

MACMILLAN

RESEARCH

IMPACT

FRAMEWORK

**WE ARE
MACMILLAN.
CANCER SUPPORT**

Contents

Introduction	4
Purpose	4
What is impact?	4
Why is impact important?	4
Framework overview	5
Framework principles	6
Theory of Change	8
The change narrative	10
Activities to maximise the potential for impact	12
Impact planning	13
The main factors to consider	13
Selecting an Outcome	14
Mapping out Routes to Impact	15
Identifying impact-enabling activities	16
Impact planning in grant applications	17
Impact monitoring	18
Impact-enabling activities	19
Progression towards impact	19
Impact: evidence of contribution to Outcomes	20
Acknowledgements	22

Introduction

Purpose

The Research Impact Framework (RIF) is a guide for those seeking to apply for funding through the [Macmillan Research Grants Scheme](#), and for researchers who are successful in securing a grant. Its purpose is to help maximise the impact of the research that Macmillan funds through our grants scheme. It is intended to support researchers to plan for, deliver and demonstrate research impact and to enable Macmillan to facilitate, understand and communicate on that impact. It should act as an important reference point for grant applicants, grant holders and Macmillan to ensure that impact remains a focus before, during and after a grant-funded research project is carried out.

What is impact?

'Research impact' is a broad term that is variably defined by different organisations depending on their own priorities and focus. It has at its heart the concept of research being used to bring about positive change in the 'real world' outside of academia.

Macmillan provides care, information and support to help people live life with cancer. Our definition of research

impact aligns with this organisational focus. We worked together with people affected by cancer to develop a [Goal and Outcomes](#) that all research Macmillan funds should aim to contribute to. These focus on bringing benefit to people affected by cancer through improvements to treatment and care and through empowering individuals. For Macmillan, research impact is defined as **the demonstrable contribution that research makes to our research goal and outcomes.**

Why is impact important?

Macmillan has a duty to the public and its donors to ensure that the money it raises is used as effectively as possible. It is important therefore that we fund research that has the highest potential to contribute to the benefits we want to see for people affected by cancer; that we work together with researchers to maximise the chance of that potential being realised; and that we are able to demonstrate the benefits that flow from our investment in research.

Researchers are increasingly expected to demonstrate the impact of their work and the RIF's focus on systematic impact planning and monitoring will facilitate this.

Framework overview

The RIF describes Macmillan's approach to research impact in four sections:

- **How Macmillan and researchers will work together:** a set of principles which underpin how the charity will work in partnership with grant holders to maximise research impact
- **How Macmillan is aiming to achieve:** the Goal, and the Outcomes (or changes that need to happen in order for that goal to be achieved), to which all research projects funded through the grants scheme should aim to make a contribution; this is articulated in the 'Theory of Change'
- **How impact should be planned:** the mechanisms by which impact should be planned by researchers and how Macmillan will assess those plans
- **How impact will be monitored:** the impact evidence that will need to be provided by researchers and how Macmillan will collect that evidence

Framework principles

These research impact principles are a set of statements which frame the relationship Macmillan wants to have with all of its grant holders. They are designed to ensure the best levels of support, partnership and mutual understanding, with the ultimate aim of maximising research impact.

→ **Guidance for applicants:** These principles set out the relationship Macmillan wants to have with its grant holders.

Principle	Principle in practice
1. Working in partnership	Partnership is the best way to ensure maximum impact and this should be a two-way relationship. Macmillan will contribute internal expertise and networks to support and promote the research. Grant holders will work with Macmillan to maximise the potential of the research to benefit people affected by cancer.
2. Involving people affected by cancer	Grant holders will consider in what ways people affected by cancer can be meaningfully involved in their research. Macmillan believes that this supports impactful research. Macmillan can provide examples of successful involvement and facilitate access to volunteers affected by cancer.
3. Regular communication	Grant holders will maintain an ongoing dialogue with Macmillan through regular reporting and will share their findings with Macmillan at the earliest opportunity. In turn, Macmillan will provide a named contact for each Grant and will respond promptly to queries, issues or updates.

