

Your guide to managing cancer in the workplace





No two situations are the same, so a cancer diagnosis will mean something different for everyone, from different physical symptoms and treatment to different emotional and financial burdens.

If someone in your workforce is diagnosed with cancer, or cancer is affecting someone close to them, this guide can help.

We outline your responsibilities as an employer, **what you can do to support your employees** and much more.

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Where to start

Even before cancer impacts your workforce, it's important to be prepared.



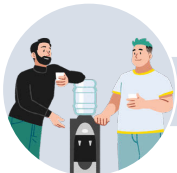
Check your policies are up to date

- Make sure your policies for sickness, long-term conditions or health and wellbeing are up to date and easy to understand
- Make sure they recognise the difference between managing short-term absence and managing someone with a long-term condition like cancer
- Make sure your policies include managing an employee who is caring for someone with a potentially long-term condition, such as cancer



Train your managers

- It's important managers are able and ready to support employees, and there's a great deal of help available
- Visit Macmillan's **Training and Support for Employers** pages for more information on their training programme as well as other resources designed to help support your managers.



Educate your employees

- Help your employees to understand more about the support available if they are diagnosed with cancer and how to help if someone else is diagnosed
- Order a copy of the '**Your work and cancer toolkit**' from Macmillan.



Raise awareness of cancer

- Highlight the support you can offer employees affected by cancer
- Encourage staff to take part in fundraising.

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a blue patterned top, is holding a red ribbon in her right hand. The background is blurred, showing a window with light coming through. The red ribbon is a symbol for cancer awareness.

Understanding cancer

There are over
200 types
of cancer with
many different
treatments

An employer or line manager is an important source of support for employees.

Making sure you and your line managers have a basic understanding of cancer and types of treatment will help. This could help you recognise and plan for any circumstances that may crop up.

Treatment

Someone with cancer may feel overwhelmed. They may face a long treatment path or have medical appointments, and may need time off work.

No two days or situations are the same, but here's a basic overview of the types of treatment they might face.



Surgery

- An employee may need day surgery, meaning they are in and out of hospital within a day.
- Alternatively, they may need to stay in hospital for a while.
- It will depend on the type of operation they have and how they recover from it.
- This will affect the amount of time off work your employee needs to recover.



For more information, [visit here](#)



Radiotherapy

- Radiotherapy uses high-energy x-rays to destroy cancer cells.
- Treatment usually happens Monday and Friday.
- A course of treatment may take a few weeks.
- Although treatment may only take a few minutes, getting to and from hospital and waiting for treatment could take up most of the day.
- Some people feel able to work during radiotherapy, but they may need to reduce their hours. Others may need to stop working completely during and after treatment.
- Radiotherapy can make the person feel very tired, which can continue for weeks or months after treatment finishes.
- They may experience other side effects which can last for a few weeks after treatment before they start to improve.



For more information, [visit here](#)



Chemotherapy

- Chemotherapy uses anti-cancer (cytotoxic) drugs to destroy cancer cells. The drugs may be given as an injection into a vein (intravenously) or as tablets.
- A course of chemotherapy may last for a few months.
- Most people have chemotherapy as an outpatient in hospital, but it can take most of the day.
- Some people may need to stay in hospital overnight or for a few days.
- People usually have a break of a few weeks between treatments to give them time to recover.
- Some people are too unwell to work during a chemotherapy cycle. Others may only need a few days off after each treatment or may need to temporarily reduce their hours.
- Side effects can include:
 - risk of infection or bleeding (because of the effects on blood cells)
 - tiredness
 - hair loss
 - nausea
 - diarrhoea.
- If your employee feels well enough to work, there are things they may need to do to reduce their risk of infection. This could include working from home or working different hours, so they can travel to and from work at quieter times.
- Before making any changes, talk to your employee and ask what advice they've had around their working pattern.



For more information, **visit here**



Hormonal therapies

- Hormonal therapies reduce the level of certain hormones in the body or block their effects on the cancer cells.
- People usually have these drugs as tablets and can take them for months or years. Some are given as injections every few weeks or months.
- Hormonal therapies normally don't affect a person's ability to work as much as some other cancer treatments. But they can cause:
 - tiredness
 - weight gain
 - hot flushes
 - sweats
 - muscle pain.



