



**Usdaw**

*Union of Shop, Distributive  
and Allied Workers*



# Campaigning Against Racism and Prejudice

Executive Council Statement  
to the 2017 ADM



**Over the past few decades trade unions and other campaigning organisations have made great strides in challenging racism and prejudice not just in the workplace but in wider society.**

The Race Relations Act, passed over 50 years ago, outlawed the blatant and overt daily discrimination that was a feature of life for so many Black and Asian people.

No longer would signs of ‘no blacks, no Irish, no dogs’ be allowed and it was made illegal to refuse service or job opportunities on the basis of skin colour.

The Act was a vital step in reducing the prejudice that ethnic minorities faced. Like all progressive changes in the law the Race Relations Act only came about because of campaigning by unions, politicians and others.

The Stephen Lawrence Campaign, set up after the murder of Stephen in an unprovoked, racist attack 23 years ago, has had a lasting impact on attitudes to race in Britain and triggered profound changes in the law.

The official enquiry into the police’s handling of this event was a watershed moment and led to an overhaul of Britain’s race relations legislation.

But since these landmark achievements in UK race relations, the political momentum behind the drive for racial equality has been lost.

Under the Coalition and now the Conservative Government the political will to tackle race inequality and racism has all but disappeared.

A recent United Nations report said that the Conservative Government had failed to tackle the deeply entrenched disadvantages and discrimination faced by people from Britain’s Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

Conservative austerity policies have significantly increased the disadvantages faced by people from these communities.

There has been a 49% increase in unemployment amongst Black and Asian young people since 2010.

Inequality is rife across every area of life in modern Britain, including education, employment and the criminal justice system.

Health is another area of strong inequality. Ethnic minority groups are significantly more likely to have a long-term life limiting illness and are at greater risk of developing mental health problems because of their unequal position in society.

This Executive Council Statement is part of an ongoing programme of work within the Union to address the problem of race inequality and racism at work and in wider society.

For many of our Black members who work in well organised workplaces, overt racism has more or less gone away.

But that can change and recent events in the UK have shown us yet again how easy it is for the forces of prejudice and division to be unleashed in our society. The behaviour of some politicians and sections of the press in the run-up to last year’s EU Referendum vote undoubtedly stirred up racism and prejudice in our country.

The Crown Prosecution Service say that 8 out of 10 hate crimes are now motivated by hatred of a person's race or ethnicity.

There is much work to be done to stem the tide of division that has been set in motion but trade unions are well equipped to undertake this task.

Whether through training and education, representation at work, bringing members together or our political and campaigning work we have the ability to speak out, change attitudes and improve rights at work.

All of this we will continue to do and I hope this Executive Council Statement will inspire many more of our members to get involved in this work.



**John Hannett**  
**General Secretary**

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### Racism on the Rise

It would appear that far from going away the problem of racism is worsening.

Recent studies by the TUC have shown:

- 31% of Black workers have never been offered training by their current employer compared to over 70% of white workers.
- Trade union membership makes a big difference to whether or not both Black and white workers receive training. Workers who are in a union have a huge advantage in being offered training. Just 16% of unionised BME employees have never been offered training compared to 36% who are not union members.
- Black workers with vocational qualifications at HNC/HND level are almost three times as likely to be unemployed as white workers with the same level of qualification.
- The unemployment level for Black workers who have obtained City and Guilds or craft based qualifications is two and a half times that of white workers with the same level of qualification.
- Black communities are still disproportionately affected by unemployment and they are twice as likely as white workers to be unemployed, despite an overall increase in the numbers of people in work.

Britain is an unequal society where the colour of your skin makes you more vulnerable to unemployment, low pay, poor health, harassment and abuse.

These trends have been accelerated by the recent EU Referendum Campaign.

Home Office figures show that hate crimes against Black and Asian and Eastern European people have escalated sharply in the aftermath of the campaign.

The number of racially or religiously aggravated offences recorded by the police is over 40% higher than this time last year.

These figures are the tip of the iceberg; the Government itself say that hate crime is “*significantly under reported*”.

Trade unions and the TUC have reported members’ experiences of a rise in forms of abuse including racist graffiti at work, abuse on public transport and through social media.

Usdaw members have not been immune to this rise in hate crime and abuse. Our members have faced:

- ‘Polish Go Home’ graffiti appearing at a distribution site.
- Hearing the ‘N’ word for the first time in years.
- Hostile comments from customers about religious dress.
- Being spat at on the street.

The TUC has said:

*“It appears that the negative way that migrants were portrayed in the campaign has given confidence to some with racist views to voice their view publicly.”*

The recent surge in reported incidents of racist hate crime may be a blip or it may be, more worryingly, that this level of abuse and hatred is set to become the norm.

Studies show that it is normal for reports of racist and bigoted behaviour to soar after major news events.

Hate crimes do not occur in a vacuum and there is always a context to them.

In May 2013, the month that Fusilier Lee Rigby was murdered, there were 109 anti-Muslim hate crimes on the streets of London. Prior to this, from April 2012 to April 2013, there were 28 anti-Muslim hate crimes per month on average.

And there was a record high of 1,179 anti-Semitic incidents in 2014, which were blamed on reactions to the conflict in Gaza in July and August of that year.

Anti-Semitic hate crime also spiked in 2009, when conflict in Gaza also took place.

It is entirely possible that reports of hate crimes will return to normal levels, but this will not happen straight away and not without hard work and campaigning by unions and others.

Brexit is not really over for most people and whilst it still dominates the headlines there is a danger that the tensions being whipped up by politicians and the press will continue to fuel high levels of hate crime.

Of course the EU Referendum has not been the only event to shape attitudes to race and religion. In the last 12 months there have been terror attacks in Nice and Munich and the Orlando shootings in the USA.

Many commentators feel that Donald Trump's victory in the USA, following so soon after the Brexit vote is encouraging the far-right to be bolder and more aggressive. The Chief Executive of Hope Not Hate has said:

*“We are likely to see a further increase in racist violence and bullying as the haters feel more confident and legitimised. We are also likely to see growing support for far-right parties across Europe and with forthcoming elections in Austria, France, Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands – to list just a few – we could also see far-right parties/politicians increase their representation and even enter government. More worryingly, has been the adoption of far-right ideas into the political mainstream, so that even if the parties fail to win power their ideas will.”*

Anti-Semitism is also on the rise in the UK and right across Europe. In response to this the UK Government has formally adopted a definition of what constitutes anti-Semitism. Britain will become one of the first countries to use this definition of anti-Semitism which was agreed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

It is hoped that a clear definition will address the current problem whereby anti-semitism is ill-defined with different organisations having different interpretations of the problem.

The definition reads:

*‘Anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.’*

## What is Racism and who does it Affect?

Put simply, racism is the idea that people from other races are not as good as you.

The concept of superiority based on racial difference was generated by slave traders who set out to justify their trade in human beings.

They brought together a vast array of new claims and old theories about Black people, which they then refined and spread through books, pamphlets, cartoons and speeches.

The racial ideas of the pro-slavery lobby eventually became a justification not just for slavery but also for colonialism and European expansion into Africa.

One of the ideas at the core of racism was that war and chaos were inevitable in the African continent which therefore needed European intervention to civilise it. This view still persists to this day.

The natural and human resources that were taken from Africa contributed to the capitalist development and wealth of Europe and other parts of the world.

The ideology of racism and the notion that Africans were inferior helped to justify the unequal relationship that was gradually created between Europe and Africa and which led to the enslavement of millions of Africans.

This is the legacy we still live with today. Many of the views, attitudes and behaviours that developed at the time of the slave trade persist today. These include:

- Black people are more prone to being violent and unstable.
- Black people are lazy and must be made to work hard.
- Black people are more likely to commit crime.

