



# Labour For A New Deal

National Executive  
Council Statement  
to 2024 ADM



With a General Election due to take place by January 2025 at the very latest, the next nine months have the potential to change our country for many years to come. After 14 years of Tory broken promises, the election of a Labour Government would mean that the Labour Party can build on its historic achievements by delivering a New Deal for Working People.

In this National Executive Council Statement, we will look at how Labour's new deal commitments have the power to positively transform the lives of Usdaw members. We will outline what can be done between now and a general election to deliver a Labour Government.

# General Secretary's Foreword



Usdaw's 'New Deal for Workers' Campaign was launched during the pandemic, at a time when the incredible contributions of our members really came to the fore. The campaign reflects the widespread recognition that key workers deserve not just public gratitude, but a fair deal at work – a deal where everyone is properly paid and rewarded for their work and protected from unscrupulous employment practices.

In the years since the pandemic, it has become even clearer that we cannot trust the Tories to deliver the change working people need. After 14 years in power, they have run out of road. Through their longstanding refusal to take action to strengthen employment rights and tackle one-sided flexibility, they have failed to protect people from the cost of living crisis that they created.

The impact their failures have had on Usdaw members is clear from the responses to our latest cost of living survey which found that:

- A staggering 81.5% of members say they feel worse off now than they did 12 months ago, higher than 77% in 2022 and 39% in 2021.
- 76% are not able to afford to take sick leave, 61% identify getting ill as a key concern.
- 70% say their children are missing out.

These figures, and the stories we hear everyday from our members, show that we need urgent change. We need a general election and a Labour Government. I am proud to lead a Union which has delivered so many commitments from the Labour Party on behalf of our members. Over the coming months, I look forward to joining you on the campaign trail to deliver a truly historic and transformative Labour Government.

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Paddy Lillis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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**Paddy Lillis**  
General Secretary

# Section One – Building on Labour’s Historic Achievements

**The Labour Party was created by the Trade Union Movement and has a strong track record of delivering historic achievements for working people.**

Many basic working rights, such as having holidays from work and reasonable working hours, exist because trade unions fought for them and a Labour Government introduced them. Labour Governments have been responsible for more than just workers’ rights. Labour created the NHS, decriminalised homosexuality and outlawed racial discrimination.

Sometimes it feels that Labour’s many achievements have been forgotten about, or are now simply taken for granted.

In reality, in just 13 years of government between 1997 and 2010, Labour successfully introduced a huge number of policies that continue to benefit the lives of workers and their families. Some of Labour’s best achievements in this period include:

- **Minimum Wage**

It is hard to believe that just 25 years ago there were no rules in the UK to define a minimum wage for workers.

In 1998, in the first 12 months of the Labour Government, the National Minimum Wage Act came into force despite significant opposition from the Tories and the Liberal Democrats. The minimum wage immediately lifted pay for 1.2 million working people, giving an average pay rise of 10%. It continues to play an important role as a floor for wages to this day.

- **Working Time Regulations**

Labour implemented the Working Time Regulations in 1998, just one year after taking government. These regulations entitled workers to important legal minimums including:

- 20 minute rest break if you are expected to work more than 6 hours during the day.
- 24 hours rest every 7 working days or 48 hours every 14 working days.
- 4.8 weeks’ paid holiday a year, later increased to 5.6 weeks.

- **Supporting Parents and Carers**

Labour increased maternity leave to 52 weeks and extended paid maternity leave to 39 weeks. They also introduced paid Statutory Paternity Leave for the first time.

In addition, Labour introduced free nursery places for three and four year olds, through the creation of Sure Start and provided free fruit for most four to six year olds at school.

- **Winter Fuel Allowance**

Sadly, fuel poverty was an issue two decades ago, just as it is today. Labour introduced Winter Fuel Payments to help older people meet the costs of heating their homes in winter. They are paid in a lump sum each winter and continue to be valued by older people to this day.

- **Investment in the NHS**

The Labour Government prioritised significant investment in the NHS, something which delivered a much better service across the whole country. During their 13 years in power, Labour delivered 85,000 more nurses and 32,000 more doctors. This resulted in NHS waiting lists falling by half a million, heart disease deaths down by 150,000 and cancer deaths down by 50,000.