For more information, **visit here**



Targeted therapies

- Targeted therapy drugs affect the way cancer cells grow.
- They are given as an intravenous infusion through a drip or as tablets.
- They are often given with other treatments.
- Possible side effects include:
 - flu-like symptoms
 - chills
 - headaches
 - a raised temperature
 - risk of infection
 - tiredness.
- People may be able to keep working if they have a targeted therapy on its own, but tiredness and other side effects may make it difficult.



For more information, **visit here**

Physical side effects

Someone living with cancer may experience a range of physical side effects, whether during or after treatment. One of the biggest of these is fatigue.

Coping with fatigue

This is a different type of tiredness to everyday tiredness. Someone with cancer may get tired quickly, even after low activity. Rest or sleep may not help.

Fatigue may get worse during different stages of cancer treatment or at different times of the day. For most people, fatigue lessens after treatment finishes, but for some it may continue for months or sometimes years.



- ✓ finds it harder to do certain tasks
- ✓ has less strength and energy than they did before
- ✓ has difficulty concentrating and remembering things
- ✓ becomes exhausted during meetings or after tasks that don't need much energy
- ✓ struggles to control their emotions
- ✓ becomes irritable and finds it hard to talk to others
- ✓ sometimes feels dizzy or light-headed.



Employees with cancer may have **less strength and energy** than they did before, which can affect how they work

How you can help

Even relatively small adjustments could make a big difference to your employees, **such as:**

- ✓ reducing their hours
- ✓ changing their start and/or finish time to travel at less busy times
- ✓ enabling them to work from home
- ✓ giving them easier tasks
- ✓ allowing them more breaks or time to rest during the working day.

It's important to talk to your employee and ask them what might work best for them.

Find out more about fatigue

Macmillan's webpage about fatigue looks at how it can affect someone. It could help you and your employee better understand the impacts.



Visit Macmillan's webpage on **Tiredness** to find out more

Body changes

Cancer and its treatment can change the way a person looks. These changes may be temporary or permanent.

Body changes will depend on the person's situation, but can include:

- ✓ hair loss
- ✓ changes in complexion or skin tone
- ✓ scarring
- ✓ weight loss or weight gain.

These changes could affect how your employee thinks and feels about their appearance, which could affect their confidence.

Find out more about body image and cancer

You can view or order Macmillan's '**body image and cancer**' booklet which includes helpful information.

Emotional effects of cancer

A cancer diagnosis and treatment can have a huge impact on someone, their family, friends, and colleagues.

When someone is diagnosed with cancer, they may feel shocked and numb at first. Uncertainty can be one of the hardest things to deal with. Some people manage this by taking one day at a time and not looking too far into the future. Others want to find out as much as possible about their situation to get back a feeling of control. Some people take a while to accept they have cancer. They may try to carry on as if nothing is wrong.

They may feel many different emotions, including:

- ✓ anger
- ✓ sadness
- ✓ fear – of the cancer, treatment or dying
- ✓ loneliness.

Going for tests and waiting for the results can be a worrying time, and the employee may want to keep their situation confidential.

They may want to be with people close to them or need some time off if they, a loved one or a friend are diagnosed with cancer.

Finding out that cancer has come back can also be upsetting. This can be particularly difficult if the person needs more treatment or if there are fewer treatment options than before.

Your employee's emotions

Cancer can cause many different emotions. Your employee's mood might change quickly and unexpectedly.

If this happens while they are at work, it might help to offer them a private space for a while. Alternatively, you could suggest they go home for the rest of the day. Ask if they would like you to contact a family member or friend to travel home with them.



For more support and information on how to support someone affected by cancer, [visit here](#)

Your emotions

It's natural for you and your colleagues to also have strong feelings. Ask for support to help you cope with your own emotions.

It may help to talk to someone else in the workplace or to get help through Macmillan. Remember confidentiality and how much the person wants others to know.

Find out more about the emotional effects of cancer

Macmillan's '**emotional effects of cancer**' booklet explains more about the different feelings people may have following a cancer diagnosis and what can help. It may help both you and your employee to read it.

How cancer may affect someone at work

A cancer diagnosis and treatment will affect different people in different ways. **It can depend on:**

- ✓ the type of cancer
- ✓ the stage of the cancer (its size and how far it has spread)
- ✓ any symptoms it may cause
- ✓ the type of treatment and its side effects
- ✓ how the person copes when faced with a difficult situation.

Some people want to continue working to help keep some normality. It can also help them take their minds off things.

Some people may have to stop working to care for themselves or a loved one affected by cancer.

Every situation is different

A cancer experience is one of uncertainty and anxiety, with no two days the same. Many people want a sense of control for themselves and their loved ones as they deal with their situation.