It is easy to see how these views could be used to help justify slavery and the many cruelties that were associated with it.

Racism persists today despite the abolition of the slave trade over 200 years ago and continues to affect the lives of thousands of Black people in the UK.

This Executive Council Statement uses the term Black to describe anyone who is subjected to racism and discrimination on the basis of the colour of their skin. This term therefore includes Asian people, Caribbean and African people, Chinese people and a wide range of others who themselves or their ancestors originated in countries outside Europe.

There has over the years been a lot of discussion in British society and in trade unions about the best way to refer to Black people. Some people have said that using the term Black means we are ignoring the differences that exist between people of diverse cultures, origins and beliefs.

Usdaw uses the term Black because we need to find an acceptable way of describing people who have a common experience of racism. Racism does not distinguish between different shades of blackness.

A recent study by the TUC and London Metropolitan University puts it like this:

*“We recognise that the term Black is not an accurate description ... (just) like the term white ... the term Black though is used in much the same way as the term worker – not everyone who works for a wage likes to think of themselves as a worker – they might prefer to be called by their job title or by a term like supervisory staff or technical worker. But to get a sense of collective solidarity (which is) the basis for trade unionism we need to recognise what brings us together.”*

What brings Black people together is their shared experience of racism.

If we are going to tackle racism effectively, we need to focus on what brings people together and not what pushes them apart. After all, the people who carry out racist attacks do not stop to check whether someone really is a Muslim or whether they are in fact Hindu, Sikh or Christian. Racists do not make fine distinctions between different groups – for them all such groups are equally undesirable on the grounds of their skin colour.

We need to be united if we are going to defeat racism and that which unites is greater than that which divides.

But whilst Black people are an easy target for racism because of the colour of their skin, more recently other groups in society have become the focus of a great deal of prejudice and bigotry.

Many workers from Poland, Romania, Slovakia and other Eastern European countries have been targets for hate and hostility since Central and Eastern European countries joined the European Union in 2004.



The press and some politicians have deliberately stirred up tensions between different communities, exploiting people's legitimate concerns about finding employment, job security, housing and health shortages by blaming these problems on migrant workers.

Racial and ethnic stereotypes have been extensively used in some sections of the press. Just look at these recent headlines:

*'no wonder so many in Romania want a new life in Britain – Revealed – Grime Life Inside Gypsy Ghetto'*, **The Sun**

*'Gypsies say they can't wait to arrive in land of dole and benefits'*, **The Daily Express**

*'Benefits Britain here we come'*, **The Daily Mail**

Stereotypes of Roma people as thieves, benefit cheats and people traffickers have been heavily relied on in much press reporting. Roma people are the largest ethnic group in Europe at over 10 million people. They were one of the first ethnic groups to be targeted by the Nazis and over two million Roma people died in concentration camps. Throughout history Roma people have been persecuted by their host countries and their language and traditions undermined. Roma people are frequent targets in other EU countries of violence by neo-Nazi and other far-right groups.

The Tories and UKIP claim that migrant workers suppress wages. However in areas of the UK with high numbers of migrant workers wage levels have not fallen any more than they have elsewhere in the UK.

Wages have been falling since 2008 because of the global financial crisis and austerity policies.

Recent forecasts from the TUC show that the average annual wage of a British worker will be £1,000 lower in 2020 than it is today. This has nothing to do with migration; it is due to a fundamental shift in the UK economy towards a more unequal and unregulated economy.

Government has more or less abandoned any sense of responsibility for ensuring the economy works for everyone and has instead encouraged a rising concentration of wealth in the hands of the few and the growth of a new global financial elite who have not generated jobs wealth or stability for anyone but themselves.





## The Experience of Usdaw Members

This section looks at some of the issues that may affect Black, Asian and migrant workers in particular. Of course, anyone can have a problem at work – whether this be performance targets or absence management to take just two examples. However, there are also some specific issues that may be more likely to affect Black, Asian and migrant workers.

### Abuse and Harassment from Customers and Colleagues

Our Black members are not alone in facing abuse at work. However the abuse our Black members face is very often racist in nature.

An Usdaw survey shows that the majority of our Black members have experienced racist abuse whilst at work.

Three-quarters of members who responded to our survey had been subjected to racist abuse at work and a third had faced racial harassment.

Udaw Black members told us about colleagues leaving racist literature lying around, having their accents mimicked and being given nicknames such as Bin Laden or Taliban.

Our Black members tell us it can be hard to get colleagues to understand the impact this kind of behaviour can have on them.



**Gaby McDowell is an Usdaw member who works in a call centre in the North of England. Gaby experienced racist abuse from a caller whilst at work.**

*“It was a Friday morning. This guy started speaking quite slowly and quietly at first as he explained why his direct debit payment had bounced. Then he started using the ‘f’ word. That happens quite often, you get used to it. But then his voice became louder and louder and he started shouting, ‘you’re f\*\*\*ing harassing me, you’re f\*\*\*ing this, f\*\*\*ing that’. I tried to calm him down but he ignored me.*

*Then he shouted ‘you f\*\*\*ing Paki bitch!’. I was shocked and said ‘pardon?’ I couldn’t believe what I’d heard. Then he shouted it again. I said ‘I could report you for that sort of language’ but he carried on yelling and screaming so I ended the call. I was visibly upset.*

*By the time I got home and told my husband Andy, I’d decided to report it to the police and I did that on the Saturday. The police were very helpful.*

*I was determined to go through with this and to feel that the man understood he could not speak to people like that. People shouldn’t have to put up with that level of abuse. It was clear to me the caller had picked up on my accent and used those words against me. His words were his weapon.*

*He could have called me a ‘f\*\*\*ing bitch’ that wouldn’t have bothered me so much, but bringing someone’s colour into it that’s not acceptable.*

*So I went to the magistrates court in late March. The recording of the call was played and he pleaded guilty, he had no choice.*

*He did apologise but now he has a criminal record.*

*I’m originally from Botswana in Southern Africa, I’m a child of Apartheid, so human rights and equality have always mattered to me.”*

## Religious Observance

We live in a country which is home to a wide range of different races, religions, beliefs and cultures. Some towns and cities have a high proportion of people from particular faiths. London for example has almost two-fifths of the UK's Muslim population. The West Midlands is home to nearly a third of the UK's Sikhs.

Employers are required by law to manage the needs of different faiths groups in a way that is fair and reasonable.

Some religions and beliefs have special festivals or spiritual observance days and many of our members, particularly those who are Muslim, Hindu or Sikh, may need time off as a result. Members may also need time away from work to pray at specific times of the day. Some religions also have special dietary requirements which may include periods of fasting.

Getting time off for religious observance can be a difficult issue for many of our Black members.

In larger workplaces there may be large numbers of members wanting time off for festivals such as Eid and Ramadan. It can be genuinely difficult to manage this in a way that gives everyone what they want. However our experience shows that where Usdaw gets involved, it is possible to agree an outcome that works for members and their employer.

This happened at Primark in Leeds. Several Muslim members asked for time off to celebrate Eid. Their request was refused as they had not given the required three weeks' notice of their intention to take leave. Because Eid is celebrated to coincide with the sighting of the moon at Mecca, staff could not give three weeks' notice as it is not possible to know this far in advance on which date the moon will appear. The company advised members who took the time off they would be in breach of their contracts and would be disciplined. Then Usdaw got involved. We spoke to management and advised them we did not see any legitimate business grounds for refusing the request. The members were advised they had the Union's full support. Management finally agreed they could take the time off. A new policy on time off for religious observance was put to the company for their consideration.

