

MANAGER GUIDE
**SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES
WITH CANCER**



Health & Well-being





MANAGER GUIDE

SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES WITH CANCER

This guide has been created to help you support a colleague who has/or has had cancer. As a line manager your role is critical to ensuring that all members of your team are well supported and enabled to perform their role and make a full contribution.

Every person and their situation are unique, don't make assumptions, find the right solution for each occasion.

This guide sets out support available in EDF Energy to assist managers when supporting employees with a diagnosis of cancer and a list of things to consider – not all tools and suggestions may be applicable to every circumstance.

If your employee is caring for somebody with cancer, you may find it useful to read [‘Manager Guide – Supporting Carers’](#).

BACKGROUND

- Cancer is not a single disease with a single type of treatment. There are more than 200 different types of cancer, each with its own name and treatment.
- Each year over 330,000 people are diagnosed with cancer in the UK and it has been estimated that more than one in three people will develop cancer at some point in their lifetime.
- Cancers can occur at any age and the cause of most cancers are unknown. However there are some risk factors which can increase or influence a person's risk. Age is a risk factor that cannot be changed, but people can make lifestyle choices about other risk factors such as:
 - stopping smoking
 - eating a balanced diet
 - avoid becoming overweight, or if you are overweight, try to reduce your weight
 - cutting down alcohol intake
 - getting regular exercise.
- There are currently over 700,000 people of working age living with a cancer diagnosis.

DEFINITIONS

- Cancer is a disease of cells. Sometimes cells go wrong and become abnormal. These abnormal cells keep dividing to make more and more abnormal cells creating a lump (tumour).
- Doctors can tell if a lump is cancerous by performing a biopsy, this involves removing a small sample of tissue or cells from it and examining it under a microscope.
- A lump that is not cancerous is called benign and may grow but cannot spread to anywhere else in the body. It usually only causes problems if it puts pressure on nearby organs.
- A lump that is cancerous is called malignant and can grow into nearby tissue.

- Sometimes cancer cells spread from where the cancer first started (primary site) to other parts of the body travelling through the blood or lymphatic system. Cancer cells that spread and develop into a tumour somewhere else in the body are called a secondary cancer or a metastasis.
- After diagnosis, cancer specialists often do further tests to identify the stage and the grade of the cancer which helps them advise on the most appropriate treatment.
- The stage describes its size and whether it has spread from its original site. Each cancer has its own staging system and doctors will explain this.
- Grading is how the cells look under a microscope and the grade gives an idea of how quickly the cancer may develop.
 - **Grade 1 or low-grade or well differentiated** – the cancer cells look similar to normal cells and usually grow slowly and are less likely to spread.
 - **Grade 2 or moderate or intermediate grade** – the cancer cells look more abnormal and are growing slightly faster.
 - **Grade 3 or high grade or poorly differentiated** – the cancer cells look very different from normal cells and may grow more quickly.

CANCER TREATMENTS

Cancer can be treated in many different ways depending on the type of cancer, where it is in the body, whether it has spread and the individual's general health. For some types of cancer, treatment may not be necessary when first diagnosed, instead active surveillance or 'watchful waiting' will mean keeping an eye on the cancer and starting treatment only if the cancer shows signs of getting worse. Individuals will be told about their treatment options and given time to consider these. There are five main types of cancer treatment.



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Some cancer treatments treat a particular area of the body. These are called localised treatments:

- **Surgery** - An operation to remove the tumour is the main treatment for many types of cancer. It is usually used for cancers that are in one area of the body.
- **Radiotherapy** - High energy x-rays are used to destroy the cancer cells. By targeting the area affected by cancer, there is as little harm as possible to the normal cells.

Other treatments treat the whole body. These are called systemic treatments:

- **Chemotherapy** - This uses anti-cancer (cytotoxic) drugs to destroy cancer cells.
- **Hormonal therapy** - These therapies reduce the level of hormones in the body or block the hormones from reaching cancer cells. This can stop the cancer growing.
- **Targeted therapies** - These destroy cancer cells, usually by interfering with the cancer's ability to grow or survive.