An employee will have their own unique needs at different stages. For example, some may want to actively seek information, be involved in decision making, know specifics about their treatment. However, some may want the opposite – relying on the medical teams for decision making, looking for a steer from consultants, wanting people to give them information rather than having to find it themselves.

Overall, balance is key, with the experience being as simple as possible, not overwhelming so it becomes a burden. Individuals want to feel empowered, with speedy access to expertise, flexibility, privacy, and getting the support they need from personal relationships and their community.

And don't forget, you need to make sure your employee knows you will support them after treatment. This could help reduce some of the stress and trauma they may have experienced.



Why work is important for someone affected by cancer

- It can help keep or bring back a sense of normality
- Help take their mind off treatment, their diagnosis
- It can provide an income and social contact
- It can help with recovery and lead to better health.

How to help at work

You and your line managers are an important source of support for employees with cancer or those caring for someone with cancer.

Why line managers are important:

- ✓ They are often the first person the employee contacts when they are unwell and can't go to work or want to meet with HR or occupational health
- ✓ They are responsible for the day-to-day management of the employee on their return
- ✓ They play an important role in making any reasonable adjustments for the employee
- ✓ They can change the level of pressure or demand on an employee, which will be important if they are returning to work after some time off
- ✓ They can help reduce stress and support an employee when they come back to work after time off.

Line manager responsibilities

The employee's line manager should contact the HR manager and occupational health for the information and support they need as a manager.

This could be guidance about the employee's health condition, advice on any reasonable adjustments needed or information about their return-to-work plan.

They might also find it helpful to discuss any worries they have with these people. However, if an employee wants to keep their diagnosis confidential, the line manager must respect this.



10 tips for line managers



Communication is important

Listen to the employee and try to understand their situation. It's fine to ask questions when they are sharing information.



Keep in touch

It's important to stay in touch when they are on sick leave, so the line manager and employee should agree together how and when they will keep in contact. Put this in writing and review it regularly.



Be sensitive to the employee's needs

Everyone's experience of cancer is different, so make time to understand their individual needs.



Respect the employee's right to privacy

Ask the employee if they want other people to know. If they do, ask them how and when they would like people to be told and respect their wishes.



Be prepared to make adjustments

Employers are obliged to make reasonable adjustments to the workplace or the employee's job to help them to stay in work or come back to work. Your HR manager or occupational health service can give you advice.



Check guidelines and policies

Check what guidelines and policies the company has in place to support the employee to help manage the situation. These may include guidance about sickness absence, long-term conditions, time off work and occupational health.



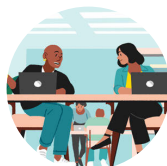
Find out about financial support

Find out whether the company offers financial support to people who are off work, such as sick pay.



Respect carers' rights at work

Carers have certain rights at work, including taking unpaid time off to care for the person they look after in an emergency. Flexible working could make it easier for carers to keep working. Macmillan's **'Working while caring'** booklet explains more.



Discuss a return-to-work plan

When the employee is ready, talk with them about a return-to-work plan to find out what support they might need at work. It could involve a phased return where they increase their hours gradually or it might mean handing over work slowly. You could also consider reasonable adjustments to support their wellbeing.



Recognise the impact on the wider team

Be aware of the impact that having an employee with cancer can have on others. For more support, talk to other managers, the HR manager, or **call the Macmillan Support Line on 0808 239 6341***.

*Lines open 8am-8pm, 7 days a week. Calls are recorded and monitored.

Flexible working

Flexible working could make it easier for employees living with or caring for someone with cancer to keep working. Employees have a legal right to request flexible working under certain laws.

Options for time off

Sick leave

- ✓ Read up on your company's sick leave policies as they will usually include information about taking time off for appointments.
- ✓ Cancer is often a long-term and uncertain condition, so you should consider being flexible with your sick leave policy. For example, you could allow more time off for medical appointments or adjust the sickness absence triggers that normally lead to action by an employer.
- ✓ Your employee may be entitled to company sick pay under their employment contract. Often called occupational or contractual sick pay, it can often be more generous.
- ✓ If possible, you should think about reasonably adjusting your company sick pay policy. This could be to cover extended periods over and above the level of sick pay an organisation must legally or contractually provide.

Statutory sick pay

If your employee is eligible for statutory sick pay, you must give them a form called SSP1. This tells them when the last payment will be. It also gives them information about applying for a benefit – **Employment Support Allowance** – for people who can't work because they are ill or disabled.