**Bharti Dhamecha, an Usdaw rep at the store at the time, saw what an impact the Union's handling of this case had:**



*"It helped raise our profile because people could see that we were willing to stand up for members over an issue that to them was really, really important."*

There are numerous examples of Usdaw reps getting involved on this issue to make a difference and win for members.

**Loretta Traynor is a rep at the Littlewoods site in Shaw, Oldham where there are large numbers of Muslim members.**



*"This was a really big issue for Muslim members at our site and many were having real problems getting time off at what is an incredibly important time for them. The Union got involved and now we have an agreement where between 15 and 20 per cent of staff can have time off for Eid. This does not mean everyone but at least members can see there is a fair system and that really helps."*

It is important to stress that the law requires employers to manage requests for religious observance in a reasonable and fair way. The law does not give any one group the absolute right to time off nor does it require employers to agree to all requests.

**This section focuses on some of the issues that our Black, Asian and migrant members tell us they experience at work.**

### Racial Harassment

Racial harassment takes many different forms but the result is the same – stress, health problems, loss of confidence and real psychological and physical injury. It can affect all aspects of a person's life leaving them feeling isolated, marginalised and unable to exercise their rights or live their lives as they choose. It often results in workers leaving their jobs rather than face continuing harassment.

As discussed in Section 1 of this statement, racism is on the rise in the UK, particularly since the EU Referendum. Therefore, it is more likely than ever that reps may be called upon to deal with issues of racial harassment in the workplace, and it is important that reps feel confident in supporting members who raise concerns.

### The Law

The Equality Act was implemented in England, Wales and Scotland in 2010, and has strengthened the law on harassment. It defines harassment as:

‘Where a person engages in unwanted conduct which is related to race and which has the purpose or effect of:

- violating the worker's dignity; or
- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that worker.’

The Act specifically makes harassment related to race unlawful. Race, as defined in the Equality Act, includes nationality (including citizenship), colour, ethnic or national origins. Workers are also protected from discrimination and harassment for reasons relating to religious belief.

Similar protections exist in Northern Ireland under the Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 (RRO) and the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 (FETO).

Racial harassment, therefore, is behaviour or abuse of a racial nature which is unwanted and personally offensive to the recipient. It can involve a manager, a supervisor, work colleagues, customers, suppliers or contractors.

Importantly, it is the perception of the person targeted that determines whether harassment has taken place, not the intention of the perpetrator. This means harassment cannot be excused by someone saying ‘I didn't mean any offence’, or ‘it was just a joke’.

Harassment can be a series of incidents but a ‘one-off’ incident might also amount to harassment if it is serious enough.

### Supporting Members

Union reps play a central role in tackling racism – they are often the first point of contact for members experiencing racism, therefore it is important that reps take concerns seriously.

Not only is racial harassment against the law, all good employers will have clear anti-bullying and harassment policies. Employers should therefore take any allegations of harassment seriously and deal with them promptly.

Reps should recognise that making a complaint of racism may not be an easy step to take. Black, Asian or migrant members may be reluctant to report harassment for a wide range of reasons, including:

- A negative or unhelpful response when they have raised issues in the past (eg in another workplace or outside of work).
- Fear of being told that they have ‘a chip on their shoulder’ or are ‘playing the race card’.
- Fears of victimisation and damaging the workplace environment.
- Fear of losing their job.
- Feeling unsure about workplace policy on raising complaints and confidentiality.

Given the nature of the issue, it is important that Usdaw reps should:

- Treat cases of racial harassment seriously and support the members involved during the investigation and afterwards.
- Take cases up as quickly as possible.
- Handle complaints with sensitivity, speed and confidentiality.
- Discuss with the complainant what action they wish to take and the options available. This may include, depending on the grievance procedures within your company:
  - An informal approach of speaking to the harasser directly.
  - Invoking the informal grievance procedure, and involving management.
  - A formal grievance.
- Establish whether other workers have experienced the problem.
- Report the incident(s) to management.
- Keep a record of each occurrence of the offending conduct, copies of any letters sent to the alleged harasser about their conduct and notes of any meetings about the incident(s).
- Advise the member that if the matter is not resolved through the procedures, they may be able to take the matter to an employment tribunal. Tribunal claims must be lodged within strict time limits – normally three months less one day from the date of cause of complaint. You should seek the support of your Area Organiser if a case gets to this stage.
- Remember to always follow company grievance and appeal procedures.
- Seek the support, with the member's agreement, of other workers in order to reduce the risks of isolation and victimisation.

For more information and support, see *'Tackling Racial Harassment at Work – an advice booklet for Usdaw Reps'* (Leaflet 288), which includes guidance on supporting members facing racism in the workplace.

## Religious Festivals and Holy Days

Britain is a multi-cultural and multi-faith society with many different religions and the profile of Usdaw's membership reflects this.

Many religions have specific days or periods throughout the year that involve additional religious observances for followers. The nature, duration and requirements vary depending upon the holy day or religious festival, and can also vary depending on the personal religious beliefs of an individual.

## Worship and Prayer

Employees may need to attend additional religious events during religious festivals. While some of these are tied to specific times, others may provide the opportunity to attend a service at different points during the day.

Alternatively, members may request a private space for prayer or meditation in the workplace. Many employers will have prayer rooms specifically for this purpose, but if not it may be possible to set up a temporary space for the duration of the religious festival or at appropriate times of the day.

There is no right to time off to attend religious services, however it is good practice for employers to accommodate requests wherever possible. Members may not need a full day off, and often a little flexibility in terms of break times is all that will be needed.

## Fasting and Abstinence

Longer periods of fasting and abstinence can be particularly challenging and tiring for employees, which can understandably impact on performance. Members may need support during fasting with their workload, for example spreading out particularly physically or mentally demanding tasks can help. It is important to speak to managers so that they are aware that the member is fasting and are able to offer support.

## Time off Work

Employees may wish to take time off to celebrate holy days and religious festivals. This may be just one day, or for a longer time (see section on Extended Leave opposite). Employers should seriously consider any requests for time off for religious observance, and should try to grant requests wherever possible.

Many religious festivals are aligned to the lunar calendar, meaning their dates change each year. This can also mean that the exact date is not known until very close to the time. This can make it difficult to request leave in advance, but members should try to give as much notice as possible.

There are a number of ways in which requests can be handled eg:

- Use holiday leave.
- Rearrange the working week so that the individual can be off work at the time they need.
- Swap shifts with a colleague.
- Unpaid leave if none of the above options are available.

Where too many staff request the same time, reps can work with managers to find a fair and consistent solution. This may include asking colleagues to change shifts, split shifts or divide the time so that more people can be accommodated.

## Dress Codes

Most employers will have a dress code policy outlining the standards of dress expected from employees. There are many reasons for dress codes, ranging from health and safety requirements to being easily identifiable to customers. Dress codes should relate to the job and be reasonable in nature.

Dress codes must also respect the religious beliefs of all sections of the workforce. For example, many individual employees will want to wear articles of clothing or jewellery that manifest their religious faith. Imposing the same rule on everyone may indirectly discriminate against workers with a particular religion.

Most good employers will have dress codes that accommodate various different forms of religious dress, which allow staff to follow their religion and also adhere to the workplace dress code.

If disagreements do arise, the first thing for a rep to do is check the company's dress code policy, to see whether managers are implementing it properly. If the policy does prevent a member from wearing religious dress, the employer must be able to justify the reasons for this, otherwise they will be at risk of indirect discrimination.

In most cases it will be possible to reach a compromise that allows the member to display their religious faith within the company's dress code policy.

## Language at Work

Members for whom English is not their first language will often, understandably, want to converse in their own language. This can be of great benefit to the business, eg when serving customers who do not speak English, and it is often rightly welcomed as a useful skill.