4. Dissemination and engagement	Grant holders will work closely with Macmillan teams (including Evidence, Media and PR, Policy, Campaigns and Influence, and Fundraising) to plan and undertake communications and attend engagement events to raise awareness of their research and its findings. Macmillan will support grant holders to deliver communications in accessible ways, especially for people affected by cancer, donors and the general public.
5. Open access	Open access to research outputs is an important way of maximising the impact of research. Grant holders are expected to share their research outputs (not just publications, but also datasets and other outputs) with the wider research community, and with the public and other audiences as appropriate. Macmillan will support open access publication costs.
6. Long term impact monitoring	Impact can take a long time to emerge, often beyond the timescales of a research project. Macmillan will want to work with grant holders to monitor impact both during and beyond the grant funding period. Grant holders are encouraged to maintain longer term contact with the charity through its research community.

Macmillan research impact in practice: Involving people affected by cancer

A project investigating the unmet needs of carers employed a reference group of carers to act as a sounding board for the research. The group helped to pilot the research tools and ensured that the approach was sufficiently sensitive towards the needs of patients and their carers. The group continued to meet beyond the lifetime of the grant and went on to inform later research.

Theory of Change

The intention behind including a 'Theory of Change' in the RIF is to make clear what the 'Goal' is for the Macmillan Research Grants Scheme, and what 'Outcomes' (or changes) research projects funded through the scheme need to contribute to in order to help achieve that Goal. Doing so enables a tightly focused definition of research impact: a demonstrable contribution made by the research to one or more of the Outcomes and hence the Goal. This in turn provides a clear focus and structure to inform grant applicants who are planning for impact and grant holders who are collecting evidence of impact.

The Theory of Change is set out in diagrammatic form on page 9. The change narrative which follows provides more detail on what the Theory of Change means.

→ **Guidance for applicants:** The Theory of Change sets out the Outcomes that Macmillan wants to see from its research grants scheme. All research projects funded through the scheme must aim to contribute to at least one Outcome.



Goal

Macmillan-funded research benefits people affected by cancer by improving treatment and care and empowering individuals

Outcomes

Improving treatment and care

Treatment and care is more reflective of individual needs

Treatment and care increasingly improves the quality of life for people affected by cancer

Treatment and care are better-coordinated within and between all stages of the cancer journey

Treatment and care are better designed to put people affected by cancer at their heart

Empowering the individual

People affected by cancer feel in greater control of their life, treatment and care

People affected by cancer are more confident of making the right decisions about their life, treatment and care

People affected by cancer have better access to clear, relevant and timely information

People affected by cancer have more helpful, better-informed conversations with those who treat and care for them

Routes to impact (e.g. policy change, service redesign, upskilling of clinicians)

Grant-holder activities

Impact-enabling activities (e.g. public engagement, contribution to policy consultations, production of training materials)

Research

The change narrative

Macmillan provides care, information and support to help people live life with cancer. The Goal of the Research Impact Framework (RIF) is shaped around this organisational focus. The contribution of an individual project to this Goal may be direct or indirect, and may happen within or beyond the funded period of the research, but this should always be its ultimate long-term aim. Even a project that does not achieve the results it hypothesised might nevertheless be helpful, for example by closing off unproductive areas of investigation within this ultimate focus.



Goal

Macmillan-funded research benefits people affected by cancer by improving treatment and care and by empowering individuals.

Macmillan believes that this Goal can be achieved by bringing about a series of changes (which are referred to as 'Outcomes') related to:

- improving treatment and care for people affected by cancer; and
- empowering people affected by cancer to enable them to engage with services and make the decisions that are right for them.

There is no particular hierarchy or chronology to the order of these outcomes; all of them contribute to the Goal.

Macmillan research impact in practice: Benefiting people affected by cancer

Macmillan funded a project testing a proof of concept for an electronic system to record patient-reported outcome measures (PROMs). Further research and development since Macmillan funding ended has led to the system's deployment as a means of enabling risk-stratified follow-up for men with testicular cancer. The system is more convenient for patients, who can reduce trips to outpatient clinics, and more efficient for clinicians.

Outcomes

– Improving treatment and care

Treatment and care may be delivered in a clinical/hospital environment, or through other services, or in the community. People affected by cancer can always benefit from an improvement in the way in which they are treated and cared for, and research can help inform and drive those improvements.

