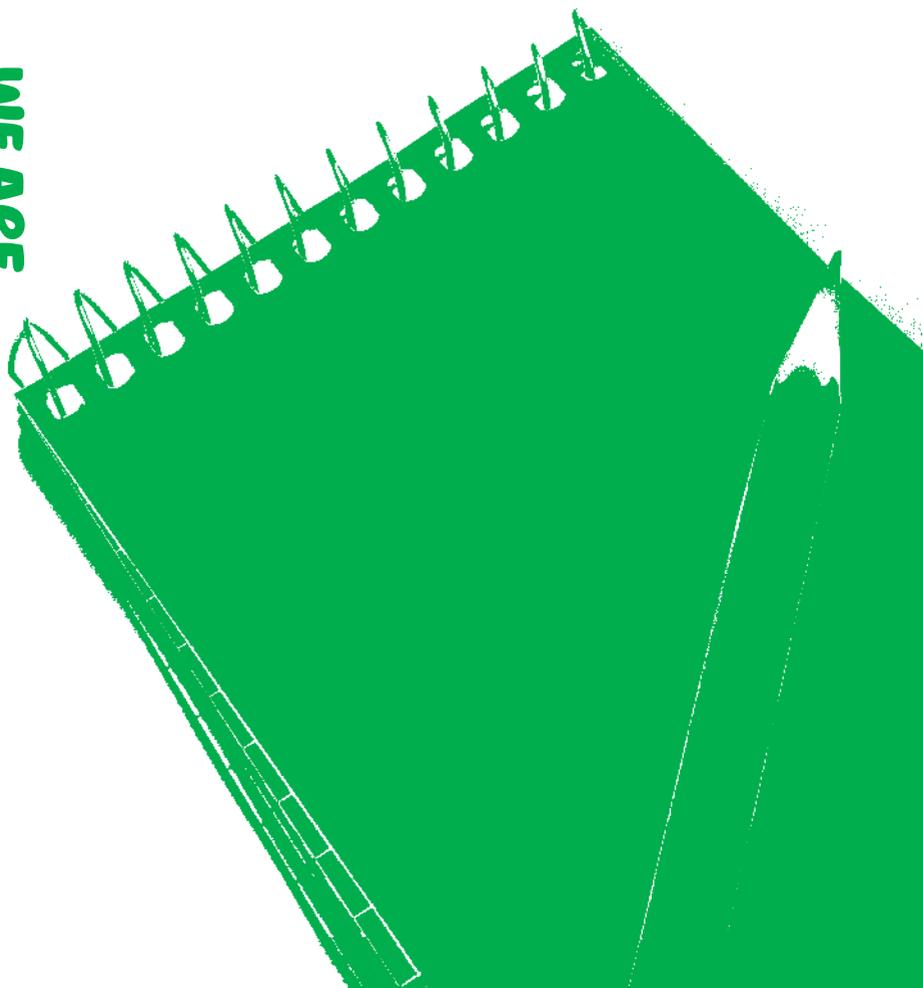


Work and cancer series

WORK IT OUT

Essential questions to ask about work and cancer

**WE
ARE
MACMILLAN.
CANCER SUPPORT**



Work and cancer information from Macmillan

Macmillan produces a range of information about work and cancer.

For employees:

- *Work and cancer: a guide for people living with cancer*
- *Work it out: essential questions to ask about work and cancer*
- *Work it out for carers: essential questions for carers to ask about work and cancer*
- *Working while caring for someone with cancer*
- *Self-employment and cancer: living with cancer when you're self-employed or running a micro business*
- *Your rights at work when you're affected by cancer*

For employers:

- *Managing cancer in the workplace: an employer's guide to supporting staff affected by cancer*
- *Work and cancer: top 10 tips for line managers*
- *Cancer in the workplace* (a DVD to help employers manage people affected by cancer at work)

