



Usdaw
*Union of Shop, Distributive
and Allied Workers*



Politics Affects Us All

Executive Council Statement
to the 2018 ADM



Since returning to power in 2010, the Conservatives have continually made life more difficult for Usdaw members. Whether it is cutting funding for the NHS, closing Sure Start centres or attacking employment rights, it is clear that Usdaw members are worse off now than they were when David Cameron walked into Number 10.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives are determined to cling to power. Since 2010, they have repeatedly removed the opportunities for them to be held to account. They have changed the way people register to vote, resulting in millions of people disappearing from the Electoral Register; they are trying to change constituency boundaries to make it easier for Conservative MPs to get elected; and they have made it more difficult for charities, campaigners and trade unions to be involved in campaigns. Most recently, they passed the Trade Union Act, a law to reduce the funds unions have available to campaign on behalf of their members.

Politicians are not all the same. The Conservatives have consistently made bad decisions such as cutting tax credits and child benefit, making it easier for workers to be sacked and slashing the money that funds important local services. With all of this happening, it is more important than ever that Usdaw continues to have a strong and clear political voice, continue to be free to run campaigns, and continue to raise the issues that are important to our members.

The Trade Union Act is just one attempt to silence the Union's political voice. Whilst the changes might seem small or bureaucratic, make no mistake, they have been carefully designed by the Conservatives with the aim of silencing the voice of working people.

But we are not powerless, we can ensure that the Conservatives do not get their way. Through utilising the strength of our organising model we can continue to be a strong, collective voice for our members and other working people. Usdaw has a proud track record of winning for our members both industrially and politically.

This Executive Council Statement looks at the challenges we face and how we can overcome them. By working together, we will ensure that our clear, strong voice is heard everywhere politicians meet to make decisions that affect our members' lives.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Hannett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Hannett
General Secretary

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Politics is not just something that happens far away from us in the halls of Westminster, Holyrood, Cardiff Bay and Stormont. It is something that affects the daily lives of each and every Usdaw member. Whilst this does not mean that politics has to be the sole focus of Usdaw members and the Union's work, it does mean that none of us can afford to ignore politics completely. Not if we wish to protect what we have and deliver real and genuine improvements on the issues that matter to Usdaw members.

Politics can affect each of us in different ways, but there is no getting away from the fact that it has a significant impact on our lives. That is why we have to make sure that the voices of Usdaw members are heard right at the very heart of the Government.

Politics and Our Working Lives

Much of what happens in the workplace is governed by company policies and the outcome of negotiations between Usdaw and employers. However, politics and political decisions also affect what happens to members in the workplace.

The rights that workers and Usdaw reps rely on every day are the result of political decisions and quite often the product of campaigns organised by trade unions.

When Usdaw achieves recognition with a company, or when an Area Organiser attends a disciplinary meeting in a workplace without Usdaw recognition, the Union is relying on rights, won through political campaigning, that enable a trade union to better organise and represent members.

Through the workplace rights that Usdaw members have, they are able to take breaks at work, have paid time off for holidays or are protected from unsafe working practices. These rights may have been enhanced through negotiation. However, they are founded on the basic statutory rights delivered through politics and backed up by the force of law.

Our members' pay packets are equally affected by political decisions. It is the Government who sets the minimum wage, decides tax rates and administers National Insurance.

The help, support and assistance we provide in the workplace is known as our industrial work. When we are lobbying politicians and influencing legislation, this is known as the Union's political work.

Politics at Home

The impact of politics is not restricted to the workplace. Political decisions have far-reaching implications across society.

A key example of how those decisions affect the lives of Usdaw members and their colleagues, friends and family is the National Health Service. At some point or other, everyone will find themselves relying on the NHS and the services it provides. But how the NHS performs, the resources it has, and the number of doctors, nurses and specialists available are all affected by politics and the decisions that politicians take as our representatives.

It does not stop there. Other important public services, like the police and fire services, as well as important local services provided by councils, are all governed by political decisions on funding and priorities.