It is quite common for a combination of these treatments to be used. Many of these can cause side-effects to varying degrees which can affect an employee's ability to work, these may include, fatigue, risk of infection, nausea and vomiting, body changes.

WORKING WITH CANCER

Many people with cancer will continue to work after or even through their treatment. For people who have experienced ill health or disability, remaining in or returning to work can actually help to promote recovery and lead to better health outcomes. Many people living with cancer say that work is important to them. Work can provide normality, routine, stability, social contact and income, so be mindful and respectful of requests to continue working. Some work tasks may require specific advice and individuals could require restrictions from work duties if working with particular health hazards

(eg radiation and lung sensitising chemicals). Referring individuals to [Occupational Health](#) at the earliest opportunity will provide specific work related advice.

It's difficult to predict what impact cancer and its treatment will have on someone's ability to work. In some cases, people may have to give up work because the symptoms make it impossible to work. In other cases, people will be able to carry on working, but they may still need some time off. Reasons for people not being at work are not always physical, cancer can have a huge impact of impact of someone's emotional well-being and if there is a genuine risk to life then they may choose to take their remaining time to be with family and friends and sort out their personal circumstances.

EXTERNAL SUPPORT AVAILABLE

**WE ARE
MACMILLAN.
CANCER SUPPORT**

[Macmillan Cancer Support:](#)
0808 808 000



[Citizens Advice England:](#)
03444 111 444



[Citizens Advice Scotland:](#)
0808 800 9060



Please [see website](#) for the relevant benefits and pensions contact details



[The Money Advice Service:](#)
0800 138 7777



[CRUSE Bereavement Care:](#)
0808 808 1677



SUPPORT AVAILABLE AT EDF ENERGY



Human Resources

- Call 776 to be directed to appropriate person.
- Tailored advice on individual situations.



Occupational Health

- Fit for duty assessment.
- Physical and psychological support.
- Reasonable adjustments advice.



Employee Assistance Programme

- Counselling Support.
- Manager Support Line.
- Support Materials: Legal, Financial, Consumer, Health.



EDF Energy Cancer Support Network

- Support network.
- Connect with colleagues in similar situations.
- Share experiences.



Disability & Carers Network

- Support network.
- Connect with colleagues in similar situations.
- Share experiences.



Pensions Administrator

- Provide information on pension options (see FAQ's for various contact details).



Line Manager & Management Community

- Experienced managers may have useful knowledge to share.

MANAGERS – AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION

(please note – not all will apply in every case,
apply only where relevant)

- 1. Awareness of available support** - Make yourself aware of the support EDF Energy has available and how to contact others who may be able to provide advice e.g. [Occupational Health](#), your Line Manager, HR Advisor (call 776), the [Health & Well-being Hub](#) etc.
- 2. Communication with employees** - It can be difficult for people to talk about cancer so it's important to communicate openly, sensitively and deal with information confidentially. It may help to let your employee take the lead in the conversation. Try not to make assumptions and don't talk too much about other people's stories, every case is different. You should offer information about the options for time off, services on offer to help them and discuss what information they want to share with their colleagues. It may also help to agree who they should contact in your absence and how much information will be shared with that person.
- 3. Diagnosis** - Your employee may be going through a range of emotions. They may need time off and support to process those emotions, talk to your HR Advisor for advice (call 776). You and your colleagues may also be deeply affected by the news. It's important to get the support you need and encourage other members of your team to do so too if they seem affected. The following services could help: [Employee Assistance Programme](#), [Occupational Health](#), [Cancer Support Network](#) or external bodies such as Macmillan Cancer Support.
- 4. Understand the individual's requirements** - See the person not the cancer. Ensure you are clear how the cancer affects them and understand if there are any reasonable adjustments required, don't make assumptions about anything. With advances in medicine and every case being different, try not to let yours or others previous experiences of the disease influence your thinking, listen to your employee. A management referral to [Occupational Health](#) can provide advice on adjustments which may help the person whilst at work – your HR Advisor can provide guidance for completing a referral to Occupational Health.

