

Redundancy scenes

(a 'teachable moment' – Shaun Monday (2011))

Three short scenes focusing on the questions and decisions that arise on being made redundant.

The scenes have as the main protagonist

- an employee
- aged late 50s to early 60s
- in current employment for 10 years plus
- in employer's pension scheme

These scenes may be used in the following ways.

Possible formats:

- an audio recording to be used to prompt discussion
- a script for a role-play activity
- a script to be developed with more detail written in related to participant led research ('local' information)

Task

Participants take various roles in the scripts and read through. Others follow the scripts.

In small groups, participants discuss what issues are raised and what actions they would recommend to the employee.

Responses to the task

The following are **issues** that could be discussed and developed:

- ❑ people receive and use information differently
- ❑ financial information is conditional on personal circumstances
- ❑ people in similar situations should share available knowledge
- ❑ external factors can limit choices
- ❑ financial payments often encumbered with constraints and by regulations
- ❑ personal attitudes can limit (or enhance) what is seen to be advantageous
- ❑ collecting information needs evaluating which leads to further decision making

There are a number of **sources of information** that may help cases:

- ❑ union representatives
- ❑ Citizen Advice Bureau
- ❑ Solicitors (you may get advice through home insurance policies)
- ❑ Equality and Human Rights Commission

The following is the type of **information gathering** that may be useful:

- ❑ Regulations for maximum redundancy payments
- ❑ Statutory and 'usual' limits of redundancy pay
- ❑ Local redundancy arrangements

- ❑ Local agreements about early retirement
- ❑ Local pension scheme(s)
- ❑ National retirement regulations and policy
- ❑ National unemployment regulations and policy
- ❑ Local job market – full-time, part-time
- ❑ Regulations for occasional or private work

Other notes on the activity

Names may be better to use, but gender and ethnicity then need to be considered, and the expectations and prejudices of the audience. These are amendments that can be made according to context

The scenes are written as generally as possible, and so actual ages and amounts of money usually included in regulations are avoided. These could be included if a specific group with a shared experience were using the scenes. This is what is meant by 'local' in the list of 'information gathering' above

Scene 1

A discussion with work colleagues (Coll 1, Coll 2 & Coll 3), all of whom are being made compulsorily redundant

'Me' is the protagonist

Coll 1: You don't seem at all worried about the redundancy, do you know something we don't

Me: No, no – I'm just trying to see what this means. I know some of us who are older can be entitled to a bigger redundancy pay – but then future jobs are much less likely.

Coll 2: It isn't just your age – although that's connected – it's how long you've been working here

Coll 1: and there is continuous service . . .

Coll 3: What's that?

Coll 1: You know, if you have worked somewhere else but like here – same type of employer – then working there "your service" . . .

Me: sound like being a servant . . .

Coll 1: your work in the other place counts – so 5 years here and 7 in the other means you have 12 years continuous service.

Coll 3: Thanks – 'cos I've only been here 3, but it was 10 previously

Me: So there going to tell us what we have got and we can check that on the website, that Government one

Coll 2: Is that all they are going to give us? You here all sorts of things about the payouts employees get. What's different about us?

Me: That was what I was looking at – they have to give us the statutory minimum, but that has an assumed maximum salary, and we all earn more than that – some of us twice that amount, I think. So if they use your real salary . . .

Coll 1: I don't expect they will pay anything they don't have too . . .

Coll 3: I'm sorry – but you're beginning to lose me. Whose salary do they base it on?

Scene 2

The protagonist (Me) and a Union representative (ur)

Me: We have just heard they have agreed to base the redundancy payment on our real salaries – it makes quite a difference in my case

Ur: Are there no conditions – there usually are?

Me: We have to sign a confidentiality agreement – but I don't see that is going to make any difference to me.

Ur: Well it might if you think your redundancy was unfair. Usually these agreements are there to stop you taking your employer to a tribunal after you have left, to challenge the redundancy.

Me: Well at the moment it seems much easier to take the money – that is what most of us think. There hasn't been any offer to vary the final date of employment has there? As I said to you before what is really unfair is that it is so close to drawing my pension.

Ur: We have been discussing that. They have closed down all early retirement schemes, and so anything to do with drawing your pension early has to be worked out with the pension scheme you pay into.

Me: I thought you were sorting out something on that - they don't seem to know anything here. They were helpful though when I asked them to notify the Pension Scheme that their records were wrong for my start date here.

Ur: We have not been able to negotiate new agreements since the management changed here, but if you have a case you want us to take up, we will. We are of course in a national dispute over the proposed changes to the whole pension scheme – but that won't change your situation now.

Me: I never understood it in the first place and now all this talk about three eightieths and converting pensions to lump sums, it doesn't make a great deal of sense.

Ur: Well, there is another meeting in a couple of weeks, but I don't think the offer will be any better.

Scene 3

The protagonist (me) and a close friend/partner/spouse (you)

Me: It's got really confusing now. Redundancy seemed straightforward – they give you a date, you take your money and in a shorter or longer time you get another job.

You: So what is different now?

Me: Well the job situation is not good; the best options are part-time and may be some private work.

You: Well that sounds quite positive – especially if you have some redundancy money to cover a few months.

Me: But most people say I might as well retire – well I don't think they mean not do anything, but take my pension, so there is less pressure to find paid work.

You: So what is wrong with that – apply!

Me: But I don't know if that will be best. I have looked at the website for pensions, for unemployed, for other jobs. They all give me information, but not quite the right information. I may know what my pension will be now – but what if I work part time as well – what is my status? Am I self-employed or retired? Should I postpone retirement? Shall I just give up?

You: Isn't it time to make a list? Or may be you should make a few appointments. What about the bank? I know you don't usually go there but they must have some guidance.

Me: All I know is that on Monday morning I go and register with the Job Centre. Even then I think they will say I am too old.

You: Too old for what?

Me: Yeh, that's what I'm worried about