If your employee is likely to be off work for longer than 28 weeks, you can give them the SSP1 form up to six weeks before their statutory sick pay is due to finish. This means they can start a claim for Employment Support Allowance before their sick pay ends.

As a manager, it's a good idea to tell your employee about the SSP1 form before it goes out to them, explaining what it is and what it means.

Statutory sick pay
is paid after
**four days of
sickness**
and lasts for up to
28 weeks of
illness.*



* gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay, accessed March 2026.
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Fit note

During the first seven days of sickness, an employee can self-certify that they are unable to work. After this time, a doctor may issue a fit note (previously known as a sick note). This allows a doctor to advise if someone may or may not be fit for work. The fit note will also say why. Someone completely fit for work will not be given a fit note.

If the note says someone may be fit for work, the GP should include information about how the person's illness affects them. They may also give advice about what could be done to help the person at work (reasonable adjustments).

You and your employee should talk about and agree any changes that would help them come back to work.

Time off for appointments

Your employee may want to agree some time off. They should try to let you know in advance, so you can arrange cover if needed, but this may not always be possible.

Your sick leave policy should include information on how to deal with time off for medical appointments. But you may need to be flexible. It will depend how many appointments they have and how often they are. Allowing time off work for appointments is a reasonable adjustment.

Hiring temporary cover

You may need to arrange temporary cover if your employee can't work for a long period of time or wants to work fewer hours.

You should:

- ✓ talk about this honestly with your employee
- ✓ be clear about your reasons for hiring temporary cover
- ✓ listen to their thoughts and concerns
- ✓ tell them the extra help is temporary
- ✓ follow your company's standard process for employing temporary workers.

Making reasonable adjustments

Because cancer is legally defined as a disability, under equality laws employers have an obligation to make reasonable adjustments, if they know or should reasonably be expected to know that an employee has cancer. One or two small changes could make a big difference and may help your employee stay at work.

There is no fixed description of what a reasonable adjustment should be. It will depend on:

- ✓ how much the adjustment will help the employee
- ✓ how practical it is to make the adjustment
- ✓ the cost of making the adjustment
- ✓ how the adjustment will affect the company or organisation
- ✓ the size of the company or organisation and the resources it has.

You should seek advice from your HR manager, occupational health service or a legal adviser if you need guidance on your duty to make reasonable adjustments.

Examples of reasonable adjustments

- Giving your employee time off for medical appointments or for rehabilitation.
- Changing your employee's job description to remove tasks that are particularly difficult because of the cancer.
- Temporarily giving some of the employee's work to a colleague.
- Allowing them to work different hours, such as working part-time, having a flexible start or finish time, or working from home, so they can work when they have the most energy and perhaps travel at quieter times.
- Giving them extra breaks if they feel very tired or are coping with fatigue as a short rest in a quiet place can be helpful.
- Changing their performance targets to allow for time off or any treatment side effects, such as fatigue.
- Moving them to a job with more suitable tasks for their situation – if they agree.
- Making sure they can access the building if they use mobility equipment, such as a wheelchair or crutches.
- Giving them a parking space closer to the entrance.
- Change where they work, for example by moving them to a ground floor office if they find it difficult to climb stairs.
- Giving them computer equipment that might help, for example, voice-activated software if they can't type.
- Making sure they can get to the toilet easily (providing an accessible toilet).
- Changing the date or time of a job interview if it was planned at the same time as a medical appointment.
- Giving them the option to work from home to help them save energy and travel less.
- Make sure their home has a suitable work environment and they have the right equipment to do the job.
- Help them stay in touch with colleagues, so they don't become isolated.
- Allowing a phased return to work.

Workplace Adaption Passports

You could agree and put in place a Workplace Adaption Passport.

This gives you and your employee an agreed record of workplace adjustments. You can review and adapt it as their individual needs change.

It means both you and your employee can see what you've agreed to put in place to help them keep working or to come back to work. It can also help if your employee moves teams during their illness.



What is a Workplace Adaption Passport?

It's a written record of the changes you and your employee agree to put in place to help them stay in, or return to work.



How Macmillan can help

Macmillan is on hand to help everyone affected by cancer, including family, friends, carers and employers.

- You may find it helpful to **watch their video** on making reasonable adjustments for your employees.
- 📞 If you or your employees have questions about cancer, **call Macmillan's support line** free on **0808 808 00 000*** or,
- 🌐 For an overview of the support available for employers including expert training, resources and guidance, visit their **Employers support page**.

