

Macmillan's merger with Cancerbackup

Macmillan Cancer Support has merged with Cancerbackup, the leading cancer information charity. Macmillan develops and provides a wide range of medical, practical, emotional and financial services; Cancerbackup was recognised as the UK's leading source of high-quality information on every cancer.

We believe the merger will mean that everyone affected by cancer in the UK will now get faster, enhanced access to detailed, high-quality cancer information and support.



Macmillan Cancer Support will now provide the secretariat to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Cancer, chaired by Dr Ian Gibson MP. For more information on the group, please visit www.appg-cancer.org.uk

'I'm absolutely confident we'll meet our combined vision of providing people with the right information at every point in their cancer journey.'

Ciarán Devane,
Macmillan's Chief Executive

World's Biggest Coffee morning

Friday 26 September 2008

Have you thought about combining your Friday constituency surgery with a fundraising coffee morning?

World's Biggest Coffee Morning is Macmillan's flagship fundraiser which last year saw over 50,000 people hold a coffee morning to help improve the lives of people living with cancer. Together we raised an incredible £7.5 million.

Thank you to the many MPs and Peers who hosted or attended an event last year. We want to make this year's event even better and we need your help.

To find out about the many opportunities to get involved in our even bigger World's Biggest Coffee Morning, visit www.macmillan.org.uk/coffee

Contact us

If you have any questions about Macmillan Cancer Support's work, please get in touch with us.

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If any of your constituents affected by cancer need support, please tell them to call our helpline on **0808 808 2020** or visit our websites on www.macmillan.org.uk or www.cancerbackup.org.uk

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Matters ^{Cancer}

Macmillan Cancer Support Parliamentary Update **Summer 2008**

Prescription charges

No one should be in a position where they have to choose which life-saving medicines to take based on what they can afford. Yet one in ten cancer patients aged 55 and under who have to pay prescription charges cannot afford them.

Macmillan Cancer Support is calling on the Government to use the public consultation on prescription charges in England for a fundamental shake-up of the system.

So far, Ministers have said the review must be 'cost-neutral'. This is despite the introduction of free prescriptions in Wales and the phasing out of charges in Scotland.

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Prescription charges

continued from front page

Free prescriptions for all

Macmillan thinks no one should have to pay for their prescriptions. Health service funding should not be raised by taxing vulnerable patients and certainly not those fighting a life-threatening disease.

We want the Government to consider innovative ways to fund additional spending on the prescriptions budget in England. For example, more effective use of non-branded medicines could save hundreds of millions of pounds a year.

We think the Government should also consider the significant extra costs to both the NHS and the benefits system if a cancer patient's recovery is delayed or their cancer returns because they cannot afford treatment.

What should the Government do?

A first step towards free prescriptions for all would be to ensure that no one is in a position where they cannot afford to pay for their treatment. To enable this, the Government should do the following:

1. Exempt over 60s – people over 60 should continue to receive free prescriptions.

2. Extend benefit passporting – people on the following benefits should be 'passported' to free prescriptions:

- Incapacity Benefit
- Employment and Support Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Benefit

This passporting process needs to be simple and easily accessible to avoid patient confusion, anxiety and low take-up.

3. Cut the PPC – at £102.50 per annum the cost of the Prescription Prepayment Certificate (PPC) is currently too expensive for people on low incomes and should be significantly reduced.

4. Boost PPC take-up – there needs to be a significant push to improve awareness and take-up of the PPC. Both are currently far too low.

5. Raise the tax credit income limit – the Government should also examine the case for raising the income limit below which Working Tax Credit claimants are entitled to free prescriptions.

What can you do to help?

There are patients in your constituency who are failed by the current prescription charges system. There are others who will lose out from cost-neutral reform. Please ask Ministers to consider innovative ways to ensure that, at the very least, this reform process will mean that all patients can afford their prescriptions.

Macmillan's prescription charges campaign

– why it really matters to people affected by cancer

Alison, 45, from Derbyshire was diagnosed with breast cancer in June 2007. 'I'll be on Arimidex for the next seven years – if I can tolerate it that long. The side effects from my treatment drugs have been horrendous. I'd like to try alternative drugs to help reduce these terrible side effects but I can't afford them. And when my incapacity benefit finishes, I don't even know if I'll continue taking Arimidex because of the cost. I simply can't afford to have cancer.'

Amanda, 43, was diagnosed with breast cancer in November 2007. 'I'm facing five years on Tamoxifen. It was a real shock to find I had to pay for it. I don't begrudge anyone free prescriptions but I find it impossible to understand why a work colleague with a thyroid problem, who earns more than me, gets all her medicines free. Why not cancer patients? I'm long-term sick too.'

Barbara, 48, diagnosed with synovial sarcoma (soft tissue cancer in the ankle) in 1999. 'Over the years I've had so many prescriptions I've lost count. As a single mum struggling to work, support my son and pay the daily bills, there were many times when I couldn't afford to pay. Each time I picked up the prescriptions from the GP I'd choose which drugs not to take because I couldn't afford the total expense. Who knows if that's the reason the cancer has kept coming back.'

Cancer Reform Strategy and Survivorship

Macmillan Cancer Support has helped to launch a new initiative to improve the lives of people living with and after cancer. The National Cancer Survivorship Initiative (NCSI) is one of the key planks of the new Cancer Reform Strategy (CRS) for England.

The initiative, which has the backing of the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, aims to improve the quality of care for people living long-term with cancer and to help them get their lives back after life-saving treatment.

Cancer survivors experience poorer health and face numerous physical, psychological, social and financial issues for the rest of their lives. Current health and social services often do not meet their needs.

We co-own the initiative with the Department of Health and played host to stakeholders and international experts at a recent think tank event to formally launch it.

The think tank's purpose was to establish priorities. Eight work streams were agreed, including looking at how to improve post-treatment care planning, financial support and back to work practices.

Macmillan is also involved in another major CRS scheme – the National Cancer Equality Initiative – to tackle inequalities in access to cancer treatment and the experiences of care among different groups in society. At the moment:

- If you are someone from a black and minority ethnic community living with cancer you are more likely to report a worse cancer experience.
- If you are an older person with cancer you are less likely to be offered the chance to participate in a clinical trial.
- If you are someone with cancer who is living in social deprivation you are more likely to die of cancer.

We will be working to ensure everyone has access to high-quality care and treatment no matter who they are.



How can you help?
We need Parliamentarians' help to ensure the exciting commitments set out in the Cancer Reform Strategy are implemented quickly and effectively. The timetable for implementation must not slip.

You can find out more about the National Cancer Survivorship Initiative at: www.macmillan.org.uk/survivorship