- 5. Regular conversations** - Continue to have regular conversations with your employee to understand any changes they may be experiencing especially before, during or after treatment and what you may be able to do within the work environment to assist with this. A management referral to [Occupational Health](#) can help with this along with advice from your HR Advisor.
- 6. Keep in touch** - If your employee is going to be absent from work, agree how you will stay in touch, the frequency of this and anything specific they want to be kept informed on during their absence. Try and create a single point of contact, people who are away from work for extended periods of time may feel vulnerable and unable to deal with multiple communication channels.
- 7. Returning to work** - If your employee is returning after a long absence they may still be coping with side effects or difficult feelings. Try and understand the whole picture. They may need some temporary or long-term adjustments to enable them to return to work. Ask them about their needs, make a management referral to [Occupational Health](#), and along with your Regional Case Advisor's involvement (contact via 776), create a Rehabilitation Plan (see [Management of Workplace Rehabilitation Procedure](#) for more information). You could invite them into the workplace for a team meeting or to visit a few weeks before their return date so it is not as daunting on their first day back.
- 8. After cancer treatment** - Once they finish treatment/return to work, keep having regular catch ups. After cancer treatment many people can suffer from fatigue so it may take a few adjustments and trial periods to find the right balance that works. They may also be lacking in confidence and/or need skills updating, so training, coaching or a buddy may help – again, don't assume, discuss and agree how this will form part of a Rehabilitation Plan with your employee. Also be mindful that further treatment and/or appointments may be necessary and discuss these and any work impacts they will have with your employee too.
- 9. Incurable cancers** - Many people live for months or years after a diagnosis of incurable cancer and choose to work at this time. If an employee is gradually getting weaker, it can be difficult to manage. Contact [Occupational Health](#) and your Regional Case Advisor in HR (via 776) for further advice. Also be mindful of colleagues who may find this time upsetting, letting them know about support available through the [Employee Assistance Programme](#) or Macmillan Cancer Support Line. The person who is ill may also need advice about things like their pension or writing a will. The [Pensions Administrator](#), the [Employee Assistance Programme](#) and Macmillan Cancer Support can all help with this.
- 10. Bereavement** - In the regrettable case the person with cancer passes away, you will be guided by your HR Business Partner on actions to be taken (HRBP contact details available via calling 776). These are likely to include: liaising with your HRBP to arrange appropriate communication to colleagues and external contacts, agreeing with HRBP any contact with the family, letting colleagues know about funeral arrangements etc. There may also be arrangements to be made regarding the individual's personal

belongings and company property to be returned, information needed by Payroll, but again any actions will be agreed in advance with HR and in line with the family's wishes. In terms of you and your team, remember people react differently and death can be difficult to come to terms with even if they knew the person was terminally ill. Some people may need more support than others, but remember to look after your own needs too. If anyone needs someone to talk to they can contact the [Employee Assistance Programme](#), [Occupational Health](#), Macmillan Cancer Support or [Cruse Bereavement Care](#).

- 11. Financial support** - Cancer can have a big impact on your employee's personal finances. Their entitlement to Sick Pay is outlined in their contract of employment and HR Advisors can provide advice on this. Macmillan Cancer Support can provide advice on benefits they may be entitled to and how to apply for them, guidance on pensions, savings or mortgages. Further advice can be sought from the [Employee Assistance Programme](#), Citizen's Advice, the Money Advice Service, the Department for Work & Pensions or their Trade Union. If someone's employment situation changes, their entitlements may change too so encourage your employee to seek expert advice regarding pensions, insurance and benefits at this time.
- 12. Keep records** - Make sure you document everything, keep a record of adjustments large and small and their impacts, so you both have a record of what has been done and how it has made a difference (good and bad).
- 13. Discrimination** - The Equality Act 2010 protects people with cancer from discrimination. This continues even if the cancer has been successfully treated and is now in remission and means they cannot be treated less favourable for any reason relating to their past cancer.
- 14. Managing changes** - In times of change, take time to consider the implications on this particular individual. Talk to your HR Business Partner about any potential adjustments which may be needed e.g. during restructures.
- 15. Look after yourself and the whole team** - Be aware, there may be implications on the wider team, your responsibility is to the whole team. You are pivotal to the whole team, so make sure you look after yourself, get support from your Manager / [Occupational Health](#) / [Employee Assistance Programme](#) when needed.



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