this year taking its total to 620 with the long-term plan to have 1,500 stores nationwide.

It currently has a 3.6 per cent share of the grocery market and increased sales by 20 per cent last year.

Meanwhile, the combined sales of German discounters Aldi and Lidl could hit £10bn this year and generate as much turnover as Morrisons by next year.

Projected sales forecasts by 2015 for Aldi were put at £7bn and around £4bn for Lidl.

## Co-op to sell chemists

The Co-operative Group's 700-strong store pharmacy business put up for sale following the Group's banking collapse has attracted interest from Lloyds Pharmacy, Boots and other companies, according to reports.

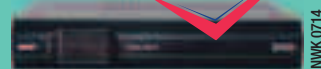
Morrisons also expects to offload its Kiddicare business as it looks to concentrate on its online deal with Ocado.



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NWK 0714



# Zero-hours curbed



Government plans to ban companies using zero-hours contracts to tie employees exclusively to one employer have been criticised for not going far enough to protect workers.

Zero-hours contracts are estimated to affect 1.4m workers and are used widely by well-known retailers including Sports Direct, McDonalds and Burger King.

General secretary John Hannett said: "The gross

misuse of zero-hours contracts needs to be tackled. We want to see employers put under a legal obligation to offer workers contracts that reflect their normal working hours.

"Usdaw believes once a 12-week working pattern has been established this should become the employee's minimum contracted hours.

"The number of people on these contracts has soared under the Coalition so we welcome Labour's

commitments to employees on zero-hours contracts not being obliged to make themselves available outside contracted hours, to have the right to demand a regular contract and compensation if shifts are cancelled at short-notice.

"We know many part-time workers want more hours, we know workers on such insecure zero-hours contracts find it difficult to plan their finances and we need action now to provide fairness at work."

## More power for councils

Local authorities will be given new powers to integrate health and social care programmes to help keep elderly and disabled people out of hospital, Labour leader Ed Miliband has announced.

Labour would also give extra powers to councils to spend more on further education for 19-24 year-olds and to bring job centres and youth services together for under 21 year-olds looking for work.

Other reforms are planned on crime, childcare providers and education provision.

"There will also be a statutory requirement for local authorities to set up public accounts committees with powers to scrutinise all services," he said.



## Payday loan firms at fault

Complaints about payday loans have more than doubled in the past two years, but the Financial Ombudsman warned yesterday that the 'shame factor' was putting off most people from complaining.

The ombudsman received 5,395 inquiries about payday loans in the past financial year and found in favour of the consumer in two-thirds of cases.

The head of the Financial Conduct Authority said: "Very often the people who are going to payday loans companies are the most vulnerable. People need to know that they can take their case to the ombudsman.

"We know that they walk into debt charities such as Citizens Advice and StepChange a lot because they're on the high street, but we can help too."

## Fees crush tribunal cases

The number of single claims being taken in employment tribunals has slumped by 59 per cent.

Ministry of Justice figures for the first quarter of the year show there were just 5,619 single claims against 13,739 in the same quarter of 2013 when there were no fees charged.

The figures show large falls across the board. The number of claims for unpaid wages slumped by 85 per cent over the same periods from 21,213 to just 3,133, while there was a 80 per cent drop in sex discrimination cases being taken, with just 1,222 claims in the first quarter of this year against 6,017 in the same period 2013. Unfair dismissal claims were down by from 11,041 to 4,235.

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## Get ready for Respect Week – now



Activists are being urged to plan now for the forthcoming national Respect Week part of the award-winning Freedom From Fear campaign.

The Week will run from November 10 –14 and will be supported by promotional materials including leaflets, posters and other merchandise.

General secretary John Hannett launched the campaign more than ten years ago. "Our members who deal with the public are still subject to verbal, threatening or physical abuse and it's totally unacceptable," he said.

"This campaign has impressed on employers, employees, consumers and politicians that abuse – for whatever reason – is not and never will be 'part of the job'.

"Until our members can go to work safe in the knowledge that they will not be intimidated whether verbally or physically our campaign continues.

"Activists should start thinking now about planning activity in-store and liaising with their company to maximise the campaign.

"If it's possible to invite the local MP or councillor to the event – better still. We have made important progress on this issue but there's still a lot to do."

# Big legal win again!

Usdaw has won another massive legal victory this time for former Comet staff who were not consulted by the administrators when they were made redundant just before Christmas 2012.

Most employees will be eligible for up to eight weeks' pay with the total bill expected to be around the £10m mark.

More than 6,600 staff were sacked when the company's 195 stores, offices and distribution centre were closed after the company went into administration.

However, it will not be administrators Deloitte who foot the bill for the 'protective award' but the tax payer via the Government's Redundancy Payments Services office.

General secretary John Hannett said: "It's absolutely disgraceful that companies can get away with this sort of tactic in the 21st century.

"The former staff at Comet have had to wait over 18 months for this decision, having already been through the trauma of losing their job and being forced to seek justice through a lengthy tribunal hearing.

"Not only were the staff



treated very badly in the first place, they have watched the administrators fight tooth and nail to try to stop them getting a small amount of compensation for the disgraceful way they have been treated.

"The scandalous behaviour of the Administrators is reflected in the tribunal's decision to make a maximum award to the former staff.

"This area of law requires review because it is riddled with injustices for both workers and taxpayers and is stacked in favour of the financial and

business sector. The Government needs to end the perverse financial incentive for employers and administrators not to comply with legal obligations on collective redundancy consultation."

However, former Comet employees employed at the 16 stores with fewer than 20 employees will now join ex-Woolworths and Ethel Austin staff in their wait for the European Court to decide on their claim for a protective award as the Government is fighting to have them exempted.

## Tough times for young

Apprenticeship starts for young people have fallen by more than 11,000 since the coalition came to power, according to new figures from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

House of Commons Library research has also confirmed that it is now twice as hard to get an apprenticeship as it is to get a place at university.

"The Coalition has failed young people," said a Labour Party spokesperson.

## Unions hold firm in 2013

In 2013 there were 6.5 million union members, broadly unchanged on 2012, with a reduction of just 6,000 over the year, according to the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills.

The bulletin, *Trade union membership 2013*, also found that the union premium for hourly earnings was up to 16.4 per cent last year from 15.8 per cent in 2012. The premium was smaller in the private sector, but, at 7.0 per cent, was up on the 2012 premium of 5.8 per cent.

## Rogue bosses caught out

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has revealed that over £4.6 million in wage arrears has been paid to more than 22,000 workers following a successful year for its National Minimum Wage enforcement teams.

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady said: "It is shocking that so many employers are cheating low-paid workers out of the minimum wage. Well done to HMRC staff but we need more resources to catch these wage crooks."

# Reps under pressure as industry evolves

**Delegates gathered in Warrington in June for the Warehouse and Distribution national conference, Network was there too...**

## **Paddy Lillis – Deputy general secretary**

Massive reorganisation, the increasing use and abuse of agency workers and the Coalition's attack on workers' rights have seen the warehouse and distribution sector face tough challenges over the last year, deputy general secretary Paddy Lillis told conference.

"Add to that companies cutting costs by reducing staff levels and driving down terms and conditions and we know it's tough out there," he said.

"We have some very well-organised sites in this sector with good teams of reps, but we also have sites where we clearly could do better."

He explained that the reps development programme launched in 2012, which aimed to reduce the turnover of new reps, had paid dividends and cut the drop-out rate from 24 per cent to 17 per cent.

