

# Work support route guide

Helping professionals talk to  
people about work and cancer



## Talking about work and cancer

This information is for health and social care professionals supporting people living with cancer. You can use it to support people who are worried about work, and give them useful guidance. There are questions you could ask them, recommended responses and lists of further sources of support.

Having discussions about work as soon as possible after a cancer diagnosis can help prevent problems.

You do not need to be an employment expert to talk about work, and the conversation does not have to take up a lot of your time. The important thing is that you include work in your conversations with people living with cancer, and encourage them to consider their options.

If you are using a holistic needs assessment (HNA) to find out more about someone's concerns, work may be one of the issues they raise. This information will help you direct people to the right information for them.

There is a list of all the services mentioned in this guide on [pages 26 to 30](#). It might be helpful to print this list and give it to the person you are helping. On [page 31](#) there is space for you to add any local services that might help.

## Starting a work conversation

To get started, ask the person living with cancer which of the following options best describes their employment status. Then use the flow chart to ask the person questions and give them helpful responses.

**A****In employment or on long-term sick leave**

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**C****Self-employed**

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# A

## **In employment or on long-term sick leave**

This section will help you support someone with cancer who wants to keep working during or after treatment.

**Have you spoken to your employer about staying in work during treatment, or returning to work after treatment?**

→ **No** →

If you want to, talking to your employer can help deal with your needs. If you are not sure what to say, you can start by talking with a [Macmillan work support adviser](#), a trade union representative, or a family member or friend.

Think about the best person to speak to at work, and if you would prefer to do this by phone, email or video call.

Remember it is your choice whether you want to tell your employer or not.

**Yes**

**Do you know your legal rights at work following your diagnosis?**

→ **No** →

A law called the Equality Act 2010 protects you from discrimination (being treated less favourably), being placed at a particular disadvantage (along with others who also have cancer), and harassment and victimisation at work because you have cancer.

If you live in Northern Ireland (NI), the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 protects you from discrimination at work because you have cancer.

Your employer must make reasonable adjustments to help you do your job if they know you have been diagnosed with cancer, and you are at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to colleagues who have not been diagnosed with cancer.

Examples of reasonable adjustments include giving you time off for medical appointments, allowing you to work different hours or making changes to your job description to remove tasks that you would find hard to do because of the cancer.

You can order Macmillan's booklet [Your rights at work when you are affected by cancer](#) or talk to a [Macmillan work support adviser](#).

**Yes**

**Are you considering a change in career or early retirement?**

→ **Yes** →

If you would like to change your job or career, there are services that can help you update your CV. They can also give you tips about interviews and finding work. These include [National Careers Service](#), [Careers Wales](#), [Skills Development Scotland](#), and [Careers Service \(Northern Ireland\)](#).

Volunteering may also be a good way to learn new skills. Details of volunteering organisations can be found on [page 30](#).

Early retirement may also be an option if you belong to an occupational pension scheme. You may want to talk to an independent financial adviser or a [Macmillan financial guide](#).

**No**

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**Have you and your employer agreed a return-to-work plan?**

→ **No** →

Making a return-to-work plan with your employer can help you agree the best way to support your return to work. The plan may include:

- a phased (gradual) return
- different working hours
- adjustments to your workplace or role.

For advice and support, talk to your human resources (HR) or occupational health team, if you have one.

You can talk to a [Macmillan work support adviser](#) for guidance on agreeing adjustments with your employer. Macmillan also has more [online and printed information about work and cancer](#).

↓  
**Yes**

**Do you know where to find further information and support?**

→ **No** →

If cancer affects your ability to do your job, the government's Access to Work schemes can offer guidance and funding for practical support in the workplace (pages [26](#) and [28](#)). This could help pay for special equipment, adaptations and transport to and from work.

You can also talk to:

- a work coach or employment service adviser at your local [Jobcentre Plus](#) or [Jobs and Benefits office \(NI\)](#)
- a trade union representative
- a [Macmillan work support adviser](#).