These are the main Outcomes that Macmillan would like to see research we fund contribute to in the area of improved treatment and care:

- **Treatment and care is more reflective of individual needs:** treatment and care is likely to be better and more effective if it is tailored and more responsive to the requirements of individuals
- **Treatment and care increasingly improves the quality of life for people affected by cancer:** it is crucial to treat and care for the whole person rather than just the cancer; and to take into consideration non-clinical mechanisms of support that allow people to live better with and after cancer
- **Treatment and care are better-coordinated within and between all stages of the cancer journey:** the cancer journey can be long and complicated; improving a person's transition between phases of treatment, recovery and/or end of life care through better coordination should help to improve the experience and outcomes for people affected by cancer
- **Treatment and care are better designed to put people affected by cancer at their heart:** placing people affected by cancer at the centre of service design should mean better, more responsive services



Macmillan research impact in practice: Improving treatment and care

Research investigating the readiness of the nursing and allied health professional workforce to provide survivorship services found a lack of confidence among staff in some areas of care, such as care planning and long term symptom management. The research influenced the development of competency frameworks which have ultimately changed practice through training, professional development and workforce planning.

Outcomes

– Empowering the individual

The second broad area where research can bring a benefit is from the perspective of the person affected by cancer, rather than the system that supports them.

The Outcomes that Macmillan-funded research should aim to contribute to in this area are:

- **People affected by cancer feel in greater control of their life, treatment and care:** a sense of losing control of one's life – which can come from a cancer diagnosis – can be very debilitating and may impact negatively on a person's recovery or wider wellbeing
- **People affected by cancer are more confident of making the right decisions about their life, treatment and care:** there are many decisions that a person needs to make about their cancer and its treatment as well as their life in general following a diagnosis and beyond treatment; people need to feel confident that they are able to make the right decisions
- **People affected by cancer have better access to clear, relevant and timely information:** greater confidence and a sense of control begins with people feeling sufficiently and appropriately informed about their cancer from diagnosis through treatment and, if necessary, through to end of life

- **People affected by cancer are able to have more helpful, better-informed conversations with those who care for and support them:** honest, open and constructive conversations with professionals can help to generate patient confidence and allow them to feel more in control of their lives

Activities to maximise the potential for impact

Impact is about contributing to the Goal and Outcomes in this Theory of Change. Simply conducting the research is unlikely to lead to demonstrable impact; all researchers should plan and undertake activities to maximise the potential for the research to contribute to impact. That contribution may come about in the short term and as a direct result of the activities of the researchers. However, in many cases there will be a chain of activities and changes which will need to happen in order to effect an Outcome change and this will happen over an extended period of time. The next section of the framework discusses and provides support for researchers to plan for maximising impact, and to collect evidence to demonstrate both impact-enabling activities and contributions to impact itself.

Impact planning

The main factors to consider

The development of a clear and comprehensive impact plan alongside a research proposal will provide a strong foundation for maximising impact. The potential for research to bring benefit to people affected by cancer (i.e. its impact) is a key factor when Macmillan makes decisions about awarding grants. A well thought through impact plan is likely to increase the chances of a grant being awarded.

The plan should include consideration of the following key factors:

- The **Outcome** (or Outcomes) from the Theory of Change that an applicant considers are most likely to be influenced by the research
- The **Routes to Impact** that the applicant expects the research to follow on its way from the outputs and products of the research to its potential contribution to the selected outcome
- The **Activities** that the applicant will undertake to encourage the progression of the outputs of the research along the Routes to Impact

Each of these is discussed in more detail overleaf.



Selecting an Outcome

It is important to set a long-term aim for a research project's impact. While the direction of the research may change over time, or may not succeed in its original intentions, linking the research to (at least) one of the framework's Outcomes firmly sets the direction of the research in the context of what is important to Macmillan. It also supports the applicant in demonstrating clearly why Macmillan should fund the research.

→ Selecting an Outcome:

Applicants should identify at least one Outcome from the framework which best describes the potential long term impact of the project.

The following points may help researchers to identify the Outcome(s) that their research is most likely to contribute to:

- Think long term. Outcomes may not be immediately achievable for some projects, due to their size, scale, or the nature of their focus (such as very early stage research in a new area)
- Start from the broader perspective – is the research likely to contribute to changes in cancer care and support systems, or is it more about empowering people affected by cancer? – before attempting to single out individual Outcomes
- Consider your own ambitions for the research and where it might lead
- Reflect on how the research might be viewed from the perspective of a healthcare professional, or a person affected by cancer. What would they perceive as the benefits of the research to them in the long run? How might it relate to their experience of cancer?