- **LGBT+ Rights**

Labour introduced Civil Partnerships in 2005, in a ground breaking move that provided legal recognition and protection for same-sex couples. This was a crucial stepping-stone to full marriage equality in 2013. Labour also reversed the ban on gay and bisexual people being in the armed forces and overturned Section 28, the homophobic ban on 'promoting' gay relationships in schools. Furthermore, Labour made it unlawful to discriminate against LGBT+ people at work.

- **Trade Union Rights**

While the Tories have been trying to make it more difficult for workers to organise in trade unions, the Labour Government delivered some key rights, including the right to be accompanied in formal meetings and a new procedure where companies could be forced to recognise a union.



# Section Two – Tory Failure

**In contrast, over their 14 years of Government, the Tories have failed working people.**

- They commissioned the Taylor Review into Modern Employment Practices, then failed to implement many of its recommendations.
- They promised greater employment rights in their 2019 manifesto and failed to make good on their promises.
- Then they promised an Employment Bill on more than 20 occasions which they never delivered.

Their repeated broken promises on employment rights have left working people in vulnerable employment and significantly weakened the economy. As a result, poverty rates have sky rocketed across the UK, with 600,000 more children living in poverty now than in 2010.



## Tory Economic Failure

Fourteen years of Conservative rule has also left the UK economy weak. The Government's failed austerity programme choked off investment, slashed public services and let the whole country down. According to the TUC, the Tories have presided over the worst period of economic growth since the 1920s.

Whilst trashing the economy, the Conservative Government has consistently made working people pay the price. While the number of billionaires in the UK has more than trebled since the Tories came to power, we have seen the longest squeeze on real terms wages in over 200 years. This inequality was particularly clear in their attempts to cut taxes for the richest through their disastrous 2022 mini-budget which resulted in sky rocketing mortgage payments, higher food prices and excessive energy prices.

The impact is clear, independent think-tank the Resolution Foundation calculates that the average person will be £250 poorer at the end of this Parliament than they were at the time of the last election. This is the first time in history that people will actually be poorer at the end of a Parliament than at the start. Usdaw's own survey data has revealed that 82% of members are feeling worse off than they did 12 months ago.

## Attacks on Working People

Shortly after being elected in 2010, the Conservative led Government launched a serious attack on workers' rights. This included making it easier to unfairly dismiss workers, weakening protections against redundancy and removing some protections during a business transfer. Since first coming to power, the Conservatives have overseen a 700% increase in the number of zero-hours contracts.

## Attacks on Trade Unions

The Tory Trade Union Act 2016 brought in the most restrictive anti-union laws ever seen in the UK. Strike action and recognition ballots are now even more restricted than they were during the Thatcher years. More than this, during a cost of living crisis plunging millions of households into poverty, the Tories prioritised introducing even more restrictions on the right to strike rather than finally delivering on behalf of working people.

## Tory Instability

Since 2010 there have been five Prime Ministers, seven Chancellors, nine Work and Pensions Secretaries and nine Business Secretaries. The Tories have not taken their responsibility to run our country seriously and have been caught up with in-fighting while the economy has stagnated, and families have fallen into poverty.

The country deserves better, it deserves a government interested in delivering for the people rather than lining their own pockets and protecting their own interests.

# Section Three – Developing Usdaw’s Campaign Goals

Usdaw’s ‘New Deal for Workers’ Campaign emerged in 2020. It built on the work that had been done in the Union’s ‘Time for Better Pay’ Campaign, and its aim was to make sure that the critical role our members play in society would be recognised and rewarded beyond the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our members worked incredibly hard in extremely tough conditions during the pandemic to keep the country supplied with essentials. The pandemic highlighted that many of the people who keep our economy and our society going are low paid workers, including those in sectors like retail and distribution. At the same time it exposed the deep unfairness and inequalities at the heart of the labour market.

The key goals of the campaign were shaped by the calls of Usdaw members and reps, and also evidenced by their real-life experiences. At the height of the first wave of the pandemic, Usdaw surveyed over 7,000 members to set out the issues affecting them in the world of work. This evidence was combined with ADM policy to set out a clear list of objectives to deliver a fair deal for Usdaw members, including better pay, improvements to sick pay and more secure employment. We raised these objectives with the Government at every opportunity, and in our negotiations with employers too.

Unfortunately, after the pandemic we quickly entered a cost of living crisis. This has had a devastating impact on millions of households. Workers who were on the frontline keeping the country going during the pandemic are now struggling to afford the everyday essentials, pushed into poor mental health and falling into debt.

