

If changes are difficult to agree

Reaching agreement on changes to employment contracts can sometimes be difficult. You, your employer and any employee representatives, should continue to explore all options for as long as is reasonably possible.

It can be particularly difficult if proposed changes are complex. Negotiations can take time, there may be disagreements and there might be times when it seems like there's no way forward.

It can be helpful to remember that disagreements often generate new ideas and lead to solutions.

Keep discussions constructive

To stay focused on keeping discussions constructive, it can help to:

- share any more relevant information – being transparent about your reasons can help others understand them better and make discussions more effective
- continue to ask questions and listen to answers – taking time to understand other people's views can help you find common ground
- be prepared to consider proposals that are different to your preferred outcome – be open-minded to finding other solutions
- try to agree one change at a time – it can help to break down complex problems into smaller ones, for example start with 'what' might need to change, then move on to 'how' and 'when'
- recognise that differences of opinion are normal and to be expected – considering different views can lead to new possibilities to explore
- try to find a solution that includes something for everyone – do not assume that someone must win and someone must lose

Explore if alternative solutions might be possible

If proposed changes seem difficult to accept, it can be helpful to explore if there's anything that might make the proposal more attractive.

For example, if your employer proposes a change that requires staff to work unsociable hours, they might be able to offer extra pay for those hours.

You could also consider if:

- a change could be introduced gradually rather than all at once
- a change could be introduced on a temporary basis only
- all parts of a proposed change are needed, or if some aims could be achieved in other ways
- there are solutions that may not need a contract change

However, if there's a 'collective agreement' with a trade union, it should set out a 'collective bargaining' procedure for negotiations between your employer and the union.

Your employer must not make direct offers to you as an incentive to give up any of your terms that are covered by the agreement, unless they've followed and genuinely believe they've exhausted the agreed collective bargaining procedure.

If they make direct offers without first exhausting the agreed procedure, you can make a claim to an [employment tribunal](#).

You should talk to a trade union representative if you are in this situation.

How Acas can help

Acas offers a range of services that can help you, employee representatives and employers resolve disagreements.

[Find out more about Acas support and training on changing employment contracts](#)