*Lines open 8am-8pm, 7 days a week. Calls are recorded and monitored.

How to help employees caring for others with cancer

Employees caring for someone with cancer may need help to get the balance between caring and working right.

Working carers have legal rights aimed at helping them to keep working. This includes the right to time off during an emergency and the right to ask for flexible working hours.



Caring responsibilities may mean an employee needs to take time off, sometimes at short notice. They might take sick leave or annual leave when there is an emergency, rather than asking for time off to care for someone with cancer. This is often because people don't know their caring role is a reason to request leave. Or the employee may not want to tell you they are caring for someone.

The person with cancer may need care for a long period of time, so you may need to be flexible about allowing your employee to take time off for a while.

As soon as you know an employee is caring for someone, talk to them about:

- ✓ your organisation's policies
- ✓ their rights as a carer and their options for leave
- ✓ what you need from them and any information they can provide to help you support them.

Looking after the carer's own health and wellbeing

It's not easy to care for someone with cancer. The physical and emotional demands it places on the carer can affect their ability to work.

Here are some of the ways it could affect your employee. They may:

- ✓ find it difficult to concentrate
- ✓ feel tired from lack of sleep
- ✓ find it makes their own health problems worse, such as high blood pressure or back problems
- ✓ need time off to look after their own health
- ✓ feel guilty or lose confidence if they are unable to do their usual work while caring
- ✓ worry about how it affects their own career development, whether that's promotion or applying for a new job.

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Macmillan has lots of practical support for employees who are caring for someone with cancer.

Carers can also access support from **Macmillan** by calling their **support line** on **0808 239 6341***



Or by **visiting here**

*Lines open 8am-8pm, 7 days a week.
Calls are recorded and monitored.

Time off for carers

Emergency time off

Carers may be legally entitled to take time off to deal with an emergency or if something unexpected happens to the person they care for.

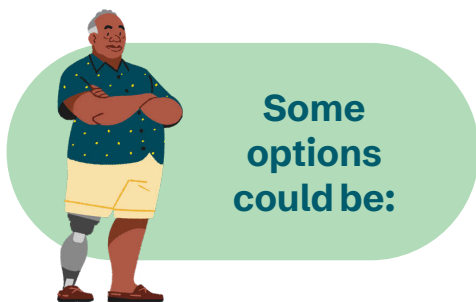
Carers don't need to have been in their job for a certain amount of time before they can take time off to help someone they look after in an emergency. However, how much time off they can have depends on the situation. As an employer, you may decide this by looking at what has happened, how close the person's relationship is to the other person and whether someone else could help instead.

Your employee should tell you about the emergency as soon as possible, including when they expect to return. The time off is usually unpaid, but this will depend on your policy.

Sick leave

A person's legal right to take time off in an emergency doesn't apply if they want to take planned time off. This would include taking someone to a medical appointment.

As an employer, you may have a policy for other types of leave for carers. Alternatively, you could talk to your employee about arranging time off.



- ✓ carer's leave (paid or unpaid)
- ✓ compassionate leave
- ✓ flexible working
- ✓ borrowing holiday days from next year or buying additional days
- ✓ career breaks and sabbaticals (usually unpaid)

It's up to you as an employer to decide whether you agree to these other types of time off.

These options aim to allow your employee to look after their own health or the health of the person they care for, while reducing the impact on your organisation. They also protect the employee as much as possible from financial problems.

How carers are protected from discrimination

Carers are protected by law from being discriminated against at work because of their connection to the person they are caring for. This is known as associative discrimination.

The protection they get depends on where they live.



England,
Scotland, Wales
Protected
by the Equality
Act 2010



Northern Ireland
Protected
by the Disability
Discrimination
Act 1995



Channel Islands
or the Isle of Man

Find out more at:

Jersey - Citizens Advice -
[citizensadvice.je/
discrimination](https://citizensadvice.je/discrimination)

Isle of Man Government
gov.im/equality

States of Guernsey
gov.gg/discrimination

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Find out more

You can find out more about how to support employees who are caring for someone with cancer by calling the [support line](#) on  **0808 239 6341***, or by watching [this video](#)

*Lines open 8am-8pm, 7 days a week. Calls are recorded and monitored.

Talking about cancer at work

You may want to help but may not be sure what to say.

But it's important to keep communication open. Not talking will make things harder to deal with.

The person with cancer may also find talking difficult. Everyone reacts differently. Some people find it easy to talk about their thoughts and feelings and situation, but others are more private.

