

# FD Consultants

## Psychosocial Support and Trauma Specialist Services

### Managing Restructure & Redundancy - Guidance for Managers

The task of having to make staff members' roles redundant usually arises at times of significant change within an organisation. Typically managers will be in the midst of having to adjust to restructuring themselves - whilst also being called upon to minimise expenditure yet maintain, or even increase, the output of their team. If you are a manager having to make roles within your team redundant, it is therefore important to be aware of the multiple challenges you may be facing, to look after yourself, and to make use of what support is around you as you go through this potentially demanding process. Enforced change means that many of the things you are facing will be beyond your control. However, there will be some aspects that you can influence. These are things you can do in order to aim for a 'good enough' ending with staff who will be leaving, and an optimally smooth transition for those who will remain within your team.

Here are some pointers to hold in mind:

- *At times of restructure high levels of anxiety tend to be present within organisations.* Gossip and speculation are likely to circulate - with staff often envisaging 'worst case scenarios' regarding redundancy and enforced change. Where possible, it is important to communicate clearly with staff - telling them what you are able to share and letting them know honestly when there are questions that you are currently unable to answer. Whilst your HR team should be taking the lead with regards to managing the redundancy process within your organisation, gaining some background knowledge for yourself about the legal and practical issues concerned may help.

ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) provides free and impartial information and advice to employers and employees on all aspects of workplace relations and employment law. Their website gives details [regarding the management of staff redundancies](#), as does the [Gov.UK website](#).

When it comes to disseminating news about redundancies, group e-mail may be an efficient way of quickly sharing factual information about restructuring with staff. However, do maintain the ongoing opportunity for face-to-face discussion in team meetings and one-to-ones. It is always best to break the potentially devastating news of actual redundancy to a staff member in a confidential and individual face-to-face context.

- *Redundancy is a form of loss.* As with a close bereavement, no matter how much it is anticipated or planned for, it is likely to come as a shock and to have a significant impact on the individual whose role is being made redundant. It will also affect key people in their lives, such as partners and any dependents, as well as the rest of their team. In being told their role is being made redundant an individual may not only be losing a means of their financial security - they are also likely to be losing a central aspect of their identity and part of their professional pride. This is alongside loss of their daily routine and contact with colleagues who they may well have become close to. Feelings associated with grief will emerge after the news of redundancy is delivered - and such feelings are often conflicting, or may come in stages. Your staff member might feel anger, sadness, relief, or even a sense of numbness and going 'into denial'. It is important not to make assumptions about how they will feel and it is helpful to be as accepting as you can in the face of their responses. Given your involvement in the situation you may not be the most appropriate person for your staff member to talk openly to about their reaction to the news of their redundancy. Therefore, where possible, it can be of benefit to allow them access to a means of external psycho-social support - for example, a series of counselling sessions with an EAP (Employee Assistance Programme).
- *Be mindful of the language/terminology you use when speaking to staff about restructuring.* Without ill intention you may escalate emotional distress by the language you use. For example, stating that the 'person' is being made redundant, compared to the 'role' is being made redundant can have a big impact on the individual and their self-worth, and at the same time, holding in mind the sense of loss and emotional turmoil the individual member of staff is going through.

- *Once news of the redundancy has settled, staff often need practical support with regards to the question of 'what next'?* Enabling them access to assistance with job-hunting and CV writing can be very helpful, alongside being clear with them about what is possible in terms of seeking references and dealing with any outstanding remuneration and benefits. Your HR department will be in the best position to advise on many of these matters. Whilst it may seem stark, staff need to be informed on a practical note of when they will last have access to the building where they work, and when they will need to clear their desks and return work-related property. Clarity around such matters will help them to prepare psychologically. It will also be important, in a timely manner, to implement plans within the team for a suitable 'hand-over' of any outgoing team-member's work or case-load so that this can be adequately managed.
- *Endings are important.* When the time comes, saying goodbye appropriately to any staff member who is leaving will stand for a lot in terms of how you and they remember their time spent within your organisation (and potentially how they speak about it to others, which is important in terms of organisational reputation). Arranging to give a farewell gift, holding a small event such as a team lunch or 'farewell drinks', or mentioning the team-member in a team meeting, are all ways in which you can acknowledge an individual's departure and thank-them for their contribution. Finding out from them what would 'feel right' is respectful, though, and may give the team-member who is leaving a helpful sense of retaining some control with regards to their ending. Some people hate big parties and being the centre of attention so may prefer a quiet and discreet exit. Others, however, may enjoy the opportunity to be in the spotlight for a while and want to make more of an 'event' of their leaving.
- *After your staff member(s) have left, the task of moving your team forward and resuming operations at work with an altered structure will remain.* Things are likely to take time to settle and 'bed down'. Checking in regularly with team-members who have had to change roles or take on additional tasks will be important, as will be allowing them to access as much training or support as possible in order to equip them to deal with any new expectations being made of them. Do make good use of your own line-management, links to your HR department, and peer support during this part of the process.

### Summary

Whilst it will, no doubt, at points be difficult, supporting a team through a restructure - including the task of managing staff redundancies - is something that has the potential to feel like a significant achievement. It is likely to bring you valuable learning and experience within your role as a manager - and a sense that, in the face of tough circumstances, you did your best to be fair, supportive, and to maintain a constructive future focus within your team. However, it will probably be a point in your working-life when your stress-levels are high and your personal resources at risk of becoming depleted. Do try to retain a reasonable work-life balance, to maintain healthy eating, sleeping and exercise regimes, and to stay connected to the important people and practices in your life outside of work. If you feel some additional assistance may be of benefit, FD Consultants are accustomed to supporting members of staff affected by restructures and redundancies. Please do contact us to discuss your circumstances and needs, and to find out how we may be able to help.

### About FD Consultants

FD Consultants support anyone who has been impacted by trauma through work or personal circumstances, whether directly or indirectly. We offer consultancy to organisations when implementing a trauma management programme and duty of care policies for psychosocial support. FD Consultants offer services to enable individuals to remain resilient in highly stressful environments and situations.

We support individuals suffering trauma, vicarious trauma, stress, and burnout. We believe in working and walking alongside individuals or organisations empowering them to find their own solutions and we strongly believe everyone can recover from mental health challenges with the right help and support.