

A guide for employers

Personal finances

**WE ARE
MACMILLAN.
CANCER SUPPORT**

**WORKING
THROUGH
CANCER**



4 Personal finances

Impact of employment changes

Cancer can have a serious impact on personal finances. People often experience a loss of income, and at the same time increased expenses such as travel costs to hospital. State benefits can be hard to understand and difficult to access. Research indicates that the benefits system is not well-designed to meet the needs of people affected by cancer – it is more like an obstacle course than a support mechanism.¹⁰

Decisions taken regarding employment can significantly affect a person's entitlements and long-term financial outlook. Before formally agreeing changes in working hours, resignation or early retirement, ensure your employee has obtained expert advice on the consequences for their own financial situation.

Financial factors that can be affected by employment changes include:

- a loss of income
- pension entitlement and payment levels
- payouts under insurance policies, including life, mortgage, income protection and critical illness schemes
- eligibility for state benefits. This can be a very significant source of new income for people affected by cancer. It may not occur to your employee to apply for benefits. Many important benefits for carers and people with cancer are not dependent on income and they may even be able to claim while in work. It's important to apply quickly so the person does not miss out on payments. You can refer your employee to one of the expert advice agencies listed below.

Your employee may wish to consult an independent financial adviser (IFA) in relation to queries about financial products such as pensions, insurance and investments. They can identify a qualified professional through a directory operated by the profession at **unbiased.co.uk** They can confirm an IFA's credentials by checking the Financial Services Authority website **fsa.gov.uk** IFAs may charge a fee for their services.

Sources of advice

Other sources of free, reliable and impartial advice include:

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

The CAB can advise on a range of financial issues and will help people negotiate the benefits system. To find a local branch, look online at www.citizensadvice.org.uk The website also has useful fact sheets.

The Pensions Advisory Service

The Pensions Advisory Service is an independent, non-profit organisation that provides free information, advice and guidance on the whole spectrum of pensions.

Helpline **0845 601 2923**

www.pensionsadvisoryservice.org.uk

Directgov – the official government website for public services and information

The best starting point for basic information on finances is the government's online information portal www.direct.gov.uk This is a 'one-stop' shop with information on benefits, pensions, other finance matters and employment rights.

¹⁰ Wilson K, Amir Z. Cancer and disability benefits: a synthesis of qualitative findings on advice and support. *Psycho-Oncology*. May 2008; 17(5):421-9.

Starting with this website, you may also want to explore the Access to Work programme. This is a Jobcentre-held budget that can 'buy' support to help the disabled or those with serious health conditions at work. It can be accessed by those who are in, as well as out of work. Costs are refunded to the employer or employee.

Additional Macmillan resources

Macmillan can help with money matters. When people contact Macmillan, money is one of their most common worries. We are well-equipped to help, offering a wide range of publications and services.

Macmillan publications on financial matters can be ordered free of charge from be.macmillan.org.uk. Here are just a few of the booklets on offer, as part of our *It All Adds Up* series, published with the Financial Services Authority:

- Financial planning
- Pensions
- Insurance
- Sorting out your affairs.

We also produce a comprehensive guide on state benefits called *Help with the cost of cancer* and a self-help guide to understanding the basics of debt management, *Managing your debt*. For information about how to access benefits and other kinds of financial support, your employee can call the Macmillan Support Line on **0808 808 00 00** or visit macmillan.org.uk/financialsupport

Macmillan also offers a free benefits awareness course and a national network of local financial advice centres that your employee can visit.