In Scotland, [Healthy Working Lives](#) has an advice line, which offers free confidential help and information on workplace health, safety and well-being. They can refer you to further support.

There is a list of all the services mentioned in this section on pages 26 to 30. You can print out this list and give it to the person you are helping.

# **B**

## **Out of work**

**This section will help you support someone with cancer who is planning to get back into work.**

**Are you ready to start looking for work?**

→ **Yes** →

For help returning to work, contact your local [Jobcentre Plus](#) or [Jobs and Benefits office \(NI\)](#). You will be introduced to a work coach or employment service adviser. They can help you search and apply for jobs, and prepare for interviews. You can also register with recruitment agencies. You can find them on the high street or online.

You can claim Jobseeker's Allowance online at [gov.uk](#) or by phoning your local Jobcentre Plus. In Northern Ireland you claim it at your local Jobs and Benefits office or Social Security office.

If you would like to change job or career, there are services that can help you update your CV and share tips about interviews and finding work (pages [27](#), [29](#) and [30](#)). [Volunteering](#) may also be a good way to learn new skills.



**No**



**Are you worried about going back to work?**

→ **Yes** →

Self-management courses can help you regain your confidence after treatment. Macmillan's Help Overcoming Problems Effectively (HOPE) programme is a 6-week self-management course based on an online platform. Visit [macmillan.org.uk/healthcare-professionals/for-your-patients/hope-programme](#)

Counselling can also help. To find out more, visit a [Macmillan Information and Support Centre](#) or speak to your GP.

Macmillan's booklets [Work and cancer](#) and [Your rights at work when you are affected by cancer](#) explain your rights, fair treatment, recruitment and going back to work. You can also talk to a [Macmillan work support adviser](#).



**No**



**Would you like to know more about the financial support and benefits you may be able to get?**

→ **Yes** →

You can speak to a Macmillan welfare rights adviser about the support you may be able to get. You can also find information about benefits at [gov.uk/browse/benefits](#)

Your local [Jobcentre Plus](#) or [Jobs and Benefits office \(NI\)](#), can create a plan to help you slowly come off benefits and get back to work.

For guidance about mortgages, insurance and pensions, talk to a [Macmillan financial guide](#). If you have a personal insurance policy, contact your insurers to find out if you could make a claim to support yourself until you get back into work.

**There is a list of all the services mentioned in this section on pages 26 to 30. You can print out this list and give it to the person you are helping.**

# C

## **Self-employed**

**This section will help you support someone with cancer who is self-employed. They may worry about closing their business or having to start their career all over again. This section explains some of the options and support available.**



Do you want to stay self-employed? → **Yes** →



**No**



Would you like advice on changing your career, volunteering or early retirement? → **Yes** →



**No**



Would you like to know more about the financial support and benefits you may be able to get? → **Yes** →

Managing self-employment as well as the effects of cancer and its treatment can be challenging. If you are struggling with side effects or symptoms, such as tiredness, there are services that can help. For example, you may want to try occupational therapy or physiotherapy.

Macmillan's booklet [Self-employment and cancer](#) has lots of advice about managing your workload and finances. You can also get free advice on from the [Business Support Helpline \(England\)](#), [Business Wales](#), [Healthy Working Lives \(Scotland\)](#), [Business Gateway \(Scotland\)](#), or [NI Business Info](#).

If you would like to change career, there are services that can help you update your CV. They can also give you tips about interviews and finding work:

- [National Careers Service \(England\)](#)
- [Careers Wales](#)
- [Skills Development Scotland](#)
- [Careers Service NI](#).

[Volunteering](#) may also be a good way to learn new skills.

For guidance about early retirement and what this could mean for you financially, talk to a [Macmillan financial guide](#). You can also talk to an independent financial adviser.

You can speak to a [Macmillan welfare rights adviser](#) about what financial help you may be able to get. If cancer affects your ability to do your job, the government Access to Work schemes may provide support and funding (pages [26](#) and [28](#)).