Getting from one place to another, whether by car, train, bus or any other means, involves people benefiting from, or suffering because of political decisions. Car tax, rail fares and local bus routes are all set by politicians.

Within Usdaw, there is a well-known saying, ‘you can ignore politics but politics will not ignore you’. Whether we are looking at the provision of maternity services, childcare, schools, university fees, employment protections, housing policy or pension entitlements, every single person is affected by politics at every stage of their lives.

While the union movement was originally founded on the idea that we would protect our members at work, there is no need for us to stop helping members as soon as they leave their workplace. Unions can, and have, played a significant role in social housing policy, raising awareness of NHS funding problems and protecting the welfare state.

Doing Something About It

With politics affecting so much of everyone’s lives, it is important that trade unions and their members are able to influence those political decisions. This Executive Council Statement explores why and how trade unions are involved in politics and what Usdaw members can do to make a real difference.



Trade unions have always sought to improve the lives of their members. The founder unions that eventually became Usdaw started off by negotiating with individual employers to reduce the norm of brutally long working hours which were typically up to 80 or 90 hours per week in many stores.

Despite some initial success, it was clear that there were too many employers to negotiate with individually and that the bad employers were continuing to undercut the good ones. As a result, the trade unions proposed a Bill in Parliament to limit the working hours of women and children in shops to 74 hours per week and for shop assistants to have one 'half day' off work per week.

Unfortunately, the Bill was defeated. Because of this, trade unions ultimately founded their own political party in the form of the Labour Party.

Trade Unions: Industrial and Political Activity

The two sides of trade union campaigning, industrial and political, work hand-in-hand to deliver effective change on behalf of members.

Recruiting, organising, representing and negotiating on behalf of members will always be at the centre of a trade union's work. Representing members in disciplinary and grievance meetings can right wrongs and save members' jobs. Negotiating directly with companies on behalf of members can win significant improvements to pay and conditions.

This industrial work does not happen in isolation. Disciplinary and grievance procedures are not just governed by company policy, but also by the law of the land and statutory employment rights are set by governments. No matter how successful, negotiations will only ever bring about change within that company and are subject to outside factors, such as terms and conditions being undercut by competitors.

Political action is the next clear step; both in terms of protecting our members and their rights, and also securing wider improvements to rights, terms and conditions. Through political campaigning, trade unions and the Labour Party delivered the National Minimum Wage. This simultaneously raised pay for many workers and reduced the risk of decent employers being undercut by exploitative competitors.

The industrial and political activity of trade unions complement each other, so that unions can represent their members' interests more effectively.

The Trade Union Movement and Politics

It was the recognition that political activity could achieve much broader benefits and improvements for working people that led to trade unions becoming increasingly politically active and eventually forming their own political party, the Labour Party.

Since its creation, the Labour Party has been the political arm of the Trade Union and Labour Movement, making sure that the voice of working people is represented directly in politics. There are strong links between the affiliated trade unions and the Labour Party. Usdaw is formally represented on the decision making bodies of the Labour Party and in the policy making process. As a result of our affiliation, we have seats on the National Executive Committee and the National Policy Forum.

This means that the Labour Party is connected directly to working people and aware of the issues they face. Furthermore, it means that trade unions are involved in identifying solutions. As a result, a Labour Government is the best means by which trade unions can deliver real political change for their members.

Trade unions also engage in other forms of direct political action, such as lobbying politicians on specific issues, taking part in demonstrations, and running campaigns.

The Trade Union Act and Other Tory Attacks

The political activity of trade unions is not welcomed by everyone. In particular, successive Conservative Governments have found it uncomfortable to have trade unions speaking out on behalf of their members and other working people. These governments have repeatedly tried to put obstacles in the way of trade unions engaging in political campaigning.

The Trade Union Act 2016 is merely the most recent of these obstacles.