"Looking ahead we'll also be targeting Morrisons distribution sites and anti-union companies like Aldi and Lidl – these two firms are getting all the headlines, but they are ferociously hostile to unions," he said. "We will also be putting extra effort into the food manufacturing and dairy sectors. Now both Academies

are up and running, and hundreds of reps are out on stand-down, we are determined to increase membership and extend our influence."

Reflecting on the EU elections Paddy added: "We've seen and understand the frustration felt by members towards politicians and the political process, but blaming immigrants, like UKIP do, isn't the answer.

"I'm a trade unionist and an internationalist and believe in workers being united not divided by race or nationality. Migrant workers didn't cause the economic collapse in 2008 the bankers did.

"Nor should we turn our backs on politics, that's a vote for the Tories and we've seen what they've done to workers' rights since 2010.

"We have to remind our members that decisions taken on the NHS, their children's education, housing, transport – you name it – all depend on political decisions. We'll be lobbying the Labour Party to put our members' concerns at the heart of the Party's election manifesto."

## **Louise Curtis – Head of legal services**

Reps have an even bigger role to play in ensuring members get the full benefits of the union's Legal Plus and FirstCall Usdaw, head of legal services Louise Curtis told delegates.

The Coalition's attacks on workers' rights, on legal aid, and on health and safety mean union membership is more valuable and more important than ever.

"Only union members get 100 per cent of their injury compensation," she said. "If you use a high street firm you could lose at least 25 per cent of any award, and very often they won't take your case because it may be difficult or not straight-forward.

"In addition our solicitors are very experienced and know how the warehouse and distribution sector works, so they are better placed to look after you and your members.

"Don't forget the Coalition have made it much harder for working people to get justice through the tribunal system by introducing fees ranging from £160 to £250 to lodge your claim and an extra £950 on top of that to go to a full tribunal hearing. How many of our members have a spare £1,200 in their back pocket? Very few, if any.

"We can see the massive impact these fees have had already with a 79 per cent drop in claims nationally. This is another reason why workers should join Usdaw because if we take a case to tribunal we pay the fees upfront on behalf of the member."

Louise went on to promote the importance of holding Legal Plus awareness days on-site. "Planned and delivered correctly these days can significantly up the profile of Usdaw, deliver valuable benefits to members and help you recruit," she said. "Local solicitors may be available to attend. Don't forget to use the material on the free will writing service. Explain how to access the advice on non-work related issues and promote FirstCall Usdaw."



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



View the Warehouse and Distribution Conference gallery on the UsdawUnion flickr page



Pictured right (l-r) PADDY LILLIS CHATS WITH DELEGATES AND LOUISE CURTIS.





## BIG ISSUES in the sector

- The numbers of agency staff on site
- Facilities to recruit and represent agency staff
- Unreasonable picking rates and performance targets
- Terms and conditions under pressure

### Eamonn Flynn

Eamonn Flynn, 51, is a fork-lift driver at the Wincanton/Asda site in Doncaster. He has spent the last five years as an active rep and completed both Academy1&2. He leads the 13-strong reps' team who look after more than 500 members.

"We have a brilliant set-up with management and sort out problems early and quickly most of the time. In the last five years wages have gone up by 20 per cent.

"All sorts of issues crop up and we all do our best to win for members, but

you can't win them all.

"I've grown in confidence and not looked back since becoming active. I really enjoy the work, the challenges and getting more involved in all aspects of the union.

"My next step will be to get politically involved and I'm looking into that right now."

### Rachel Moore

Rachel Moore, 30, is a training administrator at Expert Logistics in Crewe and was at her first union event.

"It's been very useful, I've made some good friends and shared lots of advice," she said.

"I liked the informal relaxed format. Everyone said it as-it-is and I like that straight-talking approach.

"It's early days in my union role but I'm enjoying it. I love helping people and I have a thirst for knowledge, which to me sums up the role of a union rep.

"I've started my training with more to come. We're planning to make progress on-site during Membership Week and we also may be getting involved in the learning agenda. In fact we're looking at all possibilities."

### Carol Horrigan

Carol Horrigan, 58, works as an order picker at Phoenix Healthcare in Runcorn, Cheshire, and has been a rep for a year.

"You learn a lot at union events and you realise we share the same problems regardless of who we are or where we work," she said.

"Disciplinary issues, flexible working and health and safety always crop up and I enjoy speaking up for people and making sure justice is done.

"We have a good relationship with management on-site and there's a mutual respect from both sides.

"Although this conference is, not surprisingly, male-dominated at our site all three reps are women so I didn't feel uncomfortable. The format worked and we all learned from each other. I enjoyed it."

### Glen Davison

Glen Davison, 50, works as a warehouse operative at the Tesco Daventry site and has spent time as a rep, health and safety rep and branch official.

"It's a really good idea to have a separate warehouse conference," he said. "The sector is completely different to retail. There's a lot of pressure on staff over picking rates for instance.

"Personally I get a lot of satisfaction from being an activist. I enjoy helping people and I get a great sense of achievement from it. Being an activist gives you a lot of opportunities to better yourself and it's a very interesting role."



L-R CAROL HERRIGAN, EAMONN FLYNN, RACHEL MOORE AND GLEN DAVISON



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# Reps add more new recruits

**Teams of activists and officials from across the UK turned out in force in June for the second national Membership Week and signed up thousands of new members.**

Hundreds of events were organised at a variety of workplaces including retail, warehousing, distribution and factories, call centres, home shopping, meat processing, dairy and pharmaceuticals.

Reps used the union's campaigns as well as the many leaflets and booklets to raise the Usdaw's profile. Promotional material on FirstCall and

Legal Plus, members' rights at work, pensions, maternity leave and education and training opportunities explained the many benefits on offer to new and existing members.

"Once again our activists across the country have pulled out all the stops to make this a very successful Membership Week," said deputy general secretary Paddy Lillis.

"With the continued economic uncertainty, the loss of big high street names, and job losses in our sectors, the reps are working hard to get the message across that Usdaw membership is the best a worker can get. The bigger we are the more influence we have."



CO-OP DISTRIBUTION, COVENTRY



MORRISONS, FAKENHAM



RECRUITING



TESCO EXTRA, REDRUTH



MORRISONS L



View the Membership Week gallery on the [UsdawUnion flickr page](#)



YouTube [UsdawUnion](#)



TESCO DISTRIBUTION CENTRE, READING



TESCO BANK, GLASGOW



EEDS



SAINSBURY'S, DENTON

# Vocal, visible, active – and out for equality



View the LGBT conference gallery on the [UdawUnion flickr page](#)

**LGBT activists met in Manchester to discuss how to encourage more involvement, how to solve workplace issues and how to support reps who are part of the LGBT community.**

While president Jeff Broome, general secretary John Hannett and deputy general secretary Paddy Lillis joined equalities officers Ruth Cross and Jo Bird and special guest speakers for the packed and varied agenda – it was a weekend for LGBT members and run by LGBT members.

## Jody Rogerson

Northern Ireland rep Jody Rogerson talked about her experiences and her determination to see same-sex marriage legislation introduced in her country. She has progressed rapidly in her village' to speaking at ADM in front of 1,300 people. "This is an issue close to my heart as it affects me, my family, my friends, my community and the whole nation," she said. "There's no reason why we should be stopped from enjoying the same legal rights on same-sex marriage as our friends in the rest of the UK.

"Stormont has rejected the legislation on a number of occasions so far by between five and eight votes, so we're not far away but the campaign goes on.

"I remember being in class when I was 14 and being lectured by a teacher about the 'sin of homosexuality'. I know people who were sent to see therapists, or had electric shock therapy to 'cure' them of their homosexuality.

