

Robert* came to see me after being made redundant. His employer, a construction company, had not given Robert any warning but had simply called him into a meeting and informed him that his services were no longer required. This news came as a complete shock, leaving Robert with a mortgage to pay and family to support and no prospect of employment for the immediate future. While Robert accepted that his employer was having difficulty getting building contracts in the current market, and that the decision to make him redundant may have been justified on business grounds, the way in which his dismissal was handled had given him no opportunity to prepare for the situation in which he now found himself. If he had known that he might be made redundant and been invited to discuss this with his employer under a proper consultation procedure (which an employer is legally obliged to implement) Robert would have been willing to propose alternatives to being made redundant such as reducing his hours of work or even accepting a cut in his salary in order to remain in employment. Due to the way that his redundancy had been handled he did not have the opportunity to do so and faced an uncertain future.

Happily for Robert he was able to present a claim at the Employment Tribunal for his employer's failure to consult him about his redundancy, and at the Hearing was awarded compensation equivalent to several months' salary. This granted Robert peace of mind for the immediate future, well-deserved after such a worrying time, and I was pleased to hear recently that he has got a new job.

Employment regulations impose strict obligations on employers and are frequently amended. The consequences of not following the correct procedure are so severe that it is

essential to be aware of the up-to-date requirements. I am always glad to give free preliminary advice on employment matters, which are especially important at the moment. DHC

*Not his real name.