The Trade Union Act 2016

The original proposals that formed part of the Trade Union Bill would have tied unions up in endless red tape, changing the rules around everything from strikes to union internal administration and how political funds operate. When it came to trade union political funds, the original proposals would have:

- Required unions to get a signed form from every existing member, within a three month period, to record that they still want to contribute to the Union's Political Fund.
- Forced unions to repeat this exercise every five years.
- Made it a requirement to declare the amount and recipient of every single item of spending from a political fund, even down to a conference delegate's bus fare.

As a result of having a political fund and an effective political voice, the trade union movement was able to quickly launch a high profile campaign highlighting the excessive provisions contained in the original Bill. Had the Bill already been in place, such an effective campaign would not have been possible. To a certain degree, the campaign was successful.

The Conservative Government was forced to back down on many of the more extreme proposals. However, as the Conservatives were in Government, they were able to pass a reduced piece of legislation that became the Trade Union Act 2016.

The Trade Union Act, despite not being as severe as it was originally intended to be, still has significant implications for trade union political funds and the activity they financially support.

The key political attack in the Bill is to change how people contribute to the Political Fund. Under the old system, all trade union members had the right to opt out of contributing to the Political Fund. Most chose not to use this right.

Under the new system, since 1 March 2018, all new members must be asked during the recruitment process to agree in writing that they want to contribute. If the recruiter forgets to ask the question or if the membership form is not filled in correctly, then that member will not contribute to the Political Fund. Whilst it may seem like a small change, it could have a big impact on the Political Fund and the campaign work that the fund supports. This is exactly what the Conservatives intended.

If trade unions are to continue to be a strong voice for their members, campaigning for change and protecting existing rights, then it is important that unions overcome this challenge and maintain a healthy political fund. Section 4 of this Executive Council Statement – *What This Means for Usdaw Members*, details how Usdaw is responding to the challenge.

Earlier Attacks on Trade Union Political Activity

The Trade Union Act was not the Conservative's first attempt to restrict the ability of trade unions to engage in political campaigning on behalf of their members, and it probably will not be their last.

The Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014 brought in a range of new restrictions on how trade unions and other groups who are not political parties engage in elections and political campaigns. These restrictions included:

- Creating a new rule meaning that when organisations such as trade unions campaign together, the total amount of the entire campaign is counted towards the spending limit for each individual organisation. This significantly reduces the amount that could otherwise be spent.
- Reducing the amount that non-party campaigners such as trade unions can spend in supporting (or opposing) a particular party at elections.

During the 1980s, the Conservative Government under Margaret Thatcher introduced a number of new restrictions and regulations designed to make life harder for trade unions. These included making it compulsory for unions to ballot their members at least every 10 years on whether they should even have a political fund. Considering trade unions are already democratic, membership based organisations, this was an unnecessary and very expensive measure.

Not only was this attack unnecessary but it entirely backfired. Margaret Thatcher assumed that trade unions could not justify the role of a political fund to their members, however, this was not the case. Due to the strength of our political work, Usdaw members happily endorse the Union's Political Fund. In our most recent Political Fund ballot, which happened in 2013, 93% of Usdaw members voted to retain the fund.



Udaw: A Political Organisation

Udaw as a trade union is active on behalf of our members both industrially and politically.

For us, this means that we run high profile campaigns seeking to protect our members from damaging political decisions and also to secure improvements that will make their lives better.

The Union also provides support during elections to candidates who understand the issues our members face and are committed to taking action to tackle them.

Furthermore, we seek to provide encouragement and support to members seeking to get more involved in politics. Politics in general needs more people with experience of working on the shop floor, a distribution centre or a call centre; people who have experience of the difficulties that working people can face and understand the importance of taking action.

Udaw regularly supports many of our members standing for council seats across the country and in 2017, the Union supported three Udaw activists in standing for seats in Parliament.

Udaw exists to represent its members and make their lives better, whether through industrial negotiations or political representation. If Udaw was not a political organisation, then the campaign to improve members' lives would be fought with one arm tied behind our back.

Udaw: Winning for Members

As a result of the strength of our campaigning work, Udaw is frequently known as 'The Campaigning Union'. Thanks to the involvement of Udaw members across the country, the Union is able to run high profile campaigns on the issues that matter to our members. Most of our campaigns involve both industrial and political activity, with the two sides working together to deliver progress on the issues raised.

Freedom From Fear Campaign

Members engage directly with politicians during events at Westminster and in the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly, talking with them about the abuse and violence they face working on the shop floor. MPs also commonly visit campaign stalls during Respect Week enabling them to take the concerns and experiences of Udaw members back to Parliament.

A key political goal of the campaign is to secure support for a new law providing increased legal protection for public facing workers who are assaulted. This will only be possible with the support of politicians in Westminster or the Scottish Parliament. So far, opposition from Conservatives and the SNP have managed to block such a Bill from becoming law. However the political work of the Union to involve politicians in the campaign and build the necessary support will continue until Udaw members receive proper protection in the workplace.



Parents and Carers Campaign

Parents and carers can be disproportionately affected by changes in the law, whether those changes are to public services like the NHS, employment rights such as flexible working, or more general parental and carers' rights and benefits.

Many Usdaw employers do offer policies for parents and carers which are better than the bare legal minimum. However, we continue to see bad employers undercutting the good ones and mistreating parents and carers. Quite often the only practical way to defend current provisions, and make the case for improvements, is to engage with politicians directly, making evidence based cases as part of a wider campaign.

Cost of Living Campaign

Politically, the Cost of Living Campaign has dealt with government driven changes to in-work benefits that would make it much more difficult for members to make ends meet.

Cuts to tax credits and the way that Universal Credit is being rolled out across the country has a huge impact on Usdaw members, and is controlled directly by politicians. Without a strong political voice speaking out on how these changes affect Usdaw members, the key problems are likely to be ignored by those in charge. Following Usdaw raising issues on our members' behalf, the Government announced a £1.5 billion investment in Universal Credit as part of the 2017 Autumn Budget. In spite of this welcome investment, Usdaw is continuing our political campaign for fundamental changes to Universal Credit.



Sunday Trading

Without Usdaw's political campaigning and the use of our Political Fund, retail would now be operating with unrestricted Sunday Trading. The only time that Margaret Thatcher was ever defeated in the House of Commons was as a result of Usdaw's campaigning to protect Sunday Trading.

Whilst this may have taken place over a generation ago, the Tories have not stopped trying to deregulate Sunday Trading. As we saw during the recent attempts in Westminster and in Belfast City, Derry City and Strabane Councils to deregulate Sunday Trading, the only way to prevent the relaxation of Sunday Trading restrictions is to engage in direct political campaigning. Usdaw organised mass lobbies of Parliament, taking members from across the country to lobby undecided politicians and make a clear, evidence based case against the proposed changes. The Union produced briefings, made presentations to key decision making politicians, and lobbied all political parties for their support.

In each case, the political campaign work of the Union and our members has proved successful, with politicians being persuaded by our arguments and the current compromise on trading hours remaining in place.



As well as these campaigns and the achievements they have delivered, our links with the Labour Party means that we have been able to influence the pledges in their election manifestos. Prior to a General Election, Usdaw, alongside other affiliated trade unions, sit down with Labour politicians and negotiate manifesto commitments in the best interests of union members. Key recent pledges have included:

- A commitment in every recent Labour manifesto to introduce the protection of workers' legislation that our Freedom From Fear Campaign calls for.
- A pledge to work towards 12 months' paid maternity leave followed by free childcare from age one.
- A commitment to protect the current Sunday Trading provisions.
- A promise to introduce a right for workers to receive a contract that reflects the hours they regularly work.

Clearly, we need a Labour Government in power to deliver on these pledges.

Usdaw: The Political Fund

The Union's political work is underpinned by the Political Fund. Like most large unions, Usdaw has a Political Fund which is kept separate from the Union's general funds. According to Conservative legislation, many examples of our political activities can only be funded from the money within this fund. The Political Fund contribution is 10p per week and is part of the normal Usdaw weekly subscription.