"However, I've also seen the Pride march in Belfast grow from around 350 people in 2007 to 35,000 last year. A few years later I also went back to see that teacher to show him I wasn't a bad person and he apologised."

## Ruth Cross

LGBT members are more likely to experience mental health issues as a direct cause of bullying and harassment at work, equalities officer Ruth Cross told conference.

"A number of reports from the TUC, Stonewall and the Manchester Business School have revealed the alarming incidence of anxiety, depression and the high suicide rate among the LGBT community," she said.

"Other reasons cited include social isolation and intrusive questions about their personal life so it's clear

mental health is an important issue for our LGBT members. In particular four out of five women say they have experienced anxiety and depression as a result of LGBT bullying. It's likely to be far worse for transgender members. So despite legislation there are still massive issues for our LGBT members around bullying and harassment and the impact on their mental well-being."

## Steve Ratcliff

Co-op activist, and major player in the Group's Respect network for LGBT workers, Steve Ratcliff spoke on the misunderstanding and hostility shown towards bisexuals and why it is important for the LGBT network to encourage more participation from people who identify as bisexual.

"There are a lot of stereotypes out there about bisexual people – we're greedy, promiscuous, can't commit, we're confused, we're gay but won't admit it – none of these are correct," he said.

"I've encountered hostility towards bisexuals from gay and lesbians which I was surprised at. It's important we are overtly inclusive and make everyone welcome."

*Pictured below*  
JODY ROGERSON  
STEVE RATCLIFF  
AND RUTH CROSS  
*Pictured below right*  
DIVISIONAL COUNCILLORS  
GRAHAM NEWPORT  
SIMON EGGLETON  
AND RACHEL GOODWIN

*Co-op LGBT members should visit:*  
[www.cooperative.coop/corporate/RespectLGBT/](http://www.cooperative.coop/corporate/RespectLGBT/)



**“Prejudice and ignorance still exists and while it does Usdaw still has a job to do to promote the equality agenda. We’ve come a long way on our journey to make the union more inclusive but it would be naive to think we have reached the end of that journey.”**

**John Hannett**



*Pictured above*  
DEBBIE WILSON  
JAMES MASSIE  
ANGEL TERJEK  
MIKE JACKSON

## A brief conversation with activists...

### Debbie Wilson...

Plymouth rep Debbie Wilson was at her second LGBT weekend and has seen how other activists have grown in confidence in just 12 months.

“It’s great to see reps progress both as individuals and within the union, some have gone on to be divisional councillors for example. Members feel comfortable here,” she said. “It’s very welcoming and shows to members they are part of a much bigger organisation. No-one judges you here.

“I think society is more tolerant now, but prejudice still exists.”

### James Massie...

Tesco team leader James Massie was at his first Usdaw event. “This is a very open, friendly and supportive weekend,” said the 22 year-old.

“The only other activity for me was going to the Leeds Pride march with Out at Tesco. I didn’t realise how much was going on in Usdaw so I’ve learnt a lot here. The workshops were very motivational and I feel empowered and I’ll be looking to get more involved.

“Equality is very important to me and it’s clear the union has a passion and genuine commitment to it.”

### and Angel Terjek

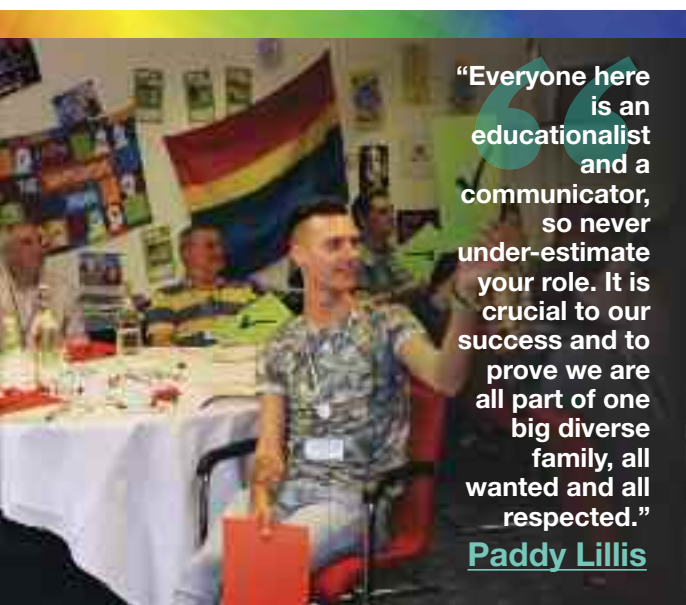
Hungarian born Angel Terjek is a warehouse operative and goods in clerk at Morrisons in Burton Latimer.

“The UK is more tolerant than Eastern Europe,” said the 27 year-old who has travelled around Europe and speaks Hungarian, English, Spanish and a little French and Italian.

“This weekend has opened my eyes and changed my mind on some issues, so I’ve really enjoyed it. It has given me some ideas on how I can help others at work. It was good to meet such a variety of people and I’ve learned a lot.”



**Watch**  
**John Hannett**  
**talks**  
**equalities**  
**on the**  
**UsdawUnion**  
**YouTube**  
**channel**



**“Everyone here is an educationalist and a communicator, so never under-estimate your role. It is crucial to our success and to prove we are all part of one big diverse family, all wanted and all respected.”**

**Paddy Lillis**

## SO PROUD Activist’s story inspires movie

Activist Mike Jackson gave an update on the forthcoming film *Pride* which tells the story of the time when his London-based gay and lesbian group supported the South Wales miners during the 1984-85 strike.

The film, to be released in September stars Bill Nighy and Imelda Staunton with Mike ‘played’ by Joseph Gilgun (star of *Emmerdale*, *This Is England* and *Misfits*).

“Early screenings have seen a massively positive response,” said Mike. “It’s not a gay film. It’s about solidarity and unity. A typically British film and based on a remarkable true story. Look out for it coming to a cinema near you and go and see it.”



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**showbiz.com**  
**search:**  
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# POLITICS MATTERS

## ANGIE GALLAGHER

It was third time lucky for one of Usdaw's newest councillors Angie Gallagher who won the Elland seat in Halifax in May.

The Tesco rep won by just 58 votes but that was enough to get her through the doors of the impressive town hall and begin her political work of standing up for her constituents. "We've not had a Labour councillor in Elland for 20 years so I was ecstatic to win," said Angie. "I'm very busy and it's hard work keeping all the plates spinning, but you have to get your head down and get on with it. I'm involved with planning issues, road safety, business and the campaign to get a railway station in Elland.

"I've always been a Labour supporter and because I've had fantastic training from Usdaw I finally made it. In fact, without the union it wouldn't have happened so I'm very grateful for all the support I've had.

"I'd certainly encourage other reps to stand as a councillor. I'm thoroughly enjoying it."



**Watch**  
John talks about getting involved on the UsdawUnion YouTube channel

"Usdaw reps are more than capable of standing and being elected to their local councils and making a difference in the world of politics.

You can see from Angie's and Jackie's example that, while it's hard work, it's also very rewarding. We need more reps like Angie and Jackie to get involved and help put Usdaw centre stage."



**GENERAL SECRETARY  
JOHN HANNETT**



## JACKIE MARTIN

Edinburgh Tesco rep Jackie Martin has her work cut out over the next two years as she has just been elected to Vice Chair of the Scottish Labour Party and will Chair the Party next year.