The results from our latest cost of living survey, published in July 2023, demonstrate that Usdaw members are struggling more than ever:

- Nearly half of members are worrying about putting food on the table and three in four have had to change their shopping habits.
- In 2023, nearly a third of respondents say they struggle to pay gas and electricity bills every month. In 2021, this was just over 7% of members.
- Around seven in ten are now relying on unsecured borrowing to pay everyday bills, a significant increase from around four in ten in 2021.



These findings demonstrate the squeeze on living standards experienced by our members over the last few years. Behind every statistic is a story, and some of the comments from members in response to the survey vividly show the real impact of the crisis:

*"The shame I felt bringing home a leaflet about food banks was unreal. A parent should not have to struggle to clothe their child."*

**- Retail Worker, Scotland**

*"My husband was retired but had to go back working. At our age, we are terrified of getting ill and losing everything we worked all our lives for."*

**- Retail Worker, East England**

*"My 17 year-old has a Saturday job. I had to ask him if he would not mind paying his own train ticket to school."*

**- Retail Worker, Northern Ireland**

*"Life just gets harder, not better."*

**- Retail Worker, Scotland**

This is why we have campaigned so hard for a new deal for working people throughout the cost of living crisis. Our survey shows that these key workers are being left further behind, at exactly the time when they need help the most.

We have consistently urged the Conservative Government to act on behalf of our members. However, the Tories have washed their hands of the crisis whilst failing to deliver on their promises of a high-wage economy and better protections for workers.

We need a Labour Government to listen to the voices of working people. Usdaw will continue to engage with the Labour Party, making sure that our members' priorities are Labour's priorities, and that we deliver the change this country needs at the next general election.



# Section Four – Labour’s Commitments

## Labour’s New Deal for Working People

Within 100 days of coming into power, a Labour Government will bring forward legislation to:

- **Introduce day one workers’ rights for unfair dismissal, sick pay, parental leave, and many other things**

It is unacceptable that workers have little protection against unfair treatment when they first enter the workplace. Labour has committed to ensuring workers have full access to their rights from day one.

- **Make the minimum wage a real living wage and ensure that every adult worker is entitled to it**

Many of the workers that our country relies on are low paid. A Labour Government will tackle in-work poverty through ensuring the minimum wage is a genuine living wage.

- **Ban exploitative zero-hours contracts**

Under the Conservatives, there has been a 700% increase in the number of workers on zero-hours contracts. Many are on these contracts as they have no other options. Labour will give workers a meaningful choice so they are not forced onto a zero-hours contract.

- **Introduce a right to switch to a normal hours contract**

Many workers are regularly working far more hours than they are contracted to, but the employer can just reduce them back down to contracted hours whenever they want to. Labour will end this unfair practice.

- **End the practice of fire and rehire**

Under fire and rehire, employers find it too easy to cut terms and conditions. While the Tories have completely failed to tackle this issue, Labour has committed to banning the practice.

- **Make flexible working a day one right**

Anyone can have the need to work flexibly. Labour will make flexible working a day one right for all workers, with employers required to accommodate this as far as is reasonable.

- **Strengthen protections against redundancy**

Workers don't have strong enough rights when they are facing possible redundancies. Labour will strengthen protections against redundancy meaning that workers will have greater job security.

- **Require employers to compensate workers when not enough notice is given for cancelled or changed shifts**

It is unacceptable that employers can cancel shifts at a moment's notice, with workers having to pay the price. Labour will ensure that workers will receive compensation when this happens.

- **Take action to close the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps**

Too little progress is being made on ensuring everyone in the workplace is paid fairly. Labour will bring forward measures to ensure that employers take action to eliminate discriminatory pay.

- **Put mental health on par with physical health in our workplaces**

The workplace can affect our mental health just as much as it can affect our physical health. Labour will make sure that our mental health is treated with as much concern as our physical health.

Outside of the new deal, Labour has committed to many other policies which are important for Usdaw members in the workplace, these include:

## **Freedom From Fear**

Recent years have seen unprecedented levels of violence, threats and abuse towards retail workers. Protecting our members has always been a key issue for the Labour Party, with Scottish Labour delivering the UK's first specific law to protect retail workers. Ahead of the next general election, Labour has committed to tackling retail crime and protecting retail workers with:

- A protection of shopworkers law.
- 13,000 more neighbourhood police, with guaranteed patrols in town centres.
- Respect orders to ban repeat offenders.
- An end to the £200 threshold for investigating and prosecuting shop theft.

