

FINDING THE WORDS

Talking about cancer at work

These tips are designed to help you prepare for conversations at work, from diagnosis to during and after treatment.

1 Telling your employer

Talking about your diagnosis is the first step to working with your boss to put in place the support you need at work. Under equalities law your employer should try to help and support you. This includes putting in place [reasonable adjustments](#) to help you stay in or return to work when you are ready and able to do so.

2 Be informed

Get as much information about your condition and your treatment (including when your appointments might be) as you can by asking the [right questions of the right people](#). This will help you let your employer know what support or reasonable adjustments you might need.

3 Know your rights

If you have or have had cancer, you have some additional [rights at work](#). In England, Scotland and Wales, employees with cancer are protected from discrimination in the workplace by the Equality Act 2010. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and its extension, the Disability Discrimination Order of 2006, protect workers in Northern Ireland.

4 Be prepared

Check your company's guidelines and sickness policies before speaking to your employer. Company policies on sickness absence may not have been drawn up with cancer in mind and therefore may need to be interpreted flexibly. This may be considered as a reasonable adjustment. If you are a member of a union you can also ask them for advice.

5 Get organised

Before you speak with your manager, write down what you want to say to use as a guide. You can hand this to your manager as a record of your conversation. Try and take notes during the conversation. If you are nervous about speaking to your employer, you can take someone with you when you speak to your manager or HR team. They can also take notes if you are not able to. Remember if you are not feeling well, you can rearrange your meeting to another time.

6 Confidentiality

Know that how much, if anything, you want to disclose about your diagnosis to your [wider colleagues](#) is entirely up to you and your employer has to respect this.

7 Keeping in touch

Agree a communication plan with work that you're happy with. This can cover who you speak with, how often you communicate (e.g. weekly, fortnightly, monthly) and how (e.g. by phone, email or in person at home or in the office). This is important if you have to take time off for treatment, but also if you remain at work as it can help to keep your manager updated as your needs may change. When you are ready to return to work, discuss and agree a [return to work plan](#).

8 Support for your employer

There is help for your employer to support you in the workplace which you can let them know about. [Macmillan at Work](#) offers resources and training for HR and line managers.

9 Remember...

...the best option for you will depend very much on your individual work, health and financial circumstances. Don't rush into any decisions, take your time and speak to as many people as you can, including your health professionals and employer about your options.

10 Macmillan is here for you

We have a range of resources on work and cancer (including information for carers and the self-employed) at be.macmillan.org.uk and at macmillan.org.uk/work. If you have questions about work and cancer you can also call our dedicated Work Support Service free on **0808 808 0000**, Monday-Friday, 8am-6pm.