The Referendum in September, the general election next year and the Scottish general election in 2016 all loom large on the horizon. "Being a rep and being politically involved go hand-in-hand for me," said Jackie, a checkout team leader at the Colinton Edinburgh store. "Even though members say they are not interested in politics when I point out how politics affects our lives at work and in the community they do sit up and listen."

A rep for 13 years, Jackie has been politically active since 2006 on the union's political committees both divisionally and nationally and will be playing her part in the No campaign on the referendum.

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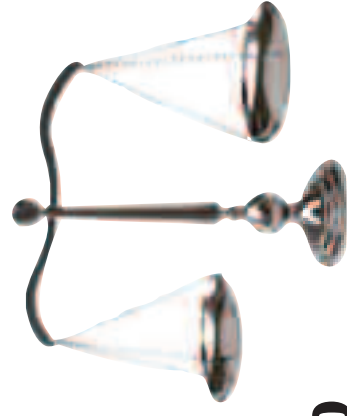
**Inflation has been way ahead of pay rises for the vast majority of the last four years meaning any wage rises have been devalued in real terms.**



**The consultation period on redundancies has been cut from 90 to 45 days when 100 or more employees face the sack.**



**The qualification threshold to take an employment claim to a tribunal went up from one year to two.**



**Tribunal fees starting at £250**

**VAT has been increased from 17.5%**



**and rising to £1,200 have been introduced**



and rising to £1,200 have been introduced

to 20%.

leading to a 79% drop in applications.

**Tax credits have been cut and other work-related benefits frozen costing working families thousands of pounds.**



**Universal Credit – a new benefit system – will see thousands of workers even worse off.**

**The bedroom tax and cuts to housing benefit has forced thousands of tenants into rent arrears.**



**Usdaw won the fight for compensation for retail workers in small stores who were made redundant but the Government appealed the legal decision and now ex-Woolworths and ex-Ethel Austin staff have to wait even longer for justice.**



**To find out how you can campaign for change with Usdaw, contact Usdaw on 0161 249 2452 or email: [politics@usdaw.org.uk](mailto:politics@usdaw.org.uk)**



Countdown to  
2015



# GET READY NOW FOR NEXT YEAR'S GENERAL ELECTION

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- Many people enjoy going to vote. Having a postal vote doesn't mean you can't go along and vote in person if you decide you can – it just gives you the option of posting your vote if that's easier.



## USE USDAW'S RESOURCE SHEETS FOR MORE INFORMATION

<p><b>A Short Guide for Union Activists</b></p>	<p><b>Organising Postal Votes for Members</b></p>	<p><b>Arranging a Workplace Visit for a Labour MP or Candidate</b></p>
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# In the spotlight Izzy Johnson



**Eastern Division's Izzy Johnson talks to Network about her experiences as a rep...**

**I became active** because rep Sue Perridge and my area organiser Paul Curry encouraged me – without those two it wouldn't have happened. They are very supportive and always there for me. Since becoming a rep I'm now taken more seriously and people's perceptions of me have changed.

**The training I've** had I've enjoyed, especially meeting other reps and building up a network of experienced reps. Every event I've found encouraging and the people very warm and welcoming.

**The most rewarding** part of the job is using my skills of persuasion and talking to people to change things in-store, build membership and identify new reps. I've been in their shoes so I can empathise with them.

**The downside** is when there is no continuity and no follow-up in-store from the union. There's also a disconnect

between new policies or campaigns and training for reps to keep them up-to-speed.

**Friends tell me** I've changed since becoming a rep. I'm certainly calmer. I've grown. I've never liked speaking in front of a group of people but the Academy makes you do that so while I'm nervous it's a challenge. I'm learning all the time. I'm the first rep from Ikea too and I hope it opens the doors for other reps to think about the Academy.

**I've never been political** but since getting active I'm beginning to realise just how important politics is. I'm more engaged now and the more I find out the more interesting it is.

**If I was prime minister** for the day I'd introduce a law that reinforces the respect agenda especially between the generations. I'm young but I think some young people can be very disrespectful to older people. I don't like that.

I'd also encourage everyone to speak or learn to speak English. The language barrier can be a problem in some stores.

**Looking back...** I'm not the type of person to have regrets, but I do wish I'd learned to drive when I was younger! At the moment I'm looking to put that right, it'll certainly help me carry all the union's leaflets around!

**Looking ahead...** I've Academy1 to complete which finishes in November. I'm also looking to get active in the divisional equalities forum. I want to get more involved in the union and I'm always up for the next challenge. So let's see where it all leads.

**We are looking for the next volunteer for our activist in-depth series, email Network to tell your story**



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usdaw.org.uk

## Fact file & trivia

EMPLOYER *Ikea*

OCCUPATION *Sales assistant* AGE 25

LIVES *London, E4*

JOINED USDAW: 2009

USDAW ACTIVIST SINCE: 2013

UNION POSITIONS HELD: *Rep and youth committee*

I SPEND MY SPARE TIME: *Helping my elderly neighbour and volunteering at the local homeless hostel. I like reading too.*

BEST MOMENT OF MY LIFE: *Winning Usdaw's Most Promising New Activist Award and representing the division at the national awards night this year.*





# Think pensions – think pay – delegates told

**One of the most informative conferences in the union's calendar and now in its tenth year saw activists gather in Warrington for the annual pensions conference.**

## **Debra Blow Pensions Officer**

Pensions are an incredibly important part of a worker's employment package whether they are about to retire or have just started out in their working life, pensions officer Debra Blow told delegates.

"It's right that pensions continue to make the headlines both politically and industrially because workers need to plan for the future but unfortunately all the research shows that many individuals are still a long way off being financially prepared for their retirement," she said.

"But we also know that for many of our members, saving for a pension can be an added financial burden. We know that some people's wages are not stretching to the middle of the month let alone the end of the month.

"So for some it's clear they will not be in a position to contribute and they will potentially have to rely on the state pension, but with state benefits about to be significantly reformed, it is more important than ever that we get out there and we inform our members of all their options.

"We need to make sure people start making provisions for their retirement now to avoid living in poverty later. We believe contributing to a good company pension scheme is still the best way to save for your retirement.

"I'm pleased to say that pensions auto-enrolment has been good for many of our members because it is capturing many workers who have never had the opportunity to save before. First indications are showing that auto-enrolment has been a resounding success and this is being reflected by the low opt-out rates.

"This is a crucial first step and, while it has worked for the big companies, we will only see the entire picture when smaller employers have to sign up to auto-enrolment in the coming years."

## **Hilary Salt First Actuarial**

Higher employer contributions and smaller charges from pension providers will help deliver the dignity in retirement workers deserve, pensions expert Hilary Salt told conference.

"Charges applied to workers' pension pots, while on the face of it very low at one or two per cent in many cases, add up to a significant reduction in the actual pension a worker receives when they reach retirement," said Hilary.

"Add to this the low levels of employer contributions currently paid by many employers and we will see many workers losing out. Lower charges and higher employer contributions is where we want to be on pensions."

Hilary, an actuary with First Actuarial, went on to detail the impact of the introduction of the single tier pension in 2016. "The state second pension will be abolished as will contracting out. This means workers and employers will pay more NI contributions which may see

companies pass these costs on to employees and/or reduce pension benefits.

"It's important workers see pensions as part of their terms and conditions, no different to pay. That's why we have to negotiate to defend pensions and improve them."

## **Jonathan Lamb Southern division**

"Pensions are undoubtedly a hot topic in workplaces up and down the country and definitely at our site where the defined benefit scheme was closed and a new defined contribution scheme introduced," said Jonathan Lamb, a LGV driver at the Wincanton site at Snodland.