Mapping out Routes to Impact

After selecting Outcomes, applicants should identify the anticipated route or routes that they think the results of their research will take on their way to making a contribution to the selected Outcome(s). This could include identification of who will use the research, how they will use it, and what will change as a result.

There are a wide range of routes that research outputs might potentially take, for example:

- **Influencing policy**, such as the introduction of new ideas into the policy development space, challenging orthodoxies, and advocacy/promotion of particular positions or practices
- **Influencing the delivery and/or quality of treatment and care** through the education and upskilling of healthcare practitioners
- **Influencing service design**, for example through the development of new systems and processes relevant to the care and support of people with cancer
- **Influencing the capacity of patients to make the right choices** by providing them with better information on which to base their decisions
- **Enabling and facilitating future cancer research** by promoting the potential of follow-on research opportunities with other researchers, thereby maintaining the original research's trajectory towards an Outcome

→ Routes to Impact

Applicants should identify the anticipated route or routes that they think the results of their research may take on the way to contributing to an Outcome

Macmillan research impact in practice: Routes to Impact

An observational study investigating how a couple's sexuality and sexual function was discussed and managed in clinical settings highlighted a lack of opportunities to raise and address such issues. The main focus of the research was on men with prostate cancer and their partners. The study enabled the researcher to conduct further research which ultimately supported a business case for a hospital-based psychosexual therapist.

Identifying impact-enabling activities

When the Routes to Impact have been mapped, it should be possible for applicants to identify activities and specific research outputs that they can deliver to support the progression of the research along those routes. Options may include:

- Public engagement via social and traditional media to raise awareness of the research and its findings, as a possible means of influencing the general public or policy discourse on cancer
- Written and oral submissions to government policy consultations
- Collaboration with businesses to explore the potential of taking a new service idea from academic proof-of-concept to a marketable proposition
- Working with Macmillan's Policy, Campaigns and Influence team to ensure the research findings are embedded in their influencing activity
- Contributions to leaflets and other information materials provided to people affected by cancer by Macmillan and other cancer and health-related organisations
- The production of training and development materials for clinicians and others working with people affected by cancer
- Peer-to-peer engagement through academic and research networks to promote the research and the potential for follow-on research projects to develop the findings further



Macmillan research impact in practice: Enabling impact

A survey-based research project exploring the unmet needs of cancer patients provided briefing packs on its findings to clinicians to promote discussion and encourage improving local practice to enhance the patient experience. The research findings were also proactively disseminated to policy makers and were cited in a government guidance document for commissioners on improving outcomes for people living with and beyond cancer.

Impact planning in grant applications

Impact plans will necessarily change over time in response to both the findings of the research and changes in the landscape that the research seeks to influence. However, an early consideration of the long-term impact aim, the routes that the research should take to achieve that impact, and the activities that will progress the research along those routes will provide a strong foundation for maximising impact when a grant gets underway. This is one of the reasons why impact planning is an integral part of our research grant application process.

Macmillan runs a two phase application process, with an initial outline application phase followed by a *full application* phase for successfully shortlisted outline applications.

At the outline phase, we ask applicants to provide a brief narrative summary of their impact plan as part of their application. At the full application phase, we ask applicants to submit a more detailed version of their impact plan.

While the level of detail will differ, applicants' responses at both phases should typically include information on:

- Their willingness to work with Macmillan on research impact, as set out in the framework principles
- Which Outcome(s) from the Theory of Change they expect the research project to contribute to
- The Routes to Impact they expect the research to follow on the way to contributing to the selected Outcome
- The impact-enabling activities and outputs that they plan to deliver to support progression along the Routes to Impact
- The evidence that they will collect to demonstrate their impact-enabling activities, progression along the Routes to Impact, and impact itself (more details on this in the 'Impact Monitoring' section below)

At both phases of the application process, the potential of the research to bring benefit to people affected by cancer (i.e. its impact) is a key factor in decision making. Careful planning for impact and clear expression of those plans in the application forms will therefore be a critical success factor for applicants.

Impact monitoring

→ Impact monitoring

Researchers will be asked to make an annual submission of impact evidence via Researchfish for the duration of their grant award and for at least three years afterwards.

It is important both for Macmillan and for grant holders to be able to demonstrate and communicate research impact, and therefore evidence needs to be collected to facilitate this. Impact monitoring refers to the collection of evidence that demonstrates impact, or progression towards impact. Macmillan will use a system called Researchfish to support researchers to collect impact evidence in a systematic way. This system is already used by many researchers who receive funding from a variety of UK funding bodies and provides an online mechanism for recording information related to impact.