However, members are sometimes told that they should speak English at all times. Often the reason given is that other colleagues have complained, usually because they are worried that they are being talked about.



Fortunately, the Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced very clear guidance on this in the Code of Practice to the Equality Act.

The guidance states that blanket bans, ie not allowing workers to speak at any time in the workplace in their first language, are likely to be unlawful on the basis of indirect race discrimination. Therefore, an employer cannot refuse to allow employees to communicate with one another in their own language at all times.

The Code specifically states:

*'An employer who prohibits workers from talking casually to each other in a language they do not share with all colleagues, or uses occasions when this happens to trigger disciplinary or capability procedures to impede workers' career progress, may be considered to be acting disproportionately (ie unlawfully).*

*In practice what this means is that an employer can impose certain limits. They can require that employees speak in a common language (usually English) in order to ensure that business is not disrupted, to avoid misunderstandings and to avoid excluding workers from conversations that concern them but they cannot stop workers from doing this at break times, or on other occasions where it might be appropriate.'*

## Extended Leave

Many migrant workers will have close family connections abroad, who they will understandably wish to visit. Other workers may wish to make extended trips for religious reasons, such as pilgrimages.

Where an employer does not have extended leave facilities, employees may need to choose between keeping their family ties and keeping their job. No worker should have to make such a difficult choice.

Extended leave arrangements, of course, benefit all workers. They can assist employees to deal with personal crises, such as family bereavement, or allow people to widen their experiences and interests by undertaking a period of study, or undertaking voluntary work.

Extended leave arrangements also benefit employers – by giving people the choice of extended leave, rather than resigning, they retain the skills and experience of dedicated members of staff.

Usdaw has negotiated extended leave policies with many companies. For example Tesco, Morrisons, The Co-op Group and Sainsbury's all offer some kind of extended leave to their employees.

However, not all employers will have a formal extended leave policy in place, so it is helpful to know what legal rights members have when it comes to requesting extended leave.

All workers have the right to 5.6 weeks' paid leave each year. When leave is taken usually it has to be agreed with the employer and many workplaces will have rules about how much leave can be taken in one go.

If a member needs more than 5.6 weeks' leave, or wants to take a longer period off in one go than is usually allowed, the employer does not have to agree. However, they must avoid unlawful discrimination when they make a decision about a worker's time off.

The Equality Act 2010 makes discrimination on the grounds of the protected characteristics of Religion or Belief and Race illegal. Employers need to keep this in mind when making decisions about extended leave requests, to ensure they avoid discrimination.

So, while there is no automatic right to take extended leave, employers should do all they can to accommodate requests.

In order to increase the chances of having requests agreed, members should try to ensure they give as much notice as possible. This will give the manager time to arrange cover and make it more difficult to refuse. Of course, there may be occasions where it is not possible to give a lot of notice, however this should not automatically mean a request is denied. The Union would expect employers to take into account the circumstances surrounding all requests.

For more information, see *'Extended Leave – an advice booklet for Usdaw Reps'* (Leaflet 293).



## Maternity and Paternity Rights

Migrant workers are more likely to be agency workers than the general population, therefore are more likely to be impacted by the different employment rights that apply to agency workers compared to employees.

One area where there is a lack of understanding of the rules among both managers and members is in relation to maternity and paternity leave arrangements. The rules are complex, therefore it is not surprising that members may have difficulty asserting their rights.

Many rights are linked to the 12 week equal treatment rule whereby agency workers must have been working in the same role with the same ‘hirer’ for a continuous 12 week period to be entitled to them. However, it is often difficult for agency workers to reach this 12 week rule as assignments are changed or offered only for short periods:

- The right to paid time off for ante-natal appointments only applies if a member meets the 12 week rule – before this, time off is unpaid.
- The right to unpaid leave to accompany a pregnant woman to ante-natal appointments only starts after 12 weeks in the same role.
- Agency workers do not have a right to maternity leave or paternity leave, even after the 12 week rule.
- The rules for qualifying for Statutory Maternity/Paternity Pay are more complex for agency workers, which can lead to confusion.
- Agency workers do not have the Right to Request Flexible Working, to try to get hours that work around childcare, or the right to unpaid parental leave.

The Union has produced guidance to agency workers’ parental rights in the *‘Maternity and Parental Rights – an advice booklet for Usdaw members’* (commonly referred to as the baby booklet), which will assist when dealing with queries.



**Supporting Black members and highlighting the practical action the Union is taking to tackle racism can help reps organise the workplace.**

This section gives some ideas on how you might use the issue of challenging racism and prejudice to organise your workplace. It also highlights the excellent work Usdaw activists are already undertaking to reach out to Black members and create harassment free workplaces.

### Organising the Workplace

#### Raise the Profile of the Issue and the Union

Black members may not think that the Union understands their particular concerns or does anything to tackle racism. We know from our research that the majority of Black members have experienced some form of racist abuse and less than half feel able to talk to the Union or their employer for fear of being disbelieved or having their concerns dismissed on the basis that they are being 'over-sensitive'. This perception might not be accurate but it is something the Union must take seriously otherwise we risk failing our Black members at a time when they need us most.

In order to give Black members the confidence to talk to their rep or full time official and perhaps share their experience more widely, Usdaw needs to demonstrate that we are taking up the issues that matter to Black members. The Union needs to make it clear that tackling racism is an Usdaw priority.

Making sure Usdaw's race equality literature and posters are on display helps to do this. It also raises the profile of Usdaw in your workplace.

#### Activists are Knowledgeable

For several years now, Usdaw has been keen to ensure that reps have access to the knowledge they need to better support Black members. Usdaw has recently re-written and relaunched the leaflets and posters it publishes on race equality and tackling bullying and harassment. The posters can be found in Appendices 1-3 at the back of this statement. The leaflets and posters can be downloaded from [www.usdaw.org.uk](http://www.usdaw.org.uk) or ordered free of charge from your local Usdaw office.

Udaw regularly updates existing literature and produces new guidance for reps as well as ensuring race equality issues regularly feature on the agenda at weekend seminars for reps, divisional conferences, summers schools and federation schools.

#### Members are Involved

The Union is keen to make sure that just as reps understand what rights members have, members also have knowledge of their own rights. By taking up the issue of race equality and tackling racism Usdaw is able to demonstrate to Black members that we understand the issues that matter to them. We can show by campaigning that we are not just there for when things go wrong but that the Union is taking positive action to address the concerns of Black members.

This all helps to demonstrate that the Union is relevant and in touch with what is happening both in the workplace and in members' lives, which in turn helps to sharpen our appeal.

Making sure that there are high levels of Union membership in the workplace helps to keep Usdaw organised workplaces safe and healthy and harassment free.

#### Engage with Members and Non-Members – Use the Survey

One of the simplest ways to engage on the issues with members and non-members is to survey your workplace.

Udaw understands that it is not easy to open up conversations and talk to others about the issue of racism and harassment. A survey is a relatively easy way of raising the issue without singling any one person out. It gives members the opportunity, if they feel ready, to talk about any concerns they might have or any problems they might be facing at work.

Remember the best way to carry out a survey is to approach people one-to-one. You can ask the questions and fill in the form. This way you get the best return. It also gives people the chance to talk to you in confidence about their concerns. Also if the person is not an Usdaw member you can spend some time talking to them about the benefits of joining the Union.

The survey makes it clear that providing contact details is optional.

In Appendix 4 you will find a short survey you can use to find out more about whether there are problems in your workplaces related to racism or prejudice. If you would like more copies of the survey simply contact the Equalities Section at Usdaw's Central Office on 0161 224 2804.