"We discussed the importance of sending a delegate to the pensions conference and I was pleased I went. It's very informative and I picked up a lot of advice to take back to the branch.

"It was very useful to hear about what's happening to the state pension too and the impact future pension changes will have on national insurance contributions.

"We'll be looking at holding a pensions awareness day on-site because it's important we keep members informed of where they are now and what's coming up in the future. Pensions are vital and we have to keep up-to-date on the issue."



View the  
reps picture  
gallery on the  
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pensions@usdaw  
union.org.uk

## **CAMPAIGN** Pensions Awareness

Reps are being encouraged to run their own Pensions Awareness Campaign at their workplaces to raise the issue and help inform members.

"The thought of holding a Pensions Awareness Day may seem daunting but please let me reassure you, you don't need to be an expert you just need to be able to give people the facts

about their pension schemes and we will do the rest," said Debra Blow.

"We can provide reps with leaflets, posters and surveys – these are all contained in our reps toolkit. We can sort out fact sheets for your company pension scheme and devise a tailor-made quiz for reps to generate interest on-site."



**DELEGATES TAKE A CLOSE  
LOOK AT THE CAMPAIGN MATERIAL**



**L-R DEBRA BLOW, HILARY SALT, PETER HARTT AND JONATHAN LAMB**

## BEWARE FRAUD

Companies who offer to 'unlock' your pension pot, before you reach 55, are most likely to be acting illegally and could strip you of most of your money and leave you liable to a massive tax bill. So-called 'pension-liberation' companies should be ignored or reported to the Action Fraud helpline on 0300 1232040 and the pensions section at central office.

## HOME STUDY

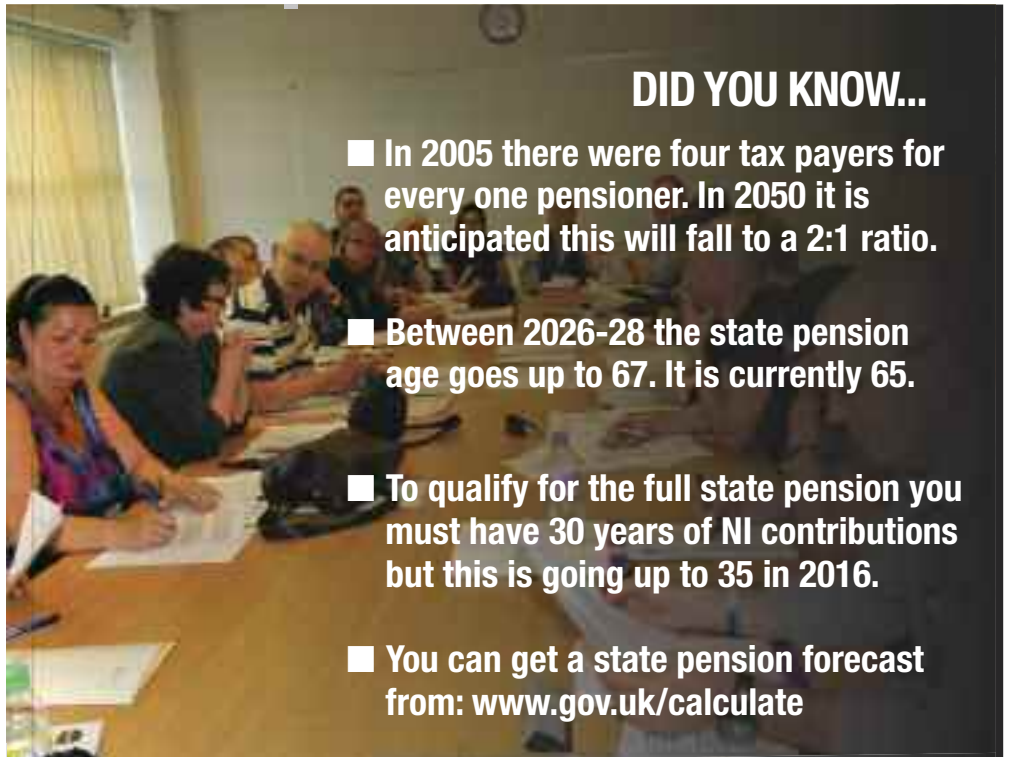
Reps can also sign up to the revamped Pensions Home Study Course. An ideal introduction to pensions in an easy-to-read format.



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

## DID YOU KNOW...

- In 2005 there were four tax payers for every one pensioner. In 2050 it is anticipated this will fall to a 2:1 ratio.
- Between 2026-28 the state pension age goes up to 67. It is currently 65.
- To qualify for the full state pension you must have 30 years of NI contributions but this is going up to 35 in 2016.
- You can get a state pension forecast from: [www.gov.uk/calculate](http://www.gov.uk/calculate)



# Campaigns push membership up

**Teamwork and a clever blend of new and experienced reps is seeing important inroads made into many workplaces**

## Connah's Quay Legal Plus Awareness

Academy2 rep **Carole Jones** was on hand to help and support 29 year-old Morrisons rep **Peter Carroll** organise a Legal Plus Awareness day in his store in Connah's Quay in Deeside in April.

"It's the first time I've organised an event in-store, so I was pleased it all worked to plan," said Peter who has been a rep for two years.

"Carole has been very supportive and encouraging, it was great to have the benefit of her experience.

"She talked me through everything before the day including ordering the legal plus leaflets and materials and liaising with our panel solicitor from Walkers.

"Fifteen staff talked to the solicitor about their legal concerns and also took advantage of the free will-writing offer at the same time.

"The general opinion from staff was very positive. The day helped to highlight the benefits of the Legal Plus service.

"A few people didn't know they could use the legal service if they had a car accident, so it was good to get this across to members.

"While others didn't know that their family members were entitled to advice in certain circumstances.

"I think the day certainly made members aware they have a first-class legal system available to them when they join the union.

"With membership standing at just over 70 per cent I'm hoping the day highlighted just how good the Legal Plus service is and this will filter through to non-members in the store and persuade them to join too."

## Sainsbury's Reading Mental Health

Experienced rep **Shirley Dunaway** enlisted the help of new rep **Sameer Shrestha** to organise a Mental

Health Awareness Day at the Sainsbury's superstore in Reading.

"Sameer is keen to get involved and learn more so the day was perfect for him," said Shirley, who is one of four reps at the store and is also branch chair and a health and safety rep. Night shift reps **Cathy Samson** and **Yvonne Livingstone** make up the rest of the team.

"We also involved Academy1 organiser **Peter Powell** and **Su Patel** from Academy2 and activist **Gregg Charles**. We were delighted prospective parliamentary candidate for Reading East Matt Rodda joined us to give his support to the day.

"And we had representatives from a variety of local mental health charities on hand to give their expert advice and support.

"It was interesting to see people's reactions when you explain the connection between mental health problems and work," said Shirley.

"They are surprised when you explain that members might be having issues with disciplinary, capability or sickness absence procedures and they could be covered by the Equality Act or the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)."

Sameer added: "The event went very well, we raised a lot of awareness with both staff and customers.

"I learned a lot too from Shirley, Su and Gregg who have the experience of organising many union events."

Peter Powell agreed: "I think everyone learned a lot from the day including myself.

"The event raised awareness that mental health can affect anyone at anytime and any age."

## Morrisons Fakenham Workers' Rights

Workers' rights topped the agenda when a team of reps and officials visited the Morrisons store in Fakenham, Norfolk during Membership Week in June.