For guidance about mortgages, loans, insurance and pensions, talk to a [Macmillan financial guide](#). Macmillan's booklet [Housing costs](#) may also help.

If you have a personal insurance policy, contact your insurers to find out if you could make a claim to support yourself while you get back into work.

**There is a list of all the services mentioned in this section on pages 26 to 30. You can print out this list and give it to the person you are helping.**

# Further information

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# About our information

We provide expert, up-to-date information about cancer. And all our information is free for everyone.

## Order what you need

You may want to order more booklets or leaflets like this one. Visit [be.macmillan.org.uk](http://be.macmillan.org.uk) or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

We have booklets about different cancer types, treatments and side effects. We also have information about work, financial issues, diet, life after cancer treatment and information for carers, family and friends.

## Online information

All our information is also available online at [macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support](http://macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support). You can also find videos featuring stories from people affected by cancer, and information from health and social care professionals.

## Other formats

We also provide information in different languages and formats, including:

- audiobooks
- Braille
- British Sign Language
- easy read booklets
- interactive PDFs
- large print
- translations.

Find out more at [macmillan.org.uk/otherformats](http://macmillan.org.uk/otherformats)

If you would like us to produce information in a different format for you, email us at [cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk](mailto:cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk) or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

## The language we use

We want everyone affected by cancer to feel our information is written for them.

We want our information to be as clear as possible. To do this, we try to:

- use plain English
- explain medical words
- use short sentences
- use illustrations to explain text
- structure the information clearly
- make sure important points are clear.

We use gender-inclusive language and talk to our readers as 'you' so that everyone feels included. Where clinically necessary we use the terms 'men' and 'women' or 'male' and 'female'. For example, we do so when talking about parts of the body or mentioning statistics or research about who is affected.

You can read more about how we produce our information at [macmillan.org.uk/ourinfo](http://macmillan.org.uk/ourinfo)

# Other ways Macmillan can help you

At Macmillan, we know how a cancer diagnosis can affect everything, and we are here to support you.

## Talk to us

If you or someone you know is affected by cancer, talking about how you feel and sharing your concerns can really help.

### Macmillan Support Line

Our free, confidential phone line is open 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm. We can:

- help with any medical questions you have about cancer or your treatment
- help you access benefits and give you financial guidance
- be there to listen if you need someone to talk to
- tell you about services that can help you in your area.

Our trained cancer information advisers can listen and signpost you to further support. Call us on **0808 808 00 00**. We are open 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm.

You can also email us, or use the Macmillan Chat Service via our website. You can use the chat service to ask our advisers about anything that is worrying you. Tell them what you would like to talk about so they can direct your chat to the right person. Click on the 'Chat to us' button, which appears on pages across the website. Or go to [macmillan.org.uk/talktous](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/talktous)

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you can call us using Relay UK on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the Relay UK app.

If you would like to talk to someone in a language other than English, we also offer an interpreter service for our Macmillan Support Line. Call **0808 808 00 00** and say, in English, the language you want to use. Or send us a web chat message saying you would like an interpreter. Let us know the language you need and we'll arrange for an interpreter to contact you.

## Macmillan Information and Support Centres

Our Information and Support Centres are based in hospitals, libraries and mobile centres. Visit one to get the information you need and speak with someone face to face. If you would like a private chat, most centres have a room where you can speak with someone confidentially.

Find your nearest centre at [macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres) or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

## Help with money worries

Having cancer can bring extra costs such as hospital parking, travel fares and higher heating bills. If you have been affected in this way, we can help. Please note the opening times may vary by service.

### Financial guidance

Our financial team can give you guidance on mortgages, pensions, insurance, borrowing and savings.

### Help accessing benefits

Our welfare rights advisers can help you find out what benefits you might be entitled to, and help you complete forms and apply for benefits. They can also tell you more about other financial help that may be available to you. We can also tell you about benefits advisers in your area. Visit [macmillan.org.uk/financialsupport](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/financialsupport) to find out more about how we can help you with your finances.