It might be helpful to start by discussing at your reps' meeting how best to approach members and non-members and also what you should do with the findings. After you have conducted the survey and discussed the results you might decide to organise a 'No Room for Racism' Campaign in your workplace (see below for more details).

Udaw would also like to see your completed surveys once you have finished with them so that we can make sure our future work in this area develops in the right direction and prioritises the issues that matter most to members and reps.

To send the surveys to Usdaw Central Office you do not need a stamp. Simply post them back to the freepost address on the survey form.

## Campaigning Against Racism

As always Usdaw reps are absolutely crucial when it comes to making any strategy to reach out to Black members a success. They are also at the forefront of making sure Usdaw organised workplaces are free from racism, prejudice and harassment. After all it is activity in workplaces and not in Union offices and meeting rooms that ultimately makes the biggest difference.

Below are just some examples of the activities Usdaw reps are organising to make sure the Union is seen as relevant and welcoming to Black workers.

### 'No Room for Racism' Campaign

Sadly in the weeks immediately following the EU Referendum result incidents of racial harassment, abuse and hate crimes escalated by 58%. Six months later racist incidents were still up by 41% compared to the same time in 2015. Across the UK, with the exception of Scotland, racist hate crimes have increased significantly.

Offences range from harassment and threats to physical assault, arson and in one instance murder. Police forces are reporting that racism is being directed against visible minorities as well as people from Eastern Europe. In fact anyone who does not fit the very narrow identity of white British national has been a potential target.

In early July Usdaw launched its brand new 'No Room for Racism' materials and since then we have been inundated with calls from reps and activists wanting to show their solidarity and support for colleagues at risk of racism and prejudice on the basis of their skin colour, nationality or national and ethnic origins. Hundreds of reps have been running workplace campaigns to promote a message of unity is strength. They have been displaying posters on noticeboards, handing out wristbands, pinning on badges and wearing the t shirts – visibly displaying their opposition to harassment, abuse and prejudice.

Pete Robson together with new activist Jo Clarke are just two Usdaw activists who organised a 'No Room for Racism' Campaign in their workplace, Tesco Callington. Together they ran three two-hour sessions in July 2016, soon after the campaign was launched. Pete said:



*"Jo found that the freebies were very well received – no surprises there! We actually found a real sense of interest in the subject and a sense that there was real discomfort in the way that xenophobic attitudes had been displayed in recent weeks. Thanks to the campaign a sense of fair play is starting to stir again. The leaflets were read by lots of people who approached the campaign stand – far more than usual and they were taken away in numbers we had not previously experienced. The campaign has really caught the imagination of all staff and has helped to bring us together."*

Everything you need to organise a 'No Room for Racism' Campaign in your workplace is available free of charge from the Stationery Department at Usdaw's Central Office. To order materials visit [www.usdaw.org.uk](http://www.usdaw.org.uk) and complete the order form (a copy of which can be found in the Appendices at the back of this statement).

## Wear Red Day – Friday, 21 October 2016

In October Usdaw joined forces with the anti-racism football charity 'Show Racism the Red Card' (SRtRC) for the second year running to support 'Wear Red Day'.

The aims of the day are straightforward:

- Demonstrate support for anti-racism.
- Raise funds for Show Racism the Red Card.

Wear Red Day is an effective way of enabling reps looking to take a practical stand against racism the opportunity to do just that. Members in participating workplaces wore something red to work. Some reps and members took a low key approach by wearing a red tie and red socks whilst others took it to another level by dyeing their hair or beards red! Those who took part made a donation of £1 which goes to Show Racism the Red Card.

There was an enthusiastic response from reps across all divisions. Activity was organised in over 50 workplaces and hundreds of pounds of much needed funds were raised for SRtRC enabling them to continue with their work to educate against racism and raise awareness of the damage it inflicts upon individuals, families and communities.

Reps in participating workplaces received campaign materials from both Usdaw and SRtRC to drum up support.

Thanks to the hard work, energy and enthusiasm of Usdaw reps the link between tackling racism and organising the workplace has never been so strong. Not only does campaigning visibly demonstrate that Usdaw organised workplaces take a zero tolerance approach to racism and any other form of abuse or harassment, it also shows that the Union is taking up issues that matter to members.

Usdaw rep Maria Barber spoke at the annual Equalities Fringe Meeting at ADM in 2016 about her experience of organising a campaign day in her workplace. She said:



*"I was on Usdaw Academy2. This involves recruitment, organising and supporting reps in my project workplaces. Together with my Area Organiser, I decided to organise an anti-racism campaign in one of our stores, as a direct response to multiple incidents of racism aimed at our Black and Asian members as well as those from Central and Eastern Europe.*

*It's an area with a very diverse population and we wanted members to know that the Union takes racism seriously and that if they raise a concern about the way they are being treated at work they will get the right support.*

*We've had a fantastic response. We set up two tables in the staff restaurant with Usdaw and Show Racism the Red Card racism materials and there has been so much interest. We are going around the store talking to members and non-members about racism and finding out why people don't feel confident to raise concerns about it or to challenge on the spot. Together with our reps we have surveyed over 100 employees and empowered some to come forward and talk to us about the issue openly.*

*I'm working with the Usdaw reps in store, Alex Allen and Slawek Rajewski who even came in to make sure the night shift were involved in the campaign.*

*The store manager and personnel manager welcomed the campaign, are being supportive and have given us their backing. We are shortly going to present the results of our anonymous surveys to the entire management team and jointly draw up an action plan. Hopefully staff can see that this is an issue we can work together on to make a difference to our members."*



**Union reps are well placed to tackle racial discrimination in the workplace. Section 3 of this statement outlines the action Usdaw reps are taking to tackle racism at work and support Black minority ethnic members.**

As well as campaigning against racism and representing individual members who have been discriminated against for reasons relating to their race, trade unions have a responsibility to be proactive. We need to ensure that as well as supporting members who may have experienced discrimination we must also act to prevent racial discrimination from arising in the first place.

This means negotiating and reviewing policies and practices in the workplace to ensure that they do not inadvertently discriminate against Black minority ethnic workers.

If the Union fails to do this then it leaves BME members having to take action as individuals by pursuing a grievance, for example. This is far from ideal as it usually means that the root cause of the grievance will not be resolved or removed which puts other BME members at risk of suffering the same experience.

Unions therefore need to be proactive in identifying and tackling the issues that affect BME workers in general rather than focusing solely on individual concerns. This chapter sets out some of the key priorities Black members have identified for collective bargaining on race equality.

Tackling discrimination in the workplace is in the interests of us all. A workplace where racism, discrimination and harassment is allowed to go unchecked is an unsafe workplace for everyone.

### Dignity at Work Agreements – Tackling Bullying and Harassment

Prevention is always better than cure. In the case of workplace harassment and bullying there are many policies that the Union can pursue in negotiations with the employer.

The employer's legal liability for harassment and bullying provides good ammunition for negotiators in arguing for an effective harassment and bullying policy. Also, managers should encourage positive behaviour by being good role models and actively dealing with discrimination, harassment and bullying.

The key principle is to create a working environment where there is dignity and respect and zero tolerance of harassment and bullying.

Every employer needs to have a policy on bullying and harassment and a procedure for dealing with them. A policy should send out a clear signal that bullying and harassment are unacceptable.

But a policy is no good without a procedure to back it up. How else do our members enforce their rights to dignity at work? A procedure needs to be jointly agreed and to recognise the distinct role that Union reps play in resolving cases of bullying and harassment at work.

#### Dignity at Work Checklist

Since the main aim of the policy is to prevent bullying, it needs to make clear that bullying behaviour is unacceptable and that it will be treated as a disciplinary offence.