Cultural differences matter too. Some languages don't even have a word for cancer. And in some communities, cancer is a taboo subject.



Find out more

You can find out more about how to talk to someone about cancer at [be.macmillan.org.uk](https://www.be.macmillan.org.uk),

or by calling the **support line** on  **0808 239 6341**.*

*Lines open 8am-8pm, 7 days a week. Calls are recorded and monitored.

First conversations

The employee's line manager should contact the HR manager and occupational health for the information and support they need as a manager.

As soon as you find out an employee has cancer or is caring for someone with cancer, encourage them to talk to their line manager, HR manager or occupational health provider. Sometimes, it can be helpful to involve more than one of these people in the conversation. However, they should decide who they want to speak with. If your organisation has access to a welfare rights officer, your employee might find it helpful to involve them early on.

They may also want to meet with someone else, someone who they find easy to talk to or because they are the same gender or age group.

Your employee may also want to have a colleague, family member, friend, or trade union representative with them in some meetings. You may want to take notes but be sure to keep the meeting confidential.

If they can, let your employee take the lead by telling you what has happened and what support they feel they need from you.

Some employees prefer to look for help themselves and read existing policies. They may not tell anyone about the cancer.



Be sensitive

Communication is very personal, and you will need to think about what you might say to your employee. Remember, everyone is different. What is right for one person might not be helpful for someone else. Think about the individual person and their situation.



Getting started

Tips to help you prepare for the meeting

- Choose a private place to talk and make sure you won't be interrupted
- Be prepared for the meeting to overrun – let your employee set the pace
- Show you are listening – use eye contact and encourage conversation by nodding or saying things like, 'I see' or 'What happened next?'
- Show it's okay to be upset by giving your employee time to express their emotions – and recover if necessary – while staying calm yourself
- Show empathy with phrases like, 'That must be very upsetting'
- Respond to humour, but do not start it – humour can be a helpful coping strategy for people going through a difficult time
- End the meeting if your employee becomes too upset to continue and say you can talk again when they are ready.



**Try
not to:**

- ✓ be afraid of silence – it's okay if it goes quiet for a bit
- ✓ be too quick to offer advice
- ✓ use phrases like, 'things could be worse' or 'things will work out'
- ✓ ignore your employee's feelings
- ✓ share stories about other people you know who have cancer – this takes the focus away from your employee.



Keep the conversation going

It is important to keep talking to your employee to make sure they are getting the support they need.

Here are some things you can do:

- ask how they are feeling – both emotionally and physically
- tell them you understand how difficult their situation must be
- check you understand what they are saying – if you are unsure what they mean or how they feel, just ask
- don't judge or offer advice they haven't asked for – if you must offer advice, think about how helpful it will be
- ask if they want colleagues to know and what information you can share
- respect the person's feelings and wishes
- ask what sort of time off they might need for medical appointments and treatment
- understand they may not know everything at any one point, so it's often a case of seeing how things go.



Give them the information they need

It's important your employee has the right information to help them make decisions about work but try not overwhelm them.

Share helpful information when they are ready.

- tell them the options for taking time off
- show them organisational policies on reasonable adjustments and coming back to work after sick leave
- if the person is a carer, they may benefit from seeing the flexible working policy
- for people with cancer, arrange flexible working as a reasonable adjustment
- tell them about their rights to be protected against discrimination, either because they have cancer or because they are caring for someone with cancer
- give them details of any services your organisation provides to help them, like counselling through your employee assistance programme.

Let them know they can talk to you at any time if they need your help. Agree how you will keep communication open and set a date for the next meeting.



How to tell colleagues

Your employee may not want to tell others they are affected by cancer, but it may help colleagues better understand about absences and any changes in work. It is however the employee's decision.

If your employee agrees that others should know, ask them:

- if they want to tell people themselves
- who they want to tell people if they don't want to do it themselves and whether they want to be there
- how people should be told, for example, telling one person at a time, in a meeting or by email
- how much information they are comfortable sharing and what they'd like to remain confidential.

When you are talking to colleagues, concentrate on the impact your employee's illness may have on people and projects at work.



Try to:

- ✓ stick to the facts
- ✓ avoid personal details
- ✓ use positive language, but be honest about what to expect
- ✓ discuss with your team about how best to talk to their colleagues.

You can suggest staff speak to you or another manager if they have any concerns about the situation or if they are feeling upset.

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Call the **Macmillan support line** on **0808 239 6341***.

