

Remploy staff ballot on strike

Voluntary redundancies offered as production drops

UNIONS are to ballot more than 200 disabled workers in Sheffield, Chesterfield and Worksop for industrial action, after factory bosses announced a wave of voluntary redundancies.

Remploy, which helps get disabled people into work and runs factories across the country, says production has been running at just 50 per cent capacity because of the economic downturn.

Voluntary redundancy has been offered at all the company's sites - including to 130 staff at Brightside Lane in Sheffield, 70 in Worksop and 13 in Chesterfield.

Workers' reps, who are campaigning for staff to reject the offers, claim bosses failed to consult with trade unions. On Monday they will issue an indicative ballot for industrial action.

BEA SPENCER
News Reporter

GMB Sheffield convener James Stribley said: "Morale is at rock bottom. They are trying to get rid of as many people as they can."

Phil Davies, GMB national secretary, added: "Considering we are talking about disabled people, many with mental health problems, it's totally disgusting."

In March 2008 more than 2,000 disabled workers were forced onto benefits when 29 Remploy sites were closed. More than 90 per cent of those workers are still not working - a testament the closures did not save money. History tells us that making disabled people redundant is not the answer as it forces these people onto benefits.

A spokesman for Remploy, which gets much of its funding from the Government, said: "This year the company will support more than 16,000 disadvantaged people into work."

"We continue to expand our employment services business and aim to support more than 30,000 people into work each year by 2012/13."

"Our factory businesses, however, have suffered the effects of the current economic climate and do not have the level of business we need and anticipated. Many of our factories do not have enough work."

"As a result Remploy is not fulfilling its mission to provide sustainable employment opportunities for disabled people."

"The company plans to offer voluntary redundancy to employees working in our enterprise businesses and central services."