

Speech to Leeds City Council on Sunday Trading

My lord mayor and councillors,

We have brought this delegation today, on behalf of Usdaw, the retail & distribution workers union, to ask you to oppose the deregulation of Sunday trading and, if handed powers over Sunday trading, as the government is proposing, that you pledge to not extend Sunday trading.

The Sunday trading regulations at present mean that large stores can open for no more than six hours on a Sunday.

There is a likelihood that small businesses would be adversely affected by such deregulation. If supermarkets and other large stores had longer opening hours, this could prove devastating for such businesses.

Retail workers are themselves overwhelmingly opposed to deregulation of Sunday trading. A survey, by Usdaw, found that 90% of retail workers are opposed to such deregulation. For many, Sunday is the only day where you can guarantee that you will have an evening free to spend with friends and family. Deregulation also threatens Sunday premium payments for those who do work Sundays, which if removed would depress pay in an already low paid industry.

Whilst there is also an opt-out from working on Sundays, many retail workers already feel pressured into not taking up that option. There are many for whom Sunday is a special day, for religious and other reasons who will feel increased pressure to work Sunday if shops are to open for longer. There is also a knock-on effect for those working in the supply chain of such stores, which will affect working hours.

The government is making its case for deregulation based on what it perceives as a success of a temporary deregulation around the time of the Olympic Games in 2012. However, trading that year in August, the month that the games fell mostly in was down on a yearly basis by 0.1%.

We believe that no legitimate case for deregulating Sunday trading can be made. The fact that the government is not prepared to deregulate themselves, but push responsibility for such measures on to local authorities, reflects this.

What we are asking from Leeds City Council is to oppose the government's proposals to deregulate Sunday trading and to pledge, if the government does hand the council powers over Sunday trading, not to extend Sunday trading hours.