A successful policy needs to cover everyone in the company and set out clearly what constitutes unacceptable behaviour and the penalties that may result. There is obviously a difference between a strong management style and an unacceptable abuse of power and the policy needs to make this clear.

It should be advertised. It may sound obvious, but everyone needs to know the policy is there. It is no use having a policy if no-one knows it exists or does anything to implement it. All employees, trainees, job applicants and suppliers need to be informed. It needs to be made clear that the policy applies to everyone – at all levels of the organisation. People with specific responsibilities under the procedure, including Union reps, should be trained in it.

It needs to recognise that not all workplace bullying takes place between colleagues. Bullying from members of the public is a big problem for many Usdaw members. Employers have a duty to prevent and deal with bullying from this source.

The policy should also make it clear that no-one will be victimised for complaining about bullying or harassment. There should be a statement that all complaints under the procedure will be dealt with quickly and confidentially.

For more information about racial harassment, what it is and how to tackle it, see Usdaw's leaflet '*Tackling Racial Harassment At Work*' (Leaflet 288).

## Temporary, Short-Term and Agency Staff

Since the 2008 recession there has been a significant increase in insecure and casual working in the UK. In the aftermath of the recession, as employment levels have risen, so too have the numbers of individuals working in part-time, temporary and insecure forms of employment.

Whilst insecure employment continues to represent a minority of overall employment – there is growing concern that the UK labour market is moving towards more low paid, short-term, temporary and more exploitative forms of employment.

TUC research published in April 2015 highlights how BME workers have been disproportionately affected by the growth in part-time, insecure and low paid employment.

What is particularly striking about the statistics the TUC has uncovered is the marked increase in BME workers employed through agencies since the onset of the recession.

While just 11% of UK employees are from Black and ethnic minorities, they hold 17% of temporary jobs and 21% of agency jobs.

According to the Labour Force Survey, in October to December 2014, nearly 78,000 BME employees were employed as agency workers, an increase of more than 20,000 as compared with 2011.

Between 2011 and 2013 there has been a 37% increase in BME workers employed through agencies. This compares with a 16% increase in white employees working through agencies. These findings suggest that workers from BME communities may be at greater risk of remaining trapped in temporary, insecure employment as the wider jobs market improves.

Agency staff and temporary workers are amongst those with the least robust employment rights and are more susceptible to low pay, redundancy and exploitation. They are also less likely to access training and staff development and as a consequence are unlikely to progress in work.





The TUC has published 'Tackling Racism in the Workplace – A Negotiators Guide' which contains a temporary staff checklist (see below):

### Temporary Staff Checklist

- Is there a union agreement on the employment of temporary contract and agency staff?
- Is there a policy on and a criteria for the use of temporary and agency staff?
- What proportion of the workforce is employed on a temporary contract or through an agency?
- Does equal opportunities monitoring extend to staff on temporary contracts?
- Why are workers not given permanent contracts?
- Are there instances where jobs of a similar role or grade are undertaken by staff on permanent contracts?
- Are there instances where the temporary contracts of workers are automatically renewed?
- Are exit interviews conducted with temporary or short-term staff? If yes what happens to this information?
- Are temporary staff and agency workers routinely approached and asked to join a union?

### Extended Leave Agreements

Try to ensure extended leave agreements cover a broad range of circumstances including visiting relatives, taking up caring responsibilities and bereavement.

The agreement should explicitly guarantee continuity of employment during leave and protect pension rights and other benefits.

The right to delay return because of illness or other problems should be made explicit. For example, some companies allow workers to take additional leave every few years, which would mean that they could take 6-8 weeks at one time. This could be agreed by the worker being allowed to carry over some days leave for two years or the extra leave may be unpaid, if that is what the worker wants to do.

Make sure you win the support of the whole workforce when negotiating this agreement as colleagues will often have to cover absences.

Extended leave arrangements exist in a number of companies with whom Usdaw has agreements including The Co-op Group, Morrisons, Tesco and Sainsbury's.

For more information see '*Extended Leave – an advice booklet for Usdaw Reps*' (Leaflet 293).



## Mentoring Schemes

Many talented BME staff work in the retail and distribution sectors of the economy. In fact the retail sector employs above average numbers of BME staff, however, despite this it is well documented that BME retail workers are significantly under-represented in managerial and senior roles.

This is not peculiar to the retail sector but applies across the board to all sectors of the UK economy. Where Black workers do get into work (and because of discrimination in the labour market they are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as white people) they face specific barriers which prevent them from progressing through grading structures.

In August 2016 the Equality and Human Rights Commission conducted the biggest ever review into race inequality in the UK today. The inquiry looked across every area of people's lives including education, employment, housing, pay and living standards, health, criminal justice, and participation.

The research confirmed that people from ethnic minority backgrounds (8.8%) are less likely to work as managers, directors and senior officers compared with white people (10.7%). This was particularly true of African, Caribbean and Black people who are half as likely to progress to senior positions than their white colleagues.

Training and promotion opportunities are vital to career development. Evidence shows that Black, Asian and ethnic minority workers are often discriminated against by not being given the opportunity to compete for advancement on a level playing field.

Unconscious bias and discrimination can also block the progress of talented BME workers and means there is not always equal access to promotions. All of this limits the aspirations and success of BME workers.

Furthermore a lack of BME role models at senior levels in the retail and distribution sectors is demoralising for those who are committed to a career in these industries and want to progress.

In terms of boosting the representation of BME workers in more senior roles at work and addressing their under-involvement in lay roles within trade unions, mentoring schemes are a form of positive action that have proven very effective.

### TUC Mentoring Scheme

The TUC's Race Relations Committee has established a mentoring scheme aimed at addressing the under-representation of Black activists in lay roles such as Shop Steward or Branch Secretary and at union events. The scheme offers participants the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of trade union organisational structures. It also aims to improve personal and negotiation skills.

The scheme works by giving new and less experienced Black members the opportunity to discuss their support needs with a more experienced activist and to agree what steps the member will take to work towards their goal of becoming more involved.

The scheme is founded on the principle that experienced lay members have an important role in supporting other lay members. It sits alongside the Union's approach to reaching out to Black members. Usdaw's Black Members' Weekend Workshop recognises that less involved members can feel inspired and more engaged when given the opportunity to interact with more experienced and confident Black activists.

## Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying is the term used to define bullying behaviour that takes place via mobile phone or over the internet through emails, instant messaging and social networking websites. Texts, messages or images are sent or posted on sites, which hurt, intimidate or embarrass another person. Cyber bullying is not carried out face-to-face and people often do not know the identity of the person targeting them.

Cyber bullying is no different from any other form of bullying; the behaviour is the same and the impact is no less devastating. Advances in technology are simply providing alternative means of reaching people – where offensive or intimidating messages were once written on toilet walls for example, they can now be sent via mobile phone or the internet.

Some cyber bullying is clearly deliberate and aggressive, but it is important to recognise that some incidents of cyber bullying are known to be unintentional and the result of simply not thinking about the consequences. What may be sent as a joke may not be received as one and the sender often does not see the impact of the message on the receiver.

With cyber bullying, bystanders can easily become perpetrators – by passing on or showing to others images designed to humiliate.

### Cyber Bullying Checklist

Acas suggest a good social media policy is key to tackling cyber bullying and offer the following advice in their booklet 'Social Media and Bullying':

**Consult staff:** In working out a policy for use of social media, employer, staff and unions should agree the details. The aims should be so employees do not feel gagged, staff and managers feel protected against online bullying, and the organisation feels confident its reputation will be guarded.

**Communicate the guidelines:** Employers should make it clear when employees will be seen as representing the company and what personal views they can express eg some employees are forbidden from expressing any political views.