"It was a timely visit as staff had concerns over management structure changes," said **Brian Lewis**, who works at the Morrisons store in



MORRISONS  
CONNAH'S QUAY



SAINSBURY'S  
READING

Norwich and is on secondment to Academy1 for six months.

"We thought it was a good subject to cover as lots of staff don't have a clue about their rights at work.

"They also had the opportunity to speak to officials from the division face to face which helped to reassure them.

"Some staff had never met anyone let alone spoken to an official from the union before, so it went down really well.

"It was a very successful day. We recruited seven new members, which should push membership up to around 40 per cent.

"We also have a possible new rep and an activist and staff were keen to fill in the surveys too.

"It was a pity store rep **John Hughes** could not be present as he was away on union business and



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MORRISONS  
FAKENHAM



TESCO DOTCOM  
CROYDON

involved in pay negotiations.

“John has been a dedicated rep for ten years and has done a tremendous job.

“I’m looking forward to regular visits back to the store to work with and support John and the new reps and hopefully we can grow the membership even more.”

### Tesco Croydon Pensions Awareness

Project worker **Gregg Charles** organised a pensions awareness roadshow and visited seven stores across the Southern division to help inform staff about their options for retirement.

“It’s been a great success,” said Gregg, who developed the idea and worked with the Union Learning Rep (ULR) from each of the seven stores to get the initiative off the ground.

### “The pensions quiz gets them talking about the issue, and the younger staff especially, found it a real eye-opener”

“Once I decided to run the awareness days I contacted the store ULRs, these included five Tesco stores in Streatham, Elmers End, New Malden, Purley and Croydon Dotcom and two Sainsbury’s stores in Haywards Heath and Tooting.

“We held the sessions in the store canteens making use of Usdaw’s comprehensive guide – the Pensions Toolkit.

“We also handed out copies of the short pension quiz, which apart from being very informative, acts as a bit of an icebreaker too, especially when a

few of the members do the quiz together.

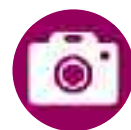
“Many were surprised by the answers, especially the younger staff who found it a real eye-opener.

“It gets them talking about pensions, which seems odd when you’re in a staff canteen where the usual topics of conversation are TV or football.

“I was also delighted to be able to run a session for the nightshift staff at the Croydon Dotcom store, that again went down very well.

“I’m very pleased with all the sessions which have shown that most people know very little about pensions and it’s a subject nobody ever speaks about, but after talking to us they are keen to find out more.

“It’s vital our members plan their future regardless of whether they are ten or fifty years from retirement.”



View the Recruitment and Organising gallery on the [UsdawUnion flickr page](#)

# Activists + Academy = a blueprint for success

## Sainsbury's Carlisle

Academy1 rep **Vicki Steele** is using her experience to develop and organise reps in the North East division.

She visited the Sainsbury's store in Carlisle in May and spent time supporting store rep **Diana Durkin** while she spoke to staff on the shopfloor and in the staff canteen.

"Diana is one of three reps in the store I've been working closely with," said 29 year-old Vicki, who only had two years experience as a rep when she was selected for the Academy.

**"Emma Graham and Mel Ferriday**

make up the rest of the team.

"I spoke with the store manager and negotiated some release time for Diana. We sat down together and discussed how to get the best out of the session.

"We had a really positive response from staff and Diana handled the questions really well, it was fantastic to see her growing in confidence.

"I'd only been a rep for a short time myself when I made the Academy. So I haven't lost sight of how daunting the role of a rep can be at times.

"Providing support and encouragement, especially to new reps, is very important and the

Academy has given me a great opportunity to do this. I'm enjoying every minute of it."

Diana added: "I've been a rep for 18 months so having Vicki alongside me was a great help.

"I know I'll be a lot more confident now as a rep which will help the team in-store."

## Tesco Greenock Campaign Day

Reps at the Tesco Extra store in Greenock in Inverclyde, Scotland, ran a joint Legal Plus and Pensions Awareness Day in May.

"The store has 400 staff and membership is 63 per cent so there's lots of potential for new members," said **Cathy McDonald** who has been a rep for six years and is one of four reps at the store. **Andrew Morrison, Jim Docherty and Christopher Polonis** complete the team.

"These events certainly help raise the profile of the union with staff, especially non-members. It went down really well.

"It was good to have the support and experience of Academy2 rep **Chris Gilmour** and our area organiser **Alan McVie**.

"Having a union solicitor visit our store was fantastic, members could get advice on a range of legal issues, including the free will-writing service, and all without having to take any time-off work.

"Highlighting the Legal Plus service in this way showed first hand what a valuable benefit it is for members when they join the union."

"It was great to combine the day with help and advice on pensions too," said Andrew Morrison, who has been a rep for two years.

"As a rep I found the Pensions Toolkit very useful.

"Again because it was an organised event in our workplace staff told me they felt comfortable about asking questions and raising their concerns about pensions.

"Most people know pensions are important but don't know very much about them, especially our younger workers."



SAINSBURY'S  
CARLISLE



TESCO EXTRA  
GREENOCK



www.usdaw.org.uk



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# Reps – authors of their own achievements!

**Union Learning Reps pulled out all the stops to encourage thousands of members in workplaces across the country to take up or to return to reading with the Six Book Challenge.**

The Six Book Challenge, run by the Reading Agency, is now in its eighth year and encourages less confident adult readers to develop their reading skills and read for pleasure.

Members who sign up for the reading initiative pick six reads of their choice, anything from magazines, online articles, comics as well as books such as the Quick Reads and record them in a diary and receive a certificate on completion. *Network* caught up with two sets of busy reps...

## Tesco Extra Watford

Members at the Tesco Extra store in Watford had a visit from bestselling crime writing author Martina Cole.

The Challenge has been running there since January through a partnership between Usdaw Union Learning Reps and management.

“Staff enjoyed getting involved. So far 20 staff have completed the Six Book Challenge and more are hoping to finish over the next few weeks,” said store ULR **Anne Gurney**.

“It’s been well supported by staff and management and everyone’s enjoyed talking to each other about what they’ve been reading.

“It was exciting to have such a well known author like Martina visit our store and present readers with their certificates in recognition of their fantastic achievements. She also stayed around for a book signing.”

## Sainsbury’s DC Haydock

In May members at the Sainsbury’s Distribution Centre in Haydock, Merseyside, received a visit from author Tom Palmer.

The children’s author is renowned for his books on football including *Football Academy* and *Foul Play* and



SAINSBURY'S DC  
HAYDOCK



TESCO EXTRA  
WATFORD

is a keen supporter of reading in the workplace.

He has joined forces with national charity The Reading Agency and the Rugby League World Cup 2013 to promote and run its Six Book Challenge with sports fans and anyone wanting to develop a reading for pleasure.

“We were delighted to have Tom’s support,” said Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator **Kevin Callow**.

“We’ve had 173 staff involved in the special Rugby League World Cup Six Book Challenge, which is just

incredible, a great achievement by everyone.

“Linking reading with sport definitely encouraged more people to get involved and we were surprised with how many took up the challenge, its success is a credit to the team of reps on site.”

■ For more information on the Six Book Challenge, how to get involved, how to become a learning rep and the work of the union’s lifelong learning campaign visit:

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



[www.sixbookchallenge.org.uk](http://www.sixbookchallenge.org.uk)

# New life beckons for ex-head of admin

**One of Usdaw's longest serving members of staff retired in July while a lifelong trade unionist has joined the education department.**

## Theresa Wilcox

A major player in Usdaw's internal transformation over the last 10 years – head of administrative services Theresa Wilcox – retired in July after 36 years on the union's staff.

