

# WORK IT OUT: THE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT WORK

We've created this work it out tool so you can find just 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 inspire you to deal with any workplace issues you have.

## The important bit:

Please use the tool as a flexible guide because not all questions will be relevant to everyone. For example, not everybody living with and beyond cancer will need to take time off work or will experience problems in the workplace. And your issues will vary depending on your individual circumstances.

## Further information

We hope you'll find this resource useful. Hang on to it for reference.

If you'd like to know more, or if you have questions about work and cancer that we haven't covered here, you can find us online at [macmillan.org.uk/work](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/work)  
Or speak to us over the **Macmillan Support Line** on **0808 808 00 00**.

## How to use this tool

The work it out tool features a range of questions you may need to ask at different points along your cancer journey.

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

1. Initial work issues and absence from work
2. Preparing to return to work
3. Returning to work
4. Not returning to work

And then we've sub-divided each category into three topic areas:

- Health
- Finance
- Work

We've indicated who you should ask each question, for example your line manager, GP or oncology team, by ticking the relevant boxes beside it.

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



# WORK IT OUT: INITIAL WORK ISSUES AND ABSENCE FROM WORK

Topic area	What do I ask?	Who do I ask? **							
		Oncology Team	GP	Occupational Health	Line Manager	HR	Advisory Services	Charity/Support group	Union
Health	How much time will I need to take off work for each of my treatments, for example surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy and hormone therapy?	✓	✓	✓					
	How will my fit note certification be managed? (Please note that 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 are available to me, for example statutory sick pay, employment and support allowance, disability living allowance and company sick pay? And how can I access this help?					✓	✓	✓	✓
	If I'm unable to work can you tell me which of my insurance and payment protection policies may be relevant?					✓	✓	✓	
	How long can I claim benefits for?					✓	✓	✓	
Work	Where can I find information on my company's policies which relate to my situation? (Your situation may involve absence management, occupational health, sick pay or the company's pension scheme for example.)			✓	✓	✓			✓
	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?			✓	✓	✓			✓

\* These questions are applicable to those who decide to work through treatment. \*\* Occupational Health may include health and safety advisers. Oncology team may include oncologists, radiologists and cancer nurses for example. Advisory services may include the Citizens Advice Bureau, Jobcentre Plus, benefits advisory services and vocational rehabilitation.

✓ The bolder 'tick' indicates the most appropriate person or group to ask in the first place.

# 2

## WORK IT OUT: PREPARING TO RETURN TO WORK\*

Topic area	What do I ask?	Who do I ask? **							
		Oncology Team	GP	Occupational Health	Line Manager	HR	Advisory Services	Charity/ Support group	Union
Health	What are the potential short and long-term risks of my cancer and treatment, both to myself and others?	✓	✓	✓					
	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 role? Will I be able to concentrate for long periods/work quickly/multi-task/learn new things/memorise information?)	✓	✓	✓					
	Which strategies could I use to manage any difficulties at work with mental tasks?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
	What strategies can I use to manage my 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)?				✓	✓	✓		✓
Work	Where can I find out about my legal rights regarding my cancer and work situation?			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	How much notice do I need to give before returning to work?			✓	✓	✓			✓
	Can I have a gradual, phased return to work after extended sick leave?			✓	✓	✓			✓
	How can I make sure that 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 that 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 out with you 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 I make sure that my physical work environment doesn't cause me extra discomfort? I may like 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? These tasks may be driving, shift-working or concentrating for long periods.			✓	✓	✓			✓
	How can we work together to make decisions about any changes to my job role and description?			✓	✓	✓			✓
	Can I have flexible work arrangements so that I can manage my treatment side effects? For example, if the side effect is fatigue, could I work reduced or flexible hours, or from home?			✓	✓	✓			✓

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# 3

## WORK IT OUT: RETURNING TO WORK\*

Topic area	What do I ask?	Who do I ask? **							
		Oncology Team	GP	Occupational Health	Line Manager	HR	Advisory Services	Charity/ Support group	Union
Health	How many follow-up medical appointments will I have to attend during working hours? How flexible can you be on timing?	✓	✓						
	Cancer can have a long-term impact on emotional wellbeing. How can we work together to reduce the risk of this causing me to take time off work?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Finance	Can I have paid time off to attend follow -up medical appointments?				✓	✓			✓
Work	Can we review any temporary changes to my work together?			✓	✓	✓			✓
	How can we best minimise my exposure to infection? This may mean my avoiding close contact with colleagues, working from home 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?			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

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# 4

## WORK IT OUT: NOT RETURNING TO WORK

Topic area	What do I ask?	Who do I ask? **							
		Oncology Team	GP	Occupational Health	Line Manager	HR	Advisory Services	Charity/ Support group	Union
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?					✓	✓	✓	✓

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