

Overcoming Barriers to Financial Support - Overview

The workshop looked at the development of Macmillan's financial support and then went on to consider the ongoing challenges to people affected by cancer in accessing financial help. All three workshops had excellent and wide ranging contributions from the attendees.

Key points

Below is a summary of the issues identified during the workshop discussion:

Barriers

- Lack of promotion of benefits entitlements and help with other health costs
- Benefits system is too complex, application process too complicated and DWP staff unhelpful
- Benefits rules and regulations often mean people affected by cancer do not qualify for help
- Poor decisions and lack of understanding of cancer
- People often lack the time and energy to challenge decisions

Solutions

- Automatic referral to benefits adviser by health professionals
- Better integrated benefits system with single application process and simplified application forms
- Better DWP training for frontline staff and decision makers
- Continue to develop as many local benefits advice services as possible
- Promotion of other financial/legal areas such as wills, pensions and insurance

Future activities

- Macmillan to continue to work with NHS/National Cancer Survivorship Initiative to ensure that health professionals routinely raise and refer on for financial issues.
- Macmillan to influence the welfare reform agenda to ensure that the system is equitable for people affected by cancer, for example Macmillan has just produced a report on the impact of the Employment & Support Allowance. There are many other areas to influence including the position of students who get a cancer diagnosis and proposed changes to the position of carers.
- Involve Cancer Voices in training of Department of work and pensions (DWP) staff - Macmillan will raise this through contacts in the DWP.
- Protect and expand range of local Macmillan benefits services with enhanced volunteer involvement. Macmillan and Cancer Voices can influence PCT and local authority commissioners to show how important these services are and encourage them to fund services into the future.
- Develop improved access to financial services and products advice and information - this is being actively pursued with potential financial institutions.