The 55 year-old joined as a clerical assistant in 1977 and progressed through the ranks at central office to take up her head of department role in 1999.

"When I first started I wouldn't have said 'boo to a goose', and we were using equipment you'll only see in a museum now!" she said.

"But 36 years later I can look back on some great training (including the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development qualification), development and support. I couldn't have wished for a better employer.

"Over the years I've dealt with ADM, ballot procedures, Usdaw's property portfolio, staffing, and worked closely with the Work Foundation to help the modernisation programme – that was full-on but hugely enjoyable.

"The last 10 years in particular have



seen a significant transformation in how the union operates and it is in a much better place now and will be better equipped for future challenges."

Theresa will have a lot on her plate in retirement as she contemplates her options on voluntary work, travel and the chance to 'develop the creative side of her brain' and to perfect her own 'work/life balance'. "I'm very interested in arts and crafts, drawing, painting and gardening and I'll now have the time to do just that. I'm very keen to keep my brain stimulated.

"I'll look back on my time with Usdaw with great fondness. I've no regrets at all. A number of former and

current employees, too many to mention, have helped me immensely and I'm very grateful to all of them. I want to wish my successor George McLean all the very best for the future.

"It'll be strange starting a new chapter in my life but I'm looking forward to it."

General secretary John Hannett paid tribute to Theresa for her outstanding service. "Theresa takes with her the very best wishes from everyone at central office. She has provided a loyal, dedicated and conscientious service to Usdaw and we wish her a very healthy and productive retirement."

## Nigel Williams

The new deputy head of the education department is Nigel Williams, who succeeded Claire Simpson in April this year.

The 43 year-old brings more than 20 years' trade union experience with him as a rep, branch official, and trade union education provider. Manchester-born Nigel began his union career with civil service union the CPSA in the late '80s.

He went on to win a union scholarship at Ruskin College, Oxford in 1997 'a life-changing experience' and later studied for a joint honours degree at Aberystwyth University in

International Politics and Information Management.

"After University I worked for the TUC as part of its learning services based in Manchester," said Nigel. "That was followed as a trade union course co-ordinator at Stockport College, then Ruskin College where I set up the trade union education units. So over the years I have worked closely with Usdaw and met many activists in the classroom.

"My main responsibilities now will be working with the reps on the Academies, summer schools and young workers committees. I'm really looking forward to it."



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# Option on flexibility

**Since June every employee now has the right to request flexible working hours after the Government extended the right previously reserved for carers and those looking after children.**

Although there is no automatic guarantee the request will be allowed, employees can expect their application to be considered 'in a reasonable manner' by employers.

Many Usdaw reps will be familiar with the right to request flexible working. This gives employees the right to ask for a change in their working hours to help them juggle work with family life.

The right to request flexible working has helped many of our members who are parents and carers to get hours of work that fit with their families.

Members who want to use the right to request flexible working must make their request in writing. There is a standard form that Usdaw has produced that will help members get their application right and this can be downloaded from the Usdaw website or you can get a copy by contacting your local Usdaw office.

Any request that is agreed represents a permanent change in the members' contract. However there is nothing to stop employers agreeing to a change for a shorter period of time. Members have a better chance of having their request agreed if they get



help and advice from their Union rep.

Disabled members might want to ask for different hours of work to help them manage their disability and work. However, disabled workers who need to change their hours of work have additional, stronger rights

under the Equality Act or the Disability Discrimination Act in Northern Ireland.

*For more information see Usdaw's leaflets; Supporting Disabled Members; Flexible Working; and The Right to Request Flexible Working Briefing for Reps.*



equalities@  
usdaw.org.uk



www.usdaw.  
org.uk/equalities

## Disability tops TUC conference

The impact of the Government's cuts to benefits and services dominated the agenda at this year's TUC Disabled Workers Conference in London in May.

Usdaw was well represented by disabled activists from each of the union's seven regions.

Jena Nicoll, moved Usdaw's proposition Disability Living Allowance (DLA). "This is one of the most effectively targeted benefits with less than 0.5 per cent levels of fraud, but despite this the

Government has replaced DLA for new claimants of working age with the Personal Independence Payment (PIP)," she said.

"This decision was made with a view to saving money – the Coalition admitted that in replacing DLA with PIP they expect to save over £2 billion by removing entitlement from half a million claimants. This decision and others like it are having a devastating impact on disabled workers' ability to remain in or take up employment."



# Aiming for pain-free checkouts



**The HSE has published some practical guidance *Managing musculoskeletal disorders in checkout work – A brief guide to help reduce injuries to checkout operators.***

The leaflet replaces an earlier guide which introduced the importance of looking at an ergonomic approach, ie one that takes account of all the risk factors associated with the job which can cause aches and pains such as checkout design, working hours, the weights, sizes and shapes of the goods being scanned and individual factors.

## **Q What is the leaflet about?**

The updated leaflet simplifies the advice and demonstrates good and bad practice with the use of photographs. It helps employers to manage checkout work and reduce the risk of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). It also spells out the need to consult with the workers who are doing the job. A separate section gives advice to union health and safety reps on how to use their legal powers to investigate hazards to help identify any issues for their members.

## **Q What are MSDs?**

The term MSD covers any damage to the joints, muscles and tendons in the legs, arms and back. The commonest

symptom is pain but other effects may include stiffness, tingling or swelling. Most MSDs will clear up with rest, but prolonged or repeated damage can result in chronic injury.

## **Q How can they be prevented?**

One of the most useful sections of the guide focusses on controlling the risks. It provides checklists on manual handling, awkward postures and work-organisation.

## **Safety Officer Doug Russell**

“The wait for the leaflet to be published was frustrating. The main text was agreed by a working party involving the unions, employers and HSE experts three years ago. But it then took a long time to get through the HSE’s publication approval system, which has been introduced to meet the demands from this Government to reduce alleged burdens on business. However, despite some editorial changes, the guidance does provide simple practical advice and is a useful tool for health and safety reps in the retail sector.”

The HSE document *Managing musculoskeletal disorders in checkout work - A brief guide* is available online.



[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

## **Premier conference puts safety top of agenda**

Safety reps are being urged to get to the 25th National Hazards Conference to be held at Keele University, Stoke-on-Trent on the 29th – 31st August 2014.

With upwards of 500 reps in attendance this is the biggest safety rep conference in Britain.

The conference gives delegates a choice of 20 workshops on a range of work-related hazards and organising topics as well as one of three keynote sessions – ‘Snapping at the heels of the HSE’, ‘Well-being or being safe from health hazards at work?’ and ‘Organising

against employers flexibility’.

Residential delegates stay in accommodation on campus. The residential delegate fee is £270. Non-residential delegates have access to all conference events, campus facilities, refreshments and food during the day and the non-residential delegate fee is £165.

Reps should contact their branch official or local office to discuss attendance opportunities.

For a delegate’s registration form go to: [www.hazardscampaign.org.uk](http://www.hazardscampaign.org.uk)

## **Food for thought...**

The annual Food and Drink Manufacturing Conference, organised by the HSE’s Forum for the industry in partnership with the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health, is being held on 07–08 October 2014 at the Park Royal Hotel, Warrington.

This year’s conference aims to build on the success of previous years by sharing good practice and demonstrating how leading

businesses develop their health and safety standards. One of the sessions will be a joint presentation by management and Usdaw reps from Weetabix.