The law sets out what campaign work and other activities are classed as political and there are a number of things that the Union must only pay for out of the Political Fund. The activities classed as political cover a broad spectrum of the Union's general campaign work and can include:

- Many aspects of the Union's key campaigns.
- Information leaflets.
- Lobbying politicians.
- Supporting Usdaw members looking to get involved in politics at various levels.
- Supporting the Labour Party in order to deliver for our members.

If the changes introduced by the Conservative's Trade Union Act have their intended effect, and significantly reduce the money available in the Political Fund, it will have a serious impact on the Union's ability to campaign on behalf of our members.

As with many of the Union's structures, the Political Fund exists at every level of the Union. Each branch has its own Political Fund to pay for local affiliations and campaigns and each division has a political fund to help the Divisional Political Committees carry out their work.

Through their branches, Divisional Political Committees and ADM, Usdaw members determine how the Political Fund is spent.



Protecting Usdaw's Political Fund and our Political Voice

As shown throughout this statement, politics affects Usdaw members across their daily lives. It is important that Usdaw, and Usdaw members, have a strong political voice, and influence the decisions that politicians make every day.

This is only possible if we manage to overcome the obstacles presented by the Trade Union Act. Primarily we need to ensure that, during every recruitment session, all new members are encouraged to sign up to the Political Fund. If recruiting new members into the Political Fund does not become a key part of our organising strategy, it will be our members that suffer.

A key part of encouraging new members to opt-in to the Political Fund involves promoting the positive impacts of Usdaw campaigns and the political work that we do. This is something that all members and reps can take responsibility for. The Union will provide materials to help these conversations, however, the best way to engage with potential members is through face-to-face conversations with current members and reps.

It is only through a loud, clear and effective political voice, backed up by a well supported Political Fund, that we will be able to achieve political change.

The requirement for new members to opt-in to the Political Fund has meant the Usdaw recruitment process has had to evolve. To help with this, a 'Frequently Asked Questions' sheet has been produced to support reps and help them answer any questions that prospective members might have about the Political Fund during the recruitment process. All reps should have already received a copy of this sheet but if you need one, please contact your local office.

The Union is also looking at ways to engage more members in our political work of the Union. As the first part of this, a leaflet on our campaigns and the way the Political Fund supports the work of the Union is available to help start conversations about the importance of this work.

Getting Involved in Campaigns

Many of Usdaw's campaigns have a clear political aim, and even those that do not are affected by political decisions.

Getting involved in the campaigns that the Union runs is a good way to understand the work that is going on.

There are many ways to become an activist and support the Union's campaign work. You may already be taking part in that work and not even realise it.

Completing Surveys

Member survey results are used in a wide variety of important ways. They often form the basis of comprehensive briefings used to influence political decisions as well as forming part of campaign materials and press releases. Without this information, based on the real life experience of our members, it would be much more difficult to communicate our key messages in a persuasive way.

Providing a Case Study

When talking about the impacts that political decisions have on the lives of our members, it is important to be able to provide real life examples. Usdaw commonly uses genuine case studies from our members of how decisions on things such as Universal Credit or insecure work impact the lives of real people. This can have a profound effect on politicians and be really valuable to any campaign. Case studies add a human dimension to what can otherwise be dry statistics, and make a powerful case for change.

Organising Workplace Visits

Reps and activists play a key role in bringing politicians and working people closer together. Organising workplace visits allows our members to speak directly with their elected reps, and makes sure that those reps hear first-hand the issues affecting our members.

Taking Part in Campaign Events

Campaigning together on an Usdaw campaign day is a great way for members to get involved in political campaigning for the first time. Divisions and local activists organise events for Usdaw campaigns, bringing groups of Usdaw members together to share their experiences and talk to the general public. Not only do these provide a big boost to our Union's campaigns, they are a good way for Usdaw members to support each other, build the profile of the Union and show that our work is relevant to the lives of working people.

Getting Involved in Politics

Ushaw is affiliated to the Labour Party for more than just historical reasons. Ushaw is affiliated to the Labour Party as it was Labour Party actions that, amongst other things, introduced the minimum wage, provided paid holidays and legislated to ensure equal pay.