**Explain the don'ts:** An employer should include social networking in its discipline and grievance policy, giving clear examples of what will be regarded as gross misconduct eg posting derogatory or offensive comments on the internet about the company or a work colleague.

**Update bullying policies:** An employer should include guidance on the use of social media in its policy for dealing with bullying. For example, it should clearly state what behaviour is unacceptable. This might include the use of offensive or intimidating language directed at another employee on social networking sites.

Employers should consider widening bullying policies to cover cyber bullying outside the workplace. This should be done in consultation with employee or trade union reps.

**Do not forget direct forms of communication:** Many of the causes of conflict at work can be resolved by face-to-face interaction. An employer improving managers' skills to resolve conflict, eg through mediation, can also help to nip problems in the bud.



### Usdaw's Equality Structures

The Union's well established equality structures help to give a voice to a number of under-involved groups of members. By making sure that Black, women, LGBT and disabled members are involved in the Union, we can ensure that the Union is relevant to everyone, and is taking action on the issues that are important to our members.

Every division has a Divisional Equalities Forum (DEF) with reserved seats for Black members. The forums take a lead in the equality work of each division – co-ordinating activity, running campaigns and sharing ideas and information.

To make sure that equality issues are taken up at a national level, the Union also has a National Equalities Advisory Group (NEAG). This is made up of DEF members, again with reserved seats for Black members. The Union's General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary, President and two EC members also sit on the group – a clear sign of the importance given to the equalities agenda within Usdaw. Members of the NEAG help shape the Union's equalities work by drawing on their direct experience of issues in the workplace.

The structures mean that the Union brings Black activists together at a divisional level as well as nationally, helping to generate activity and strengthen networks amongst Black members. Black activists are at the heart of the Union's work – driving our priorities, telling us what the issues are in workplaces and helping to set the campaigning agenda for Black workers.

Thanks to the hard work of Black activists on the Equalities Forums, Usdaw has made fantastic strides forward in reaching out to and involving Black members. The forums regularly:

- Organise weekend schools and get-togethers on tackling racism.
- Raise Usdaw's profile at anti-racist festivals and community events.
- Visit workplaces with large numbers of Black workers to recruit and organise.
- Hold workplace anti-racism campaign days.

### Why the Union takes Positive Action

Usdaw recognises that certain groups of members are under-involved in lay roles and at Union events and conferences. Black and Asian members are one of the groups of members who are under-involved. As a Union, Usdaw takes positive action to reach out to members who are under-involved.

Here is what we mean by positive action followed by some practical real life examples of positive action – in action.

All trade unions need to take positive steps to encourage workers to join up and become members. On the whole, workers do not come to the Union to sign up – the Union has to go to them. Ask any Usdaw rep – recruiting members and organising the workplace does not happen by itself.

Usdaw is growing because our reps are making it happen – attending inductions, using workplace noticeboards to raise the profile of the Union and organising campaigns to promote Usdaw. There is no doubt that without the 'go getting' attitude of our activists, Usdaw would not be in the position it currently is.

Getting Black workers involved in the Union is no different. Usdaw needs to take positive steps to recruit Black workers in the first place and once in membership, there is a further job of work to be done to keep them in the Union and encourage their involvement.

To make sure the Union is taking up the right issues we need ways of bringing members together to hear about what matters to them.

Whilst all Usdaw members share similar concerns such as pay, working hours and safe working environments, different groups of members inevitably have distinct concerns. So for example:

- Driving hours is a concern for members in road transport.
- Under-age sales is a concern for members in retail.
- Pick rates is a concern for members in warehouse, distribution and dotcom stores.

Just as the Union takes action to address these particular issues and organises conferences for each of these groups of members, it does the same for its Black members.

Taking positive action to sharpen our appeal and generate activity amongst Black members is sometimes misunderstood as ‘special’ treatment. It is not. Taking action to sharpen our appeal to Black members and to bring them together to hear about their concerns is about taking steps to remove the barriers we know get in the way of Black workers joining and getting involved in the Union. We cannot afford to have any section of our membership under-involved in the Union as this only weakens us. It is in everyone’s interests to address this.

The Union regularly takes positive steps to recruit and involve different sections of our membership. Reaching out to Black members is not any different. It is simply about recognising that different groups of members have different issues and it is only right that, as a Union, we address those issues.

## Positive Action in Practice

Usdaw’s work to encourage the involvement of Black members has always focused on practical and achievable goals. It has been successful because it delivers real results not just for Black members but for all Usdaw members.

Racism in the workplace not only damages the livelihoods, health, well-being, self-esteem and confidence of our Black members and their families, but it makes the workplace a difficult place to be for all Usdaw members. Racism creates hostile and intimidating workplaces where people do not feel able to speak out about unfair treatment or be themselves at work.

It also undermines the strength of the Union by dividing the workforce, pitting one group of members against another.

All of the following positive action steps have resulted in more Black members getting involved and active in the Union and have come about because Black activists made them happen.

## Black Members’ Weekend Workshop

Each year the Union holds a national conference for Black members called Black Members’ Weekend Workshop. This event is open to anyone who might experience unfair treatment or discrimination because of their skin colour. We use the words ‘Black’ and ‘Asian’ as shorthand to describe this.

This conference has a strong track record of encouraging activity amongst Black members.

Many members that attend Black Members’ Weekend Workshop have never been to a Union event before. The weekend builds the confidence of Black members. Many go back into their workplaces determined to become more active in the Union whether that is attending divisional conferences, taking up the role of Shop Steward or applying for the Organising Academy.

Maureen Loxley, Usdaw’s representative on the TUC Race Relations Committee explains that it was at Black Members’ Weekend Workshop that she first started her journey from member to activist:



*“My first Black Members’ Weekend Workshop was fifteen years ago. I was very apprehensive and unsure. I didn’t know what to expect as I wasn’t really involved in the Union back then. I hadn’t realised the Union held a conference for Black members and it was the first time I’d been anywhere where I wasn’t in the minority. I left feeling positive and confident. I’d made a lot of friends who I am still in touch with now. I never dreamt back then that I would now chair the weekend! I’ve never looked back. I am now proud to represent Usdaw on the TUC Race Relations Committee, to sit on the National Equalities Advisory Group and to have served as an Usdaw Divisional Councillor.”*



Debbie Newman explains why she believes Black Members' Weekend Workshop is an important date in the Union's calendar:



*“It’s been an incredible journey since my first Black Members’ Weekend. Before attending, I was a rep in my workplace, but I came away from my first meeting feeling really enthusiastic and wanting to get even more involved in Usdaw. I applied for the Union’s Organising Academy and was delighted to get a place, it was the most fantastic experience. Since then, I have found my passion in becoming a Mobile Union Learning Rep. Being able to help people access learning, and see how much they get out of it is incredibly rewarding. It’s up to us as reps to go back into our workplaces and spread the word that the Union is there for everyone and let our colleagues know about the many opportunities available to them.”*

The Union is often asked why white members cannot attend the event to learn more about the issues affecting Black members.

Black and Asian members regularly tell the Union that as well as experiencing racism both in the workplace and in society they frequently feel uncomfortable or isolated because of their skin colour. Everyone knows that going to a Union event for the first time can be daunting. It is particularly daunting if there are no other members like you there – no other women if you’re a woman member for example or no other young members if you are a young member. The weekend workshop is an effective way of tackling that isolation and boosting Black and Asian members’ confidence to get more involved.

The Union regularly brings together different sections of our membership, for example, we have a Retail Trades Conference and a conference for members who work in Warehouse and Distribution. Black Members’ Weekend Workshop is not any different. It is about recognising that not all of our members are the same. Different groups of members have different issues and it is only right that we should give them the space to come together to discuss them.

Black Members’ Weekend Workshop is unique in that it is perhaps the only event in the Union’s calendar where Black members are in a majority.