### Help with energy costs

Our energy advisers can help if you have difficulty paying your energy bills (gas, electricity and water). They can help you get access to schemes and charity grants to help with bills, advise you on boiler schemes and help you deal with water companies.

### Macmillan Grants

Macmillan offers one-off payments to people with cancer. A grant can be for anything from heating bills or extra clothing to changes needed to your home.

Call us on **0808 808 00 00** to speak to find out more about Macmillan Grants.

### Help with work and cancer

Whether you are an employee, a carer, an employer or are self-employed, we can provide support and information to help you manage cancer at work. Visit [macmillan.org.uk/work](https://macmillan.org.uk/work)

### Work support

Our dedicated team of work support advisers can help you understand your rights at work. Call us on **0808 808 00 00** to speak to a work support adviser.

### Talk to others

No one knows more about the impact cancer can have on your life than those who have been through it themselves. That is why we help bring people together in their communities and online.

### Support groups

Whether you are someone living with cancer or a carer, family member or friend, we can help you find support in your local area, so you can speak face to face with people who understand. Find out about support groups in your area by calling us or by visiting [macmillan.org.uk/selfhelpandsupport](https://macmillan.org.uk/selfhelpandsupport)

### Online Community

Thousands of people use our Online Community to make friends, blog about their experiences and join groups to meet other people going through the same things. You can access it any time of day or night. Share your experiences, ask questions, or just read through people's posts at [macmillan.org.uk/community](https://macmillan.org.uk/community)

You can also use our Ask an Expert service on the Online Community. You can ask a financial guide, cancer information nurse, work support advisor or an information and support advisor any questions you have.

### Macmillan healthcare professionals

Our nurses, doctors and other health and social care professionals give expert care and support to individuals and their families. Call us or ask your GP, consultant, district nurse or hospital ward sister if there are any Macmillan professionals near you.

# Useful services and organisations

There are organisations that can give information or support. Details correct at time of publishing.

It might be helpful to print this list and give it to the person you are helping. On [page 31](#) there is space to add any local services that might help.

## Access to Work

[www.gov.uk/access-to-work](http://www.gov.uk/access-to-work)

This government programme can help you if your health affects the way you do your job. You may be offered a grant to help pay for practical support at work.

## Access to Work (Northern Ireland)

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/access-work-practical-help-work](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/access-work-practical-help-work)

This government programme can help you if your health affects your ability to get a new job. It can help if you are self-employed or employed and have difficulties at work. You may be offered a grant to help pay for practical support at work.

## Benefits and financial support

[www.gov.uk/browse/benefits](http://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits)

This website can help you find out which benefits you may be able to get, and if you can claim tax credits.

## Benefits and financial support (Northern Ireland)

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/money-tax-and-benefits/benefits-and-financial-support](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/money-tax-and-benefits/benefits-and-financial-support)

This website can help you find out which benefits you may be able to get, and if you can claim tax credits.

## Business Gateway (Scotland)

0300 013 4753

[www.bgateway.com](http://www.bgateway.com)

This service offers practical advice, information and support to help you and your business.

## Business Support Helpline (England)

0800 998 1098

[www.gov.uk/business-support-helpline](http://www.gov.uk/business-support-helpline)

This service offers free advice on the phone or via webchat.

## Busnes Cymru Business Wales

[www.businesswales.gov.wales](http://www.businesswales.gov.wales)

This service provides free professional and financial advice to people running a business in Wales.

## Careers Service (Northern Ireland)

0300 200 7820

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/careers](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/careers)

This service provides tools and advice to help you make decisions about work and plan your next career step.

## Gyrfa Cymru Careers Wales

0800 028 4844

[www.careerswales.gov.wales](http://www.careerswales.gov.wales)

This organisation has tools and advice to help you make decisions about work and plan your next career step.

## Department for Communities – Disability Employment Service (Northern Ireland)

[www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/finding-employment/help-find-employment](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/finding-employment/help-find-employment)

If your health affects the way you do your job, this service can give you advice and financial support.