Securing a Labour Government at the next general election represents the best chance our members have for real and meaningful change on the issues that make a difference to our everyday lives. It is the Labour Party that is committed to introducing a £10 per hour minimum wage, ending zero-hours contracts and revoking the Trade Union Act.

All we have seen from the Conservatives is broken promises. During the 2017 General Election, Theresa May promised the, "*greatest extension of rights and protections for employees by any Conservative Government in history*". So far, she has refused to put worker representatives on boards, refused to guarantee workers' rights as we leave the EU and refused to do anything to deal with the problems of the gig economy.

There are many ways that members can get directly involved in the Union's work to promote the Labour Party and policies which will benefit Usdaw members.

Divisional Campaigning

During elections, each division organises campaign days for Usdaw members to promote the Labour Party locally. These are a great way for members, regardless of their level of experience to get involved with the political work of the Union. Campaigning alongside other Usdaw members means that members get to share their experiences, campaigning in a relaxed and friendly environment and really make a difference to the political landscape. Following Labour's impressive gains in the 2017 General Election, many political analysts commented upon how well Labour and the Trade Union Movement were able to convince voters during these types of sessions.

If you are interested in becoming more active in the campaign work of your division, contact your Divisional Political Co-ordinator and ask to be kept up-to-date with campaigning in your area (contact details available on page 17).

Labour Party Membership

If Usdaw members want to get more involved in the political work of the Union, they can join the Labour Party. Labour Party members are able to represent the Union at their local Labour Party meetings and national conferences. Membership also means that Usdaw will have a greater, direct say in the activities of the Labour Party.

Labour Party membership allows Usdaw members to:

- Put across their point of view at meetings and Policy Forums; helping decide Labour's policies.
- Attend Labour Party Conferences.
- Vote in the selection of Labour candidates or stand as a Labour candidate.
- Help Usdaw campaign for the policies our members need such as a higher minimum wage, better rates for young workers and help promote Usdaw's Freedom From Fear and Parents and Carers Campaigns.
- Join in debates, social events and help at elections.

By joining, you do not need to commit to going to meetings or doing anything that you do not want to. But if there's something you do want to change, it gives you the chance to do it.

Membership of the Labour Party is available at a reduced rate for Usdaw members. Membership application forms can be downloaded from www.usdaw.org.uk/labour and completed forms should be returned to the Politics Section at Central Office.

Getting Elected

A key part of Usdaw's long-term approach to politics is to see more of our members elected as local councillors, assembly members and members of parliament.

There are already Usdaw members who have stood for election and won. These members now represent thousands of their colleagues, friends and family and are able to make political decisions that will improve people's lives. It is important that people with real experience of the issues faced by Usdaw members and people like them are the ones taking the big decisions. That is why Usdaw is so keen to support our members getting involved in politics.

The skills learnt as an Usdaw activist and rep are the key skills that prepare people well to hold elected office; compassion, an ability to understand other people's points of view, and a desire to help improve people's lives.

Training and support is available from the Politics Section at Central Office for any Usdaw member seeking to be elected. Even if members are only thinking about the possibility of standing, they should contact the Politics Section who will be able to provide information and advice around how to get selected and what the role would entail.

Having elected politicians who know exactly what life's like for Usdaw members makes an incredible difference when the Union is campaigning on the issues that matter.

Strong Links with the Labour Party

To campaign effectively and deliver our political aims, we need strong links with the Labour Party at every level. Members play a direct role in strengthening and maintaining these links by representing Usdaw as delegates to local Labour Party meetings and attending Labour Party Conferences as well as getting involved as activists and campaigners.

Ushaw	Representation on Labour's National Executive Committee	The Labour Party
	Formal role at Labour's National Policy Forum	
	Delegation sent to Labour's Annual Conference	
Divisions	Representation on Executive Committees and Regional Boards	Scottish Labour, Welsh Labour and Regional Labour Parties
	Delegation sent to National and Regional Conferences	
Branches	Able to affiliate and appoint delegates directly to Constituency Labour Parties	Constituency Labour Parties

Local Affiliations

The most common link between Usdaw and the Labour Party is an affiliation between an Usdaw branch and a Constituency Labour Party.

Affiliating means that Usdaw branches can make our members' views known to the local party, including Labour Councillors, MSPs, AMs, MPs and MEPs and discuss important issues with the wider Labour Party membership. Affiliated branches will receive details of what a local CLP is doing, which means that local Usdaw members can get involved with local campaigns, events and activities.

An Usdaw branch can affiliate to any constituency where members of that branch live. It is helpful to affiliate to several CLPs. The Branch Secretary completes an affiliation form (CO Form AY) and returns it to the Politics Section at Central Office. It costs £6 per year, which is paid by Central Office out of the Branch Political Fund. Annual renewals will be done automatically by Central Office until notice is given by the branch to terminate the affiliation.

Affiliated branches can also:

- Appoint delegates to attend Labour Party meetings.
- Take part in the process to decide whether a Labour politician should stand for election again.
- Take part in the process for nominating new candidates.
- Participate in local political campaigns.
- Encourage local parties and politicians to support Usdaw campaigns.



It is clear that Usdaw's Political Fund is one of the many ways in which the Union is able to deliver for our members. Whether it is defending Sunday Trading restrictions, improving maternity provisions or introducing the National Minimum Wage, any number of the employment rights which our members rely on simply would not exist without the Union's political campaign work.

The Conservatives have a proven track record in voting against all of these provisions and have realised that it is in their interests if such subjects never make it to Parliament. As such, they have launched yet another clear attack to silence the voices of working people. This attack is clearly designed to ensure that the Conservatives can continue to serve their rich paymasters without having to face proper scrutiny.

Thanks to Usdaw's proud track record of organising, we know that we can meet the challenge put forward by the Conservatives. The Union has worked hard to ensure we can provide reps with the best possible recruitment materials to assist in induction sessions. However, as always, it will be the reps in the workplace who are key to delivering success on behalf of members.

At the same time, it is key that our members get involved in politics to ensure that the views of Usdaw members are represented at all levels of government. If you have been motivated to get involved in politics as a result of this statement, please get in contact with Usdaw's Politics Section.



Appendix 1: Useful Contacts

Central Office

Usdaw Politics Section

Political Officer: Michael Wheeler
Research Assistant (Politics): Emily Rowles

Tel: 0161 249 2452
email: politics@usdaw.org.uk

Divisions

South Wales and Western Division

Divisional Officer: Nick Ireland
Divisional Political Co-ordinator: Jason Stevens

Tel: 029 2073 1131
email: cardiff@usdaw.org.uk

Eastern Division

Divisional Officer: Dave McCrossen
Divisional Political Co-ordinator: Andy Hearn

Tel: 01992 709280
email: walthamx@usdaw.org.uk

Midlands Division

Divisional Officer: Gavin Dadley
Divisional Political Co-ordinator: Darren Matthews

Tel: 01527 406290
email: redditch@usdaw.org.uk

North Eastern Division

Divisional Officer: Joanne Thomas
Divisional Political Co-ordinator: Aidan McCarthy

Tel: 0113 232 1320
email: leeds@usdaw.org.uk

Scottish Division

Divisional Officer: Stewart Forrest
Divisional Political Co-ordinator: Rab Donnelly

Tel: 0141 427 6561
email: glasgow@usdaw.org.uk

Southern Division

Divisional Officer: Sue Merrell
Divisional Political Co-ordinator: Rafael Rey

Tel: 0208 687 5950
email: morden@usdaw.org.uk

North West Division

Divisional Officer: Mike Aylward
Divisional Political Co-ordinator: Tony Clare

Tel: 01925 578050
email: warrington@usdaw.org.uk

TU Act – Political Fund – Reps' FAQs

What should I say when recruiting a member?

You shouldn't need to use all the information on this sheet when recruiting new members. Many new members are likely to be happy to join the Political Fund with just a 'one-line' explanation. Recruiters such as yourself have suggested using lines like:

"Tick here to be part of Usdaw's Political Fund to help us campaign on issues such as short hours contracts and parents and carers rights in the workplace."

Or

"Most members are in the Political Fund – this helps Usdaw fight for workers' rights at a national level. Tick here to be part of it too."

If members then query why they should join, hopefully the information in this FAQs sheet should help you address those queries. It is important not to let such queries derail an induction session, so it may be better to deal with any in-depth questions on a one-to-one basis after the induction session.

What is Usdaw's Political Fund?

Most trade unions have a political fund – that is separate from industrial funds. It is a legal requirement that our political work is paid for out of this fund.

Our Political Fund is used to lobby the Government, no matter who is in power, on behalf of the members.

Why does Usdaw need a political fund?

Usdaw needs its Political Fund to deliver on issues that matter to our members.

- Living wage.
- Parents and carers' rights.
- Sunday trading.
- Equality in the workplace.
- Freedom From Fear/Respect Week.

All these working rights – and many more – came about because of trade unions lobbying the Government on behalf of workers.

Without the ability to work with politicians on issues such as workers' rights, housing, the NHS and public services that our members rely on, the views and concerns of our members will be lost from the political debate.

What has changed – why do we now have to opt in?

A new law called the Trade Union Act, brought in by the Conservative Government, means that new members (joining Usdaw from 1 March 2018) will now have to 'opt in'.

The Tories have done this to make it more difficult for members to contribute to the Union's Political Fund. They hope that this will make it harder for the Union to deliver on the issues that affect members.



Isn't it all just about the Labour Party?

No. Usdaw members have decided that the Labour Party best represents their interests and because of this, Usdaw is affiliated to the Labour Party.

However, the Political Fund also supports the Union's campaigns and helps to lobby politicians from all parties on issues that matter to Usdaw members.

I don't support the Labour Party – should I still pay into the Political Fund?

Yes. Usdaw's Political Fund is about raising issues with politicians and ensuring the concerns of Usdaw members are heard.

I'm already a Labour Party member – do I still need to pay into the Political Fund?

Yes. Usdaw's Political Fund is about ensuring that politicians listen to the concerns of Usdaw members. Your commitment to Labour Party membership is separate to the purpose of the Political Fund.

If I don't opt in will I get a second rate service?

Every member has the right to not contribute to the Political Fund. This will not affect your individual service as a Union member. We will still negotiate on your behalf in exactly the same way, and you will still have the full rights to representation and advice from Union reps and officials if you need us.

However, if everyone opts out of paying their contribution to the Political Fund, over time the Union will not have the funds to deal with political issues on your behalf. This means that governments will find it easier to erode your working rights, and will go unchallenged.

How much do members contribute to the Political Fund?

10p per week of your subs goes towards the Political Fund through what is known as the 'Political Levy'. Through all members contributing only a small amount to the fund, Usdaw is able to deliver significant benefits on your behalf.

Is it good value for money?/ What do I get for my money?

Yes. 10p per week is excellent value for money to help Usdaw lobby politicians and continually deliver on issues that matter to you.

Our current campaigns include:

- Protecting Sunday Trading.
- Getting the real Living Wage paid to all workers.
- Improving rights for parents and carers.

Without the Political Fund we won't be able to run campaigns as effectively.

Will people know I'm contributing to the fund?

As with your trade union membership, it is private, but not secret information. Your rep should not need to name members in the branch, but if you pay your subs straight from your wages, then your employer will have the information.

If, for some reason, you do not want your employer to know, you can easily join Usdaw as a direct debit member.

I cannot vote in UK elections, why should I contribute?

The Political Fund helps Usdaw to deliver improvements in your workplace and campaign on issues important to you. To help ensure these improvements can be delivered, we need all members to contribute to the fund.



Usdaw
*Union of Shop, Distributive
and Allied Workers*



Improving workers' lives – Winning for members

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