This leaflet and all the resources above (apart from *Self-employment and cancer* and *Your rights at work when you're affected by cancer*) are also included in *The essential work and cancer toolkit*, a pack for employers that can be ordered from www.macmillan.org.uk/worktoolkit

You can order any of our resources online from www.be.macmillan.org.uk/work To discuss any of our information about work and cancer, or to order resources, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, Monday–Friday, 9am–8am. If you're hard of hearing you can use textphone 0808 808 0121, or Text Relay. For non-English speakers, interpreters are available. Alternatively, visit www.macmillan.org.uk

We've created this *Work it out* tool so you can find the information you need about work issues at every stage of your cancer journey. We hope that using the tool will boost your confidence and help you deal with any workplace issues you have.

It includes questions you may need to ask at different points along your cancer journey. You can use it as a flexible guide, as the questions won't all be relevant to everyone. For example, not everybody living with and beyond cancer will need to take time off work. Your questions will vary depending on your situation.

How to use this tool

We've divided the questions into four categories, each representing a different work-related stage:

- **Questions about initial work issues and absence from work** These are some of the first questions you may have about work after being diagnosed, including questions about taking time off work.
- **Questions about preparing to return to work** These questions are applicable to you if you're preparing to return to work after a period of absence. You might still be going through treatment or have finished.
- **Questions about returning to work** These questions are relevant to you if you're considering returning to work after treatment.
- **Questions if you decide not to return to work** These are questions you may have if you've decided to give up work for good, or if you want to leave your current job because of the cancer.

Each category is divided into three topic areas:

- Health
- Finance
- Work.

Next to each question is a row of boxes showing all the places you can go for answers:

- ✓ A large tick indicates a service or person who's most likely to be able to answer a question.
- ✓ A small tick indicates a service or person who may also be able to help.

You may need to ask some of the questions earlier or later than suggested in the tool. Just pick and choose the questions and the times to ask them that suit you best.

Services we refer to in this tool

As well as your GP services, line manager, HR department and union, these are the services we refer to.

Oncology team

This is your team at the hospital and may include oncologists, radiologists and cancer nurses.

Occupational health

This may include health and safety advisers. Occupational health advisers may not be available at every workplace.

Advisory services

These may include:

- Macmillan Cancer Support – you can call our support line on **0808 808 00 00** or find an information and support centre near you by visiting **www.macmillan.org.uk/informationcentre**
- Citizens Advice – **www.citizensadvice.org.uk**
- Jobcentre Plus in England, Scotland and Wales (**www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus**) or a Jobs and Benefits Office in Northern Ireland (**www.nidirect.gov.uk/jobs-and-benefits-offices**)

- benefits advisory services – you can speak to our welfare rights advisers by calling the Macmillan Support Line, or search for a Macmillan benefits adviser near you online at **www.macmillan.org.uk/benefitsadvisers**
- financial guidance – you can speak to our financial guides about your pension, insurance or any other financial planning matter by calling the Macmillan Support Line or visiting **www.macmillan.org.uk/financialguidance**
- Access to Work – a government programme that helps people whose health affects the way they do their job through its website (**www.gov.uk/access-to-work**)
- Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) – an organisation that helps resolve work disputes and offers advice to employees and employers through its website (**www.acas.org.uk**) and helpline on **08457 474747**
- the Labour Relations Agency, which helps resolve work disputes in Northern Ireland through its website (**www.lra.org.uk**) and helpline on **028 9032 1442**.

Charity/support group

This may include:

- Macmillan Cancer Support
- other cancer support charities – visit **www.macmillan.org.uk/organisations** and search to find one that's relevant to your situation
- local support groups – search for local support groups near you online at **www.macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups**

Further information

We hope you'll find this resource useful and keep it for reference. If you have questions about work and cancer or would like to know more, call the Macmillan Support Line or visit **www.macmillan.org.uk/work**

1

INITIAL WORK ISSUES AND ABSENCE FROM WORK

Health

	Oncology team	GP services	Occupational health	Line manager	HR	Advisory services	Charity/ support group	Union (if you're a member)
How much time will I need to take off work for each of my treatments, for example surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy or hormonal therapy?	✓	✓	✓					
How will my fit note certification be managed? (The fit note replaced the sick note in 2010.)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Which treatment side effects are most likely to interfere with my work? When will these side effects occur and how long will they last?	✓	✓	✓					
Which support services are available to me? For example, counselling, employee assistance programmes, occupational therapy and vocational rehabilitation?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Finance

If I'm unable to work, can you tell me which benefits might be available to me, for example Statutory Sick Pay, Employment and Support Allowance, Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment or company sick pay? How can I access this help?					✓	✓	✓	✓
If I'm unable to work, can you tell me whether any of my existing benefits will be affected?					✓	✓	✓	✓
How long can I claim benefits for?					✓	✓	✓	
If I'm unable to work, can you tell me which of my insurance and payment protection policies may be relevant?					✓	✓	✓	

1

INITIAL WORK ISSUES AND ABSENCE FROM WORK

(continued)

Work

	Oncology team	GP services	Occupational health	Line manager	HR	Advisory services	Charity/support group	Union (if you're a member)
Where can I find information about any policies my company/organisation has that relate to my situation? (For example, there might be policies about absence management, occupational health, sick pay or your employer's pension scheme.)			✓	✓	✓			✓
Will I have to use my annual leave entitlement instead of taking sick leave?				✓	✓			✓
How soon can my sick pay arrangements be confirmed?				✓	✓			
If I take time off work, what do I need to do to make sure my job's secure?			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

2

PREPARING TO RETURN TO WORK

Health

	Oncology team	GP services	Occupational health	Line manager	HR	Advisory services	Charity/ support group	Union (if you're a member)
What are the potential short- and long-term side-effects of my cancer and treatment?	✓	✓	✓					
How will my treatment affect my ability to do the physical aspects of my job? For example, will I be able to drive/climb ladders/work shifts/carry heavy objects/work with children/work in a kitchen?	✓	✓	✓					
How will my treatment affect my ability to perform the mental tasks in my job? For example, will I be able to concentrate for long periods/work quickly/multi-task/learn new things/memorise information?	✓	✓	✓					
What strategies could I use to manage any difficulties I have at work with mental tasks?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
What strategies could I use to manage fatigue at work?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
I'm concerned or feeling anxious about returning to work. How can I get help?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Finance

What would be the impact of any work adjustments on my pay and benefits? For example, how would a phased return, reduced working hours or altered duties affect them?				✓	✓	✓		✓
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2

PREPARING TO RETURN TO WORK

(continued)

Work

	Oncology team	GP services	Occupational health	Line manager	HR	Advisory services	Charity/support group	Union (if you're a member)
Where can I find out about my legal rights regarding cancer and my work situation?			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Do I need to give my employer any notice before returning to work?			✓	✓	✓			✓
Can I have a gradual, phased return to work after extended sick leave?			✓	✓	✓			✓
How can I make sure I'm updated about work changes that have taken place while I've been on sick leave? (These may include changes in technology, team members, targets, client base or policy.)				✓	✓			✓
How can I make sure my return to work will be managed so there's input from all the relevant people? (These people may include my line manager, my GP, my oncology team, the HR department and occupational health.)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Can we work together to decide what we'll tell everyone at work about my cancer and its effect on my work situation? (These people may include my colleagues, managers and clients.)			✓	✓	✓			✓
How can we make sure my physical work environment doesn't cause me extra discomfort? We may need to consider things such as temperature, uniform or the location of toilets.			✓	✓	✓			
How can my job be adjusted so that I spend less time on tasks that cause me particular difficulty? For example, driving, shift-working or concentrating for long periods.			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
How can we work together to make decisions about any changes to my role or job description?			✓	✓	✓			✓
Can I have flexible work arrangements so I can manage my treatment side effects? For example, if the side effect is fatigue, could I work reduced or flexible hours, or work from home?			✓	✓	✓			✓

3 RETURNING TO WORK

Health

	Oncology team	GP services	Occupational health	Line manager	HR	Advisory services	Charity/ support group	Union (if you're a member)
How many follow-up medical appointments will I have to attend during working hours? How flexible can you be on timing and on location?	✓	✓						
I'm not that confident about returning to work, and I worry about my cancer coming back. What support can I access to help me deal with this?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Finance

Can I have paid time off to attend follow-up medical appointments?				✓	✓			✓
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Work

Can we review any temporary changes to my work together?			✓	✓	✓			✓
How can we best minimise my exposure to infection? This may mean me avoiding close contact with colleagues, working from home, working shorter hours or doing non-interpersonal tasks when my resistance is lowest.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Can I have regular breaks to help me manage my side effects? (These side effects may include fatigue, pain or dietary requirements, for example.)			✓	✓	✓			
What might the implications of my cancer be for my career progression and/or retirement pension?			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

4

IF YOU DECIDE NOT TO RETURN TO WORK

Health

	Oncology team	GP services	Occupational health	Line manager	HR	Advisory services	Charity/ support group	Union (if you're a member)
How can I ensure that I remain healthy when I'm not working, for example by staying physically active?	✓	✓					✓	

Finance

I'm taking retirement. Where can I get information about my finances and pension?					✓	✓	✓	✓
Changes in my health may prevent me from returning to work. Is there an option for ill-health retirement?			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

Work

I left my job because of my cancer. Where can I get advice on changing my career?						✓	✓	
Where can I get advice on my legal position when it comes to disclosing my illness to a new employer?						✓	✓	✓
What is my current or previous employer allowed to disclose about my illness when asked for a reference by a future employer?					✓	✓	✓	✓

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.

Thanks

This leaflet was written, revised and edited by Macmillan Cancer Support's Cancer Information Development team with support and approval from the Working Through Cancer Programme team at Macmillan. It is based on content originally produced in partnership with Loughborough University and Affinity Health at Work as part of the National Cancer Survivorship Initiative.

With thanks to: Johnny Browne, Macmillan GP Adviser, Northern Ireland; Sue Dixon, Occupational Health Manager, Wakefield Council; Jackie Dominey, Macmillan GP Adviser, Solihull; Fiona Harwood, Human Resources Manager, Fiander Tovell LLP; David Linden, Macmillan GP Adviser, Scotland; Barbara Wilson, Founder, Working With Cancer; Dr Philip Wynn, Senior Occupational Health Physician; Steven Yensen, Access to Work, External Relations Manager, Department for Work and Pensions; and the people affected by cancer who reviewed this edition.

More than one in three of us will get cancer. For most of us it will be the toughest fight we ever face. And the feelings of isolation and loneliness that so many people experience make it even harder. But you don't have to go through it alone. The Macmillan team is with you every step of the way.

We are the nurses and therapists helping you through treatment. The experts on the end of the phone. The advisers telling you which benefits you're entitled to. The volunteers giving you a hand with the everyday things. The campaigners improving cancer care. The community there for you online, any time. The supporters who make it all possible.

Together, we are all Macmillan Cancer Support.

For cancer support every step of the way, call Macmillan on 0808 808 00 00 (Mon–Fri, 9am–8pm) or visit macmillan.org.uk

Hard of hearing? Use textphone 0808 808 0121, or Text Relay.
Non-English speaker? Interpreters available.
Braille and large print versions on request.

Work it out was created as part of the National Cancer Survivorship Initiative



NHS Improvement



In partnership with



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Next planned review 2016. Macmillan Cancer Support, registered charity in England and Wales (261017), Scotland (SC039907) and the Isle of Man (604).
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