



## Alternatives to redundancy

Redundancy is one of the most traumatic things that can happen to a worker – and dealing with widespread compulsory redundancies is the worst case scenario for any branch. But there are numerous preventive measures you can negotiate around to avoid or limit that situation.

It's important for UNISON to talk to members – individually and in groups – and give them as much support and information as possible. You should also talk to your members about their ideas for alternatives to redundancy.

The options will vary considerably depending on the size of the authority and the services being provided. Timing is also a factor, so you should start talking about the options as early as possible in the process.

Alternatives include:

- natural wastage – not replacing staff who leave
- freezing recruitment
- eliminating vacant posts
- voluntary redundancy – high compensation will increase takeup and lessen the need for compulsory redundancies
- 'letting go' agency staff
- stopping or reducing overtime
- offering early retirement to volunteers (subject to age discrimination issues)
- retraining
- work sharing – reducing hours (though this could be unfair on part-timers)
- redeploying staff to other areas
- offering existing employees sabbaticals and secondments
- using local supply chains to maximise savings without staff cuts.

### Seeking volunteers

Offering a voluntary redundancy package and then asking for willing volunteers may avoid compulsory redundancies altogether.

### Redeployment

Employers must consider suitable alternative work and are expected to look for it throughout the organisation. The law removes entitlement to a statutory redundancy payment if an employee unreasonably refuses a suitable alternative.

### Training

Union learning representatives should be to the fore in helping people access education and training opportunities. The council should also provide opportunities for workers to retrain and move within existing roles, and offer advice and guidance in the event of redundancy.

With plans to increase the number of apprentice places, consider apprenticeships as a way of retraining staff. Schemes can be for over-24s as well as younger workers.

### Savings suggestions

This toolkit includes a form for you to give to members so they can suggest ways to cut costs without cutting jobs. This could throw up some good ideas and will help you involve members in your campaign.

### **The cost of redundancy to employers**

The precise cost of making a worker redundant depends on the specific circumstances of individual organisations. But the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development estimates the direct cost to an employer ranges from £10,575 for each worker (when they are not replaced afterwards) to £15,242 (if they are replaced by new workers). The cost rises to £16,375 if replacement workers need to be inducted and given initial training.

There are indirect costs too, such as higher staff turnover and lost output – the result of redundancy's impact on the morale of workers who keep their jobs.