*Lines open 8am-8pm, 7 days a week. Calls are recorded and monitored.

Keep in touch

It's important to keep the right contact with your employee during periods of sick leave or time off. This contact could be through their manager or a nominated buddy.

Be careful how you communicate with them. You should aim to make your employee feel valued, but not pressured to come back too soon.

Check how your employee wants to communicate

If possible, talk to your employee before their time off about arrangement for keeping in touch with them.



- ✓ how they want you to contact them – face to face, by phone or by email
- ✓ how often they want you to contact them
- ✓ if there is a good time for you to contact them
- ✓ what type of information they would like
- ✓ if they want to receive newsletters and important work emails
- ✓ if they want their colleagues to contact them at all.

You should keep reviewing how you keep in touch with your employee as their needs may change.

Keep to arrangements

Cancer treatment may make it difficult for your employee to be in contact at certain times. This may only become clear after treatment has started.

If you have agreed to call or meet with them at a certain time on a certain day, keep that arrangement. But try to be flexible if your employee needs to change the arrangements.

What to do if your employee doesn't want contact with work

Sometimes an employee may not want any contact with work. Ask them about their reasons for this and reassure them you just want to be supportive. It may simply be because of how they are feeling at that moment. You can ask them about it again later, when they may find the idea of contact with work less worrying.



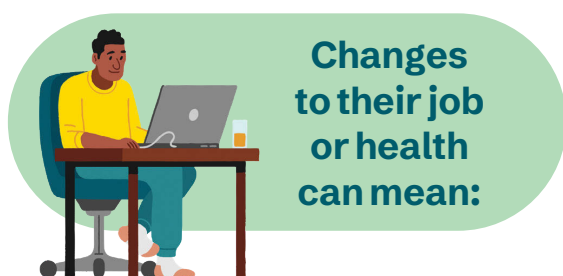
Find out more about how to talk about cancer at work

Macmillan has a [video](#) about how to talk about cancer at work that you may find helpful.

Financial support

Your employee may be worried about the effect having cancer or caring for someone with cancer may have on their finances.

They may worry about whether they will still get paid if they take time off work or stop working altogether.



- ✓ they lose some or all their income
- ✓ the pension they are entitled to changes
- ✓ they get financial support from insurance policies, including life insurance, mortgage protection insurance, income protection and critical illness cover
- ✓ the state benefits they can get change – it could mean they can get more benefits, which could increase their income.
- ✓ they are entitled to sick pay.

The decisions your employee makes about work can affect what financial help they are eligible for. It may also affect their finances in the future.

Before formally agreeing to any changes, make sure your employee has had expert advice about what might happen.



They can call:

They can call the **Macmillan Financial Guidance Team** on

 **0808 239 6341***, or they can:

 **visit here** for money and work support and information.

*Lines open 8am–8pm, 7 days a week. Calls are recorded and monitored.

Talk to them about your sick pay policy

Explain what will happen and how it will affect their pay.

Some people will want to see this as written information, while others may want you to explain it to them verbally. You should make sure you can do this both ways.

Government help

They may also be eligible for benefits from the government. This will depend on their situation. They can find out more at:

England, Scotland and Wales

gov.uk/browse/benefits

Northern Ireland

nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/benefits-and-money

Isle of Man

gov.im/categories/benefits-and-financial-support/

Jersey

gov.je/benefits

Guernsey

gov.gg/article/119730/Benefits-Allowances-Support



Help from Macmillan:

The Macmillan Financial Guidance service offers support and guidance to help people plan their budget, manage their money and understand their personal finance options.

From mortgages, pensions and other financial products to budgeting, saving or writing a will, Macmillan's financial guides can reduce the impact cancer can have on your employee's finances.



Check out their [Managing money and cancer advice](#) pages for more information.

Helping with bereavement

What to do if the cancer can't be cured

Some people can go on to live for months or years after being told their cancer is terminal. Some employees may want to continue working as long as possible. You should make reasonable adjustments to help them keep working.

If the employee is slowly getting weaker, this can be difficult to manage. An occupational health adviser should be able to help.

Your employee may also need advice on things like their pension or writing a will. Macmillan has financial guides, who can help with this, so you could suggest they call the free **Macmillan Support Line** on **0808 239 6341***.

MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT

Call **Macmillan work support advisers** for more advice on

0808 239 6341*

What to do if your employee dies

There are a few practical steps you will need to take:

- ✓ tell their colleagues what's happened and be ready to support them
- ✓ tell clients, customers and suppliers who worked with the person – this can help prevent embarrassment and upset if they try to contact your employee without knowing what's happened
- ✓ talk to your employee's family. Keep contact to one person between you as the employer and the family. This is usually the line manager or HR manager
- ✓ sort out financial issues quickly, such as any remaining pay or pensions – you should seek advice if you are unsure who you should make payments to
- ✓ make sure you address any letters or emails to your contact in the family and not to the person who has died
- ✓ tell colleagues about funeral arrangements. You must respect the family's wishes in every way. Ask them what kind of contact and involvement – if any – they want from people at work
- ✓ return your employee's belongings to the family as soon and as sensitively as possible
- ✓ arrange the return of any work equipment or a company car – make sure you do this as sensitively as possible.

*Lines open 8am-8pm, 7 days a week. Calls are recorded and monitored.

Supporting your team

Colleagues of the person with cancer may find this time very upsetting. Even if the team knew their colleague's cancer could not be cured, it can still be extremely difficult to deal with their death.

People will react differently. Some will need your support personally as well as professionally. That means this could be a very tiring time for you, so remember to look after your own needs and know where you can get support from too.

You may want to think about ways to remember the person. This could be by setting up a memorial, such as a garden or a plaque.

Make sure you tell them where they can find help in dealing with their emotions. This could be counselling or through your employee assistance programme. They could also call the **Macmillan Support Line** on **0808 239 6341***

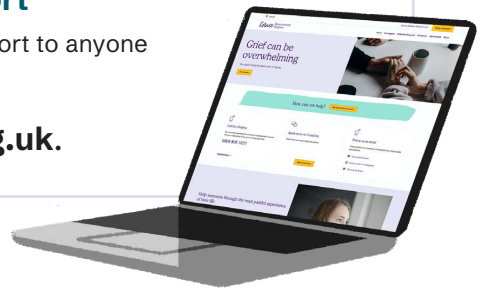
MACMILLAN
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Watch
Macmillan's video on
**Managing
bereavement
and end
of life**

Get support from Cruse Bereavement Support

This is an organisation which provides information and support to anyone who has been bereaved.

Call Cruse on **0808 808 1677** or visit **cruse.org.uk**.



*Lines open 8am-8pm, 7 days a week. Calls are recorded and monitored.

Supporting an employee caring for someone who is dying

Your employee may need more time off to care for the person with cancer. You may need to be flexible about this.

When the person they have been caring for dies, they will need time to grieve and be with their family.

If there are children who were close to the person who died, your employee might have to give them extra support. It may not always be easy to know when they will be needed at home.

They may also need time off work to sort out practical things, such as arranging the funeral and dealing with financial or legal issues.

Some people may want to talk about the person who has died, while others may not. Take your cue from your employee.

They may also find support such as an employee assistance programme useful, so make sure you let them know how what's available.

MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT

Your employee can
call the **Macmillan**
Support Line on

0808 239 6341*



Download our guide to dealing with bereavement

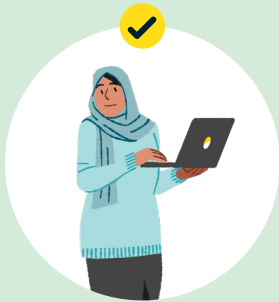
We've put together a web page providing information and practical steps on bereavement. It covers everything from arranging a funeral to telling people and companies what's happened, dealing with financial matters to how to handle social media and digital assets.



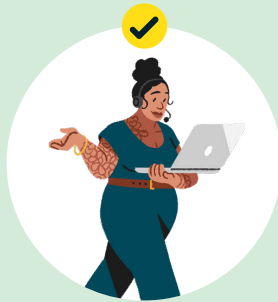
Your employee may want to look at Aviva's **Practical Guide to Bereavement**.

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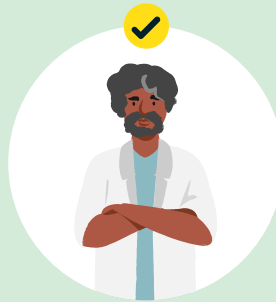
Where to get help for your employees



Wellbeing services
included with their
employee benefits
package



**Your insurance
or health provider**



**Occupational
health**



**Macmillan
Cancer Support**

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How to contact us

 0800 092 4590

 contactus@aviva.com

 [aviva.co.uk](https://www.aviva.co.uk)

Lines are open Monday to Friday from 8:00am - 6:30pm.

Calls may be rerecorded and/or monitored.

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