## **Protecting Retail Jobs**

Since the last general election, over half a million jobs have been lost across the retail sector. Despite the massive number of job losses, the Conservative Government has failed to address the issue.

Labour understands the essential role that retail plays in our economy, our high streets and our communities. Within their policy framework, the Party has outlined how they will develop a Council for Economic Growth with businesses and unions so that high streets can become vibrant and prosperous once more.

# Section Five – Building for a Labour Government and a New Deal

As outlined already in this document, it is essential that we deliver a Labour Government at the forthcoming general election. We know that the Conservatives will be able to outspend us during the campaign and that they will do all they can to cling on to power. That's why the whole Union must be committed in working together to deliver the change we need.

## Organising

This union has faced many challenges before and, whether it's protecting Sunday trading restrictions from powerful vested interests, delivering the best possible outcomes for our members during the pandemic or delivering market leading pay rises during a cost of living crisis, we have always risen to the challenge. The next few months can be no different.

Usdaw activists already do a great job organising in their workplaces – every day they convince people of the benefits of Usdaw membership, represent their interests and get them more involved in the work of the Union. Organising for a Labour Government will be no different. Whether we are organising for Labour or organising for Usdaw, we are organising to improve members' lives.

We need to spend these next months building up political awareness in every workplace, finding ways to keep politics visible and making sure the benefits of a Labour Government are on everyone's mind.



## Workplace Engagement

As with any campaign, this does not mean speaking at members about the list of promises contained within the new deal. Engaging as many colleagues as possible in politics means listening to their issues and then identifying how a Labour Government will help. For example:

- When running a mental health campaign, we can talk about Labour's commitment to recruiting an additional 8,500 mental health professionals and putting mental health on a par with physical health in the workplace. In Freedom From Fear events we can discuss Labour's strategy to tackle retail crime.
- In any conversation around improving terms and conditions we can look at the New Deal for Working People.

Spreading the word as part of your interactions as a rep really can make a difference.

Usdaw runs a whole range of campaigns throughout the year, and all of these campaigns can be linked to politics. Some members may not initially show an interest in politics, but when we listen to the issues that affect them, we can make clear how those issues are impacted by politics.

## Community Engagement

As well as engaging people in the workplace, there are a whole range of actions reps can take to help build the campaign in their local communities.

You can get involved with your local Labour Party in things such as door-knocking, holding Usdaw campaign days and street stalls, and volunteering to staff Labour phone banks and deliver leaflets. Training and support is always available and people can do as much as they feel confident with. Usdaw's Political Activists Programme is a great way to get involved – visit: [www.usdaw.org.uk/JoinTheTeam](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/JoinTheTeam) to find out more.

The great thing about getting out in the community to help is that we can get key messages around workers' rights out to people who do not necessarily have a union in their workplace. This not only brings more awareness of what Labour has to offer, but can also build solidarity with those who are currently vulnerable in their jobs.



# Section Six – Summary

**Over the past 14 years, life has got harder and harder for working people. Low paid workers have had to face a growth in insecure employment, wages that don't stretch as far as they used to and the ever-growing threat of violence and abuse at work. Now is clearly the time for significant change.**

Within this document, we have outlined a whole range of Labour's policies which would significantly improve lives for Usdaw members. These policies are not shaped around the needs of our members by accident, they are shaped around the needs of our members because we, every rep and member within this Union, helped to shape them.

In some ways, a lot of the hard work has already been done. We have spoken to members to understand their concerns, we have raised these concerns with politicians and we have secured guarantees that members' issues will be resolved. However, we cannot let ourselves believe that the work is anywhere near complete.

From now until the general election, we all have to be committed to delivering a Labour Government. Whether that is through conversations in the workplace, talking to family and friends or getting out in our communities to ensure that everyone knows the positive difference a Labour Government will make.

Ushaw's structures can help you get more involved and make more of a difference in the upcoming campaign. Please feel free to contact your Area Organiser or the Politics Section at Head Office to find out how you can help with the campaign.

# Section Seven – Labour for a New Deal Action Plan

Think about the issues affecting members in your workplace so that you can have conversations about how Labour’s plans can support your colleagues.

- Contact your local Usdaw office and ask for any materials or information that will help you promote the new deal in your workplace.
- Speak to your family and friends about Labour’s plan to introduce a New Deal for Working People.
- Get involved in Usdaw’s campaign to deliver a Labour Government at the general election by joining the team at: [www.usdaw.org.uk/JoinTheTeam](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/JoinTheTeam)





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