What goes on at the weekend is no secret. The debates and discussions are widely reported. An account of the weekend goes to the Executive Council in December of every year and a double page spread is given over to the conference in the November/December edition of *Network*.

## Divisional Get-Togethers and Events

There are also plenty of other opportunities throughout the year to find out more about the problems Black members are facing.

As well as the National Black Members’ Weekend, the Union regularly holds local divisional get-togethers for Black members to encourage them to get more involved in the Union and to hear first hand about the issues that affect them.

Black and white members regularly get-together at Union events such as divisional conferences, the Union’s Annual Delegate Meeting and branch meetings. Members can find out more by getting hold of the Union’s anti-racism literature and merchandise or going along to an equalities event in your division, for example, Divisional Equalities Forums run workshops on tackling racism or divisional conferences will often have a speaker from the forum reporting back on the work they have done.



## Other Positive Action Measures

### Leaflets

Usdaw has published a series of leaflets for reps and members on a wide range of race equality issues from tackling racial harassment and negotiating time off for religious festivals to extended leave. The leaflets give reps the information they need to better support Black members at work.

### Workplace Campaign Materials

The Union has produced a range of materials that can be used in workplace anti-racism campaigns (see Section 3 for more information).

### Campaign Stands at Anti-Racist Community Festivals

For many years, Usdaw activists have teamed up with local Black communities to give the Union a real presence at anti-racist events such as the Notting Hill Carnival and regional Mela festivals.

### Supporting the Struggles of Black People Overseas

Usdaw was very active in the anti-apartheid movement including seconding a member of staff to work in South Africa's first ever free elections. We maintain strong links with campaigns working to win a better deal for farmers in the developed world and have helped ordinary Usdaw members to travel as far afield as Costa Rica, the Windward Isles and Ecuador to support fair-trade farmers.

### Usdaw's Organising Academy

The Union writes out to Black members and has run workshops to boost interest in the Union's Organising Academy.

### Delegations to Conference

Every year, the Union sends a full delegation of Black activists to the annual TUC Black Workers' Conference, making sure the issues that matter to Black members in Usdaw are debated there.

*Usdaw*

Campaigning  
For Equality

Discrimination

# Usdaw says ... No to Racism

- If you see it - challenge it.
- If it happens to you - report it.
- Together we can beat it.



Contact your Usdaw rep for advice and support

For help and support in challenging racism, speak to your Usdaw rep  
or call your local Usdaw Office on 0845 60 60 640.

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

email: [equalities@usdaw.org.uk](mailto:equalities@usdaw.org.uk)



Usdaw

Campaigning  
For Equality

Discrimination

# Usdaw says ... Racism is No Joke

To listen is to agree.

- If you see it – challenge it.
- If it happens to you – report it.
- Together we can beat it.



Contact your Usdaw rep for advice and support

For help and support in challenging racism, speak to your Usdaw rep  
or call your local Usdaw Office on 0845 60 60 640.

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

email: [equalities@usdaw.org.uk](mailto:equalities@usdaw.org.uk)





*Usdaw*

Campaigning  
For Equality

Discrimination

# Usdaw says ... No Room for Racism

- If you see it – challenge it.
- If it happens to you – report it.
- Together we can beat it.



Contact your Usdaw rep for advice and support

For help and support in challenging racism, speak to your Usdaw rep  
or call your local Usdaw Office on 0845 60 60 640.

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

email: [equalities@usdaw.org.uk](mailto:equalities@usdaw.org.uk)





# ‘NO ROOM FOR RACISM’ Survey

Usdaw is carrying out this survey to find out more about racist bullying and harassment. We are doing this so that we can better support members who experience it and develop practical ways to ensure Usdaw-organised workplaces are welcoming to all workers whatever their race, nationality or ethnic origin.

Survey evidence is essential in helping the Union to campaign for better rights at work for all members. Please encourage everyone in your workplace to fill it in.

It is entirely up to you whether or not you give us any personal details but if you do we might contact you to ask if you would be willing to help us with our campaign to tackle racism at work.

**1. Are you:**

Male  Female

**2. How would you describe your ethnic group or background?**

**Black and Ethnic Minority**

African   
Carribbean

Asian   
Any other Black Minority Ethnic background

**White**

European   
Any other white background

**3. Have you experienced or witnessed racial harassment at work in any of the following ways during the last five years? (tick all that apply):**

- Bullying at work for reasons related to race?
- Racist remarks directed at you or made in your presence eg verbal abuse, racist jokes or banter?
- Racist literature or music distributed in the workplace or racist material being shared on social media?
- Physical violence, threats and intimidation?
- Ignorant and/or insensitive questioning about any culture or religion?
- Exclusion from workplace related social events or being subject to racism at workplace organised events or informal gatherings?
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Which one(s) of the following is the main perpetrator?**

Manager  Colleague   
Contractor  Customer, Client or Service User

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5. If you have experienced or witnessed racial abuse, harassment or bullying did you tell?  
(tick all that apply):

Your manager  A work colleague   
Usdaw  or did not tell anyone

6. On a scale of 1 to 5, how happy (with 1 being very unhappy and 5 being very happy, please circle below as appropriate) were you with?

Usdaw’s response: Very unhappy 1 2 3 4 5 Very happy  
Your employer’s response: Very unhappy 1 2 3 4 5 Very happy

7. Which of these applies to you?:

I work full-time (30 or more hours a week)   
I work part-time (8-29 hours a week)   
I work part-time (less than 8 hours a week)

8. What type of contract are you currently on? If you have more than one job, please consider your main job or the job you spend most hours doing.

Permanent contract  Temporary contract   
Other \_\_\_\_\_ Don’t know

9. Do you work? (tick all that apply):

Day Shift  Twilight Shift  Night Shift

10. Have you heard about Usdaw’s ‘No Room For Racism’ Campaign?

Yes  No

11. If not would you like to learn more about it?

Yes  No

12. Are you a member of Usdaw?

Yes  No

13. If not, would you like to join? (If yes you can join online at [www.usdaw.org.uk/join](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/join))

Yes  No

Your response will be confidential and you do not have to provide personal details.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_  
email: \_\_\_\_\_

On completion just write: **FREEPOST USDAW**  
on the envelope and put it in the post.



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**Usdaw**  
Union of Shop, Distributive  
and Allied Workers

# ‘NO ROOM FOR RACISM’ Campaign Materials Order Form



Please tick one of the following and we’ll send you everything you need for your campaign, including leaflets, posters and merchandise:

- I am organising a campaign stall.
- I am not running a stall but plan to hand out leaflets, theme my noticeboard or talk to my colleagues about the campaign.

**NB: Your order will be delivered via our courier and it is essential that a postcode is given – any orders that do not include a postcode will NOT be dispatched. Also, your order will need to be signed for and it may be heavy, so it may be more practical to have the delivery sent to your workplace (please ensure that there will be somebody available to sign for and collect the package).**

Please use **BLOCK CAPITALS**:

### Personal Details

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Home Postcode

Position \_\_\_\_\_ Usdaw Branch/Division \_\_\_\_\_

Workplace \_\_\_\_\_

### Delivery Details

Actual Delivery Address \_\_\_\_\_

Delivery Postcode

Tel \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_

email \_\_\_\_\_

*(To notify you when your order has been dispatched)*

On completion just write: **FREEPOST USDRAW** on the envelope and put it in the post.

Email your views on the ‘No Room for Racism’ Campaign to: [equalitymatters@usdaw.org.uk](mailto:equalitymatters@usdaw.org.uk)





# Usdaw

*Union of Shop, Distributive  
and Allied Workers*



**Improving workers' lives – Winning for members**

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