



Keep Talking – and ensure your employer engages with you

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Engagement at a higher level with your employer will make a difference in how you function as a GMB rep in times of redundancies.

We know that employers can operate on a sliding scale when it comes to their attitude towards working with trade unions. A scale from really bad to good.

Regardless of their position we can take certain steps to increase our influence.

Why do we want to maximise our influence?

To have any success in tackling job threats the union needs to be the first stop for management providing information and full meaningful consultation.

Don't be complacent. Keep the union involved wherever possible.

Most Recognition Agreements will detail the structure of regular consultation between the employer and GMB.

Often this will be referred to as the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) or something similar. Make sure you know what the consultative arrangements are in your workplace.

Sadly, joint consultative structures often fall into disuse with the gap between meeting getting longer and longer. Now is the time to stop this happening. Get in touch with the relevant manager to make sure that your consultation meetings are taking place.

First item on the agenda needs to be the ongoing viability of the business and the need for your employer to sign our Jobs Charter.

If you don't have existing arrangements then you need to get something in place. Under the current circumstances of the coronavirus pandemic and the shock to the economy, it is reasonable for workplace reps to be meeting frequently with management to hear first, and first hand, what the future holds for the workplace and what the employer is doing to protect jobs. How frequent this should be will vary according to the circumstances but it should be at least monthly and in many cases weekly.

Health and Safety

On a daily basis the way we are managed is so important to the physical and mental health of our members. Establishing or improving your workplace health and safety committee is one way that is extensively supported by the law.

A Health & Safety committee provides a model where everyone (union reps and management) is on equal footing and we can demand information (for example on sickness absence patterns) and argue for policies which impact on our members' physical and mental health, including staffing levels.

Using risk assessments on any changes including the impact of job losses can also work, highlighting the effect on the workers who remain and the practical difficulties in meeting production or service needs.

Do you have a Union Learning Rep (ULR) on your team?

A ULR is a position that can have a really important influence on a regular basis, raising training needs of the workforce, encouraging manager training and developing a healthy relationship with the employer.

This is a good opportunity to build trust and the union's credibility and wider influences.

Are there other unions in the workplace?



If so, are there joint union working committees?

Work at developing trust and sharing of information, particularly in cases of potential or real redundancy threats.

Argue the need for union co-operation to prevent divide and conquer tactics. Be confident in the GMB approach and principles/charter.

In larger companies including multi-nationals, do you have a European Works Council or international trade union liaison committee? Can you spread an atmosphere and perception of union solidarity across the group?

Build relationships with local politicians and journalists alerting them of the GMB Charter and the implication of redundancies. This could be the economic impact and the possible knock on effect or the threat to local services and public opinion.

