

Story 1

“Unfortunately, due to current adverse trading conditions, we are going to have to embark upon a redundancy process.”

That is what faced me (and others) in January 2015 when the initial impact of the falling oil price began to bite. But before I start, let’s make one thing clear. The falling oil price and the corresponding job losses companies are facing, are not restricted to the oil industry. Everywhere you turn in Aberdeen, there are people facing similarly difficult trading conditions. Last week I spoke to a jeweller, who mentioned that their business is struggling as people are not spending what they were previously. Before that I spoke to a nursery worker, who mentioned that for the first time in years, they have not got a waiting list and in fact, have spaces free as children have departed as the parents are no longer working. The current jobs crisis in Aberdeen is far reaching, and goes beyond “the oil industry” and there are many people across our city who are experiencing real and multiple difficulties. Over the next few weeks, we aim to raise awareness (based on my own experience) of some of the challenges and to provide guidance as to where you can seek support – both practical and emotional – at a time of stress and anxiety. And with support and guidance around you, it is important to remember – **You’re Not Alone.**

In January 2015, the business I worked for started to experience difficulties. The preceding 6 months had been much quieter in terms of business activity and going into the New Year, we all anticipated it might be tough. After the festive break, we returned to work and were advised that unfortunately, the business could not sustain the staff we had, and as such redundancies were the only option. In addition, the remaining staff were also advised of pay cuts which would take effect immediately, and also cuts to benefits as well. Although in the cold light of day, it was perhaps not unexpected, it was still a bitter blow. When the announcement was made, there were tears and a real sense of shock and uncertainty as to what the future holds. Despite knowing that the year ahead would be challenging, this announcement made that fact crystal clear.

Many of you will have faced similar situations in recent months. So how do you cope? One of the first things I did was to phone my wife to explain the situation to her. She was understandably concerned but offered reassurance that we would work through whatever would come next. Other people do not have that support network around them and with all of the uncertainty and no-one to talk to, it can be a lonely place. However, there is support out there to help:

- **Aberdeen City Council – Financial Inclusion team**
(http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/council_government/council_tax_benefits/Financial_Inclusion_Team/fit_moneyadvice.asp)
- **Aberdeen Citizens Advice Bureau** (<http://www.aberdeencab.org.uk/>)
- **Pathways** (<http://www.pathways-online.org/index.html>)
- **Mental Health Aberdeen** (<http://www.mha.uk.net/>)

With initial redundancies taking place, there was a real need to support our departed colleagues and to try and re-assure them (as best we could) that they would be okay, and importantly, that we would support them in any way we could. And for those of us that were remaining, there was a real sense of togetherness and mutual support. **You’re Not Alone.**