

Facts and figures: Welfare reform bill

Macmillan Cancer Support welcome some aspects of reform – including measures to simplify the benefits system – we remain very concerned that the proposals as a whole will leave far too many people living with cancer without critical financial support at a time when they need it most.

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

The Government is proposing to limit the length of time someone placed into the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Work-Related Activity Group (WRAG) can receive ESA – without being means-tested – to 12 months. The means-testing threshold is so low that a cancer patient could lose all their ESA benefit if their partner earns more than just £7,500 per year.

Two thirds (63%) of people with cancer who are out of work because of their condition want to work.¹

People with cancer, however, face a range of barriers that impact on their ability to return to work:

- They can experience debilitating physical and psychological effects from cancer and its treatment, including severe pain, fatigue, nausea, fever and depression.

¹ Macmillan Cancer Support/YouGov online survey of 1,799 UK adults living with and beyond cancer. Fieldwork took place 9-20th December 2010. Survey results are unweighted.

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- The majority (56%) are not advised by medical professionals about the impact of their cancer diagnosis on their working life²
- They are not routinely offered the range of back-to-work services they need such as counselling, re-training and work-placed advocacy.
- They are less successful than people with other condition in securing workplace adjustments that they are legally entitled to, which help them return to work. This is likely linked to the fact that just 47% employers are aware are that cancer is a condition covered by the Disability Discrimination Act, now superseded by the Equality Act.³
- Just 13% of people with cancer find work within one year of starting 'Pathways to Work', the previous back to work support programme.⁴
- The Government's own statistics show that 94% of disabled people, including people with cancer, are likely to be in the WRAG for longer than 12 months.⁵

Macmillan estimates that nearly 7,000 cancer patients could lose up to £94 a week under this change.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) (replacing Disability Living Allowance (DLA))

With the introduction of the new Personal Independence Payment (PIP) the Government is proposing to extend the period that someone must demonstrate need for the benefit from three to six months. Over 82,000 people living with cancer receive DLA.

For people with cancer, where treatment and its debilitating effects can begin very quickly after diagnosis, support needs are often immediate. The types of costs that can arise soon after diagnosis are:

² Macmillan Cancer Support/YouGov online survey of 1,799 UK adults living with and beyond cancer. Fieldwork took place 9-20th December 2010. Survey results are unweighted.

³ IBID

⁴ http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/adhoc_analysis/2011/pl_pathways_average_time_to_employment_condition.pdf

⁵ <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2011-05-16a.55206.h&s=chris+grayling+ESA#g55206.r0>

Travel and parking costs for hospital appointments – low immunity often forces people to rely on taxis rather than use public transport. On average someone with cancer makes 53 trips to the hospital costing £325.

New clothes – many people experience significant weight loss or gain or find it difficult to wear particular clothes.

Extra fuel costs – increased need for heating, and increased use of the washing machine due to hygiene requirements. Over seven in ten (73%) cancer patients undergoing active treatment use more fuel than previously.⁶

Aids, adaptations, wigs, shoe inserts, special diets.

Macmillan believes people with sudden-onset, long-term conditions should be able to claim support as soon as their support needs arise. We are flatly opposed to increasing the qualifying period from three to six months.

⁶ Macmillan Cancer Support online survey of 974 people living with and beyond cancer. Fieldwork conducted in April/May 2010. Survey results are unweighted.