There is a small discount for trade union health and safety reps attending the conference (contact [events@iosh.co.uk](mailto:events@iosh.co.uk) for details). The cost of attending has to be paid either by the employer or by the reps’ branch.



# Euro campaign focus on stress at work

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work has launched a two-year campaign on managing stress in the workplace – ‘Healthy Workplaces - Managing Stress’.

Across Europe, stress is the second most common cause of work-related illness and accounts for more than half of the days lost. In the UK, for example, in 2011/12 there were 1,073,000 cases of work related illness of these 428,000 were stress-related.

European Week for Safety and Health at Work is held in the third week in October (starting on Monday 20 October) and has become a traditional focus for the Agency’s campaigns. This year they are encouraging employers and trade unions to get involved in various ways, whether that is to simply run a poster awareness campaign, conduct a workplace stress survey or hold a more substantial event.

The TUC promotes the Wednesday of European Week (23 October) as National Inspection Day and urges union health and safety reps to take

action by carrying out one of their workplace inspections around that date.

Usdaw has campaigned on the risks of work-related stress for many years, and the union recognises that the problem has increased in recent years with the growth of zero-hours and short-hours contracts, uncertainty over jobs and the cost of living crisis. Along with other unions Usdaw has condemned the current Government’s cuts in HSE activity on the key work-related health problems, including stress, over the last four years.

However, it is now the HSE’s job to provide the national focus point for the European campaign in the UK and you can get involved.

More suggestions for reps to get involved will be made nearer the time.

Remember that Usdaw has a simple tried and tested survey form which reps can use to measure work-related stress and identify the causes and this year we also introduced a major campaign to support members with mental health problems.



## Q&A with...

**Ronnie Mason, 55, a part-time sales assistant for Poundland in Falkirk, Scotland. He has been an activist for two years and is currently on six months’ secondment with Academy1.**

### Q Why did you take on the role of health and safety rep?

Once I’d done my training as shop steward I was keen to learn more, the role of safety rep seemed a natural progression. I just wanted to be as knowledgeable as I could to help my fellow workmates. There are 30 members of staff in my store, 26 are members and a lot of them are young workers who have joined because they have a rep in store and know the union is there for them.

### Q What is a typical day for you as a safety rep?

I normally go into work about an hour before my start time and have a walk around the store. I look out for any tripping hazards and any other potential problems. It also gives me the opportunity to have a word with my colleagues to see if there are any issues. Like any rep I want to know as soon as there is a problem so it can be resolved quickly.

### Q Do members take health and safety seriously?

Most certainly. I am always making them alert to the fact safety is not just an employer’s responsibility but each and every individual’s as well. I have to say my members take their responsibilities very seriously. And I have to say our store manager is very safety conscious too.

### Q What safety issues have you dealt with in your store?

Not long after the store opened two years ago we had a severe winter. The doors leading into the store were the automatic type, there was a fault and they were open at all times. All the staff were cold. I raised the issue with management, it wasn’t exactly straightforward but my health and safety knowledge came into play and I resolved the issue and the doors were fixed. My members were delighted.



# Your Letters

## tweet deck

Some of our favourite tweets to @UsdawUnion

**@\_princesspeach**  
@UsdawUnion 2am selfie with my AO on our first night of #membershipweek



**@angelaede1**  
Thank you to Jacqueline and Freddy from Usdaw for supporting our Union recruitment in store



**@PaulTay1970**  
@UsdawUnion can't believe how much I'm learning on academy this year. All reps should apply next year, it's brilliant

**@DesJones85**  
Met some great new reps on @UsdawUnion's Shop Steward course! Great tutor, great people! What more could u ask for! #learning

**@sowadally**  
Fantastic to see @UsdawUnion worked with Nestle to deliver living wage. Benefit of their relationships with employers like Nestle & Tesco.

## Commonwealth Games protest

Currently homosexuality is a criminal offence in 40 of the 53 Commonwealth nations and some countries are currently strengthening their anti-homosexuality laws.

In light of this, the STUC is planning to fly the Rainbow Flag throughout the games as a symbol of solidarity with LGBT people and as a rejection of the anti-homosexuality laws that exist in many Commonwealth countries.

The STUC would like to urge all trade unions and trade union branches to consider flying or displaying the Rainbow flag on your buildings during the period of the Commonwealth Games (23 July – 3 August).

Please support this campaign, visit: [www.stuc.org.uk](http://www.stuc.org.uk)

**Graham Newport**  
Scottish division

## £50 STAR LETTER Pearl & Peggy charity

Louise Hopwood gave birth to twin girls on the 2nd

January at 22 weeks. Sadly both tiny girls only lived for a short time.

Louise and her husband Chris were understandably devastated. What made the situation even more surreal was the clothes the hospital had dressed their daughters in were too big.

Louise has turned this tragedy into a charity project. She and her family started to knit tiny baby clothes to donate to the hospital where her children were born. The project has grown with several hospitals being sent these parcels.

Louise has now registered Pearl & Peggy as a charity as she wants to provide new equipment for her local maternity unit.

She is making candles and

frames and a number of other gifts to try to raise the funds needed.

Both Atherton Tesco where Louise worked years ago and Walkden Tesco are actively promoting and contributing to this worthwhile cause.

Please visit her donation page for more information:

[www.gofundme.com/8e4wl0](http://www.gofundme.com/8e4wl0)

**Michelle Fury**  
NW Retail No.3 K76

## Reflections...

Thirty years after one of the most famous strikes in the UK, I read the book *Settling Scores: The Media, The Police and The Miners' Strike* (sent to me courtesy of *Network*) and have to say it is a very readable account of an event I feel very strongly about.

I was a miner myself for 10 years although before the strike took place, so I wasn't directly involved.

The book confirms what I knew and adds credence to what many suspected but couldn't prove at the time.

The manipulation of information by the Thatcher Government and the press was a disgrace. Arthur Scargill should have called a ballot which in my opinion he would have won and why call a strike

when stockpiles were so high?

The miners deserved better from both sides and things should and could have been so different. The miners were caught up in the middle of a political battle of wills.

**Ray Taylor**  
Sainsbury Northern F174



## Labour team

Here I am with fellow Usdaw member Tristram, right, who is the Labour Candidate for Chatham & Aylesford Constituency and currently a Medway Councillor for the Luton & Wayfield Ward, and Simon Wady, centre.

Tristram and I are the Labour candidates for the Princes Park Ward for the 2015 Medway Council Elections. We are working within the Medway Labour group, which encompasses the three constituencies and are referred to in the Medway Labour group as the dream team!

**Alan Higgins**  
Southern divisional councillor

## Branch officers at the national training centre





A dedicated space to share your news, views and achievements. Let us know what you have been up to and you could win £50! Keep it brief. We reserve the right to edit all letters published.

## Membership Week



Sainsbury's Swindon



Sainsbury's Basingstoke



Tesco Craigmarloch



Tesco New Oscott

## Picture round-up



Deputy general secretary Paddy Lillis meets up with members of Tesco Distribution, Goole in their learning centre



30 years award for Pamela Carnell, Tesco Spytty Extra



30 years award for Steven Lawler of Twinings Andover with AO Debby Hudson

## Centre, Warrington, in April and June 2014



Birmingham PRIDE

Coming soon to a store near you...

# Respect Week 2014

10-14 November



## What will you be doing?

For more information visit [www.usdaw.org.uk/fff](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/fff)

More details about how you can get involved in Respect Week coming soon including a pull-out feature in the next issue of **Network**.

You can also follow @Usdawunion on Twitter for the latest news and information. Look out for #Respect14