### **Department for Communities – Health and Work Support Branch (Northern Ireland)**

**Access to Work enquiries:** 0289 072 6756

[www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/health-work-support-branch](http://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/health-work-support-branch)

This service explains how to apply for help with the costs of practical support at work through the Access to Work (NI) scheme.

#### **Find a job**

[www.gov.uk/find-a-job](http://www.gov.uk/find-a-job)

This free online government service allows you to search and apply for full or part-time jobs in England, Scotland and Wales.

#### **Healthy Working Lives (Scotland)**

[www.healthyworkinglives.scot](http://www.healthyworkinglives.scot)

This organisation has specialist advisers who can offer free, confidential help and information on workplace health, safety and well-being. They can also refer you to further support.

#### **JobApplyNI (Northern Ireland)**

[www.jobapplyni.com](http://www.jobapplyni.com)

This is the public employment service website in Northern Ireland. The job search database lists current vacancies from Jobs and Benefits offices. You can visit this website to search and apply for jobs.

#### **Jobcentre Plus**

[www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus](http://www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus)

This organisation gives information about finding and contacting your local Jobcentre Plus. You can also use their online 'Find a job' service.

### **Jobs and Benefits offices (Northern Ireland)**

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/jobs-and-benefits-offices](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/jobs-and-benefits-offices)

This website lists the contact details of local Jobs and Benefits offices. They can help you get back into work and apply for Jobseeker's Allowance.

#### **Jobseeker's Allowance**

**0800 055 6688**

[www.gov.uk/jobseekers-allowance](http://www.gov.uk/jobseekers-allowance)

This website explains how to apply for Jobseeker's Allowance online or over the phone.

#### **Labour Relations Agency (Northern Ireland)**

**0330 055 2220**

[www.lra.org.uk](http://www.lra.org.uk)

This organisation provides impartial and confidential advice on employment relations.

#### **National Careers Service (England)**

**0800 100 900**

[nationalcareers.service.gov.uk](http://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk)

This service provides tools and advice to help you make decisions about work, and plan your next career step.

#### **NI Business Info (Northern Ireland)**

[www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk](http://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk)

This organisation offers professional and financial advice for businesses.

#### **Skills Development Scotland**

**0808 917 8000**

[www.myworldofwork.co.uk](http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk)

This organisation provides tools and advice to help you make decisions about work and plan your next career step.

### **Volunteering Made Easy: Do it**

[www.doit.life/volunteering](http://www.doit.life/volunteering)

This organisation can give you information about volunteering in the UK. You can also find opportunities near you.

### **Volunteering NI Direct (Northern Ireland)**

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/volunteering](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/volunteering)

This website can give you information about volunteering. You can also find opportunities near you.

### **Voluntary Worker**

[www.voluntaryworker.co.uk](http://www.voluntaryworker.co.uk)

This organisation can give you information about volunteering in the UK. You can also find opportunities near you.

### **Volunteer Scotland**

[www.volunteerscotland.net](http://www.volunteerscotland.net)

This organisation can give you information about volunteering in Scotland. You can also find opportunities near you.

### **Gwirfoddoli Cymru Volunteering Wales**

[www.volunteering-wales.net](http://www.volunteering-wales.net)

This organisation can give you information about volunteering in Wales. You can also find opportunities near you.

### **Volunteer Now (Northern Ireland)**

[www.volunteernow.co.uk](http://www.volunteernow.co.uk)

This organisation can give you information about volunteering in Northern Ireland. You can also find opportunities near you.

**Write down local services here**



### Disclaimer

We make every effort to ensure that the information we provide is accurate and up to date but it should not be relied upon as a substitute for specialist professional advice tailored to your situation. So far as is permitted by law, Macmillan does not accept liability in relation to the use of any information contained in this publication, or third-party information or websites included or referred to in it. Some photos are of models.

### Thanks

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We welcome feedback on our information. If you have any, please contact [\*\*cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk\*\*](mailto:cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk)