



Redundancy in local government

Hard working men and women across the country are being made redundant due to the greed of the already rich and a boom based on excess credit. Local government is not immune. We are witnessing a wave of redundancies across every type of council and in every region. Many people have already been 'let go'. Agency staff have been dismissed with little notice and with no redundancy pay, often after years of service to the community. Vacant posts have been deleted. Now those lucky enough still to be in permanent positions are being affected.

Many of our members are low-paid women who were already struggling to help support their families. The care workers, teaching assistants, benefits clerks, housing workers and the thousands of others who have spent years supporting local communities are facing uncertain futures.

We know that low pay for many UNISON members leads to high debt levels and low morale. Now redundancy and the fear of being made redundant are making a bad situation worse. Many members who still have jobs are feeling their work intensify as more people make demands on local services during a recession. More, not fewer, local government workers are needed.

No-one is denying we are facing hard times. Receipts from planning applications and other types of revenue are affecting council incomes. However, let us not forget that in March 2009 an independent panel of arbitrators found that local government employers could afford an extra 0.3% for pay in 2008/09. Local government finances are not as bad as they are made out to be by the media or the employers. There are alternatives to the pain of losing your job – we need to make them.

Redundancy does not make sense in many situations, as the costs involved and the reduction in spending power to the local economy have a very negative impact. Recent research has shown that for every £1 spent by a local authority, 64p is reinvested back into in the local economy (see APSE 2008, *Creating Resilient Local Economies: Exploring the economic footprint of public services*). In addition, low paid UNISON members support local economies by spending a higher part of their incomes than higher paid workers – they have to, they don't have enough to save!

We can help support our members in fighting redundancies through a range of measures contained in the easy-to-follow factsheets in this toolkit.

If redundancies are being proposed, or if rumours are circulating about them, then many workers beyond those directly affected will be concerned. It is an ideal time to recruit new members, involve members in activity and get new union reps. Above all, branches need to talk to our members – and non-members – and try to respond effectively – in UNISON!

The threat of redundancy is coming from budget cuts, re-organisations, the commissioning agenda in social care and the continuing drive for efficiency savings. Job security has become the top priority for our members and they need UNISON's support more than ever. **It's time to start fighting back.**