Researchers will be asked to make an annual submission of impact evidence via Researchfish for the duration of their grant award and for at least three years afterwards. Full guidance and support will be provided to all grant holders to facilitate their use of Researchfish.

The nature of the evidence collected and reported will vary according to the element of the impact process being considered and will be closely linked to the structures set out in the impact planning section of the RIF:



Impact-enabling activities

As part of the impact planning process grant holders will have identified impact-enabling activities to undertake that should support progression of the research along the anticipated routes to impact, as well as specific research outputs. The outputs of the research (e.g. new knowledge, publications, tools, interventions, datasets) are the foundations upon which impact is built but are not the end product of the impact story.

Grant holders will be asked to report on both research outputs and impact-enabling activities as part of their annual Researchfish impact evidence submission. As well as the impact-enabling activities planned from the outset, additional activities are likely to be planned and undertaken as the research develops and the findings are known, and these should also be reported.

Progression towards impact

Impact monitoring at this level focuses on the collection of evidence regarding the progression of the research along the planned route to impact. This could include early indicators that the research is being taken up and used by the stakeholders who can facilitate its contribution to the selected Outcome.

The evidence a grant holder will collect will depend on the focus of the planned routes to impact.

As is the case for evidencing contribution to outcomes, descriptions of progression towards impact are likely to be narrative in the style.



Macmillan research impact in practice: Enabling impact

A research fellowship investigating cancer cachexia (weight loss) resulted in a wide range of contributions to publications including a Macmillan information leaflet for people with cancer struggling to manage with changes in their eating.

Impact: evidence of contribution to Outcomes

Ultimately, the totality of impact evidence collected by grant holders will show the extent to which the selected Outcome has been influenced as a result of the funded research. However, it is recognised that this may only happen over a long period of time and will be affected by the wider context and other contributing elements and actors. Direct attribution of impact may therefore be difficult and may have to be inferred. Descriptions of impact at this level are more about evidencing a contribution than scientifically 'proving' an effect, thus the descriptions are likely to be narrative in style. The

impact planning that you complete at the application phase will help you to identify the kind of information you will need to collect to help you evidence a contribution to your selected Outcome.

The hypothetical example below shows the kinds of impact evidence that might be collected for each of these elements of impact monitoring and reporting. The information provided in this example is high level and indicative only; researchers should plan to provide more detail on supporting evidence (e.g. details of outputs, quantitative data to support claims where appropriate, links to relevant documents) as part of their impact reporting.

Research project title	Identifying the financial concerns of people affected by cancer.
Selected Outcome (from application)	Treatment and care increasingly improves the quality of life for people affected by cancer.
Routes to Impact (from application)	<p>Using the research findings to provide training to clinicians to give them the knowledge and confidence required to raise financial issues and refer patients on to relevant support services.</p> <p>Using the research findings to influence policy makers to ensure that financial issues are included in the training of the health and social care workforce.</p>
Research outputs and impact-enabling activities	Two open-access, peer-reviewed journal publications.
	One presentation at national cancer conference.
	<p>Ran training and development session for clinical teams involved in the research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed and produced training materials • Delivered an awareness-raising session for clinicians • Followed up with a questionnaire to explore impact on practice

Research outputs and impact-enabling activities (continued)	<p>Ran workshop on findings for Macmillan's Policy, Campaigns and Influence team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared findings and discussed how to embed into Macmillan's ongoing influencing activity • Explored potential of using the research as the basis for a policy report or roundtable with policy makers • Provided follow up support over the phone post-workshop to facilitate use of the research for influencing activities
Progression towards impact	<p>The research with people affected by cancer highlighted a range of concerns about their finances which were not sufficiently being addressed, a reluctance to raise such issues with busy clinicians, and a lack of awareness of where they might turn for help.</p> <p>Feedback collected from clinicians who were involved in the training and development session indicated that the training had affected their practice, with them now finding it much easier to begin a conversation about financial problems with their patients, and feeling more confident about signposting them to specialist support.</p> <p>Informal feedback from a local welfare rights charity (one of the places where patients were signposted) suggested a small increase in the number of clients who are affected by cancer engaging with their service in the six months following the training session.</p> <p>The research findings formed a key part of a policy report produced by Macmillan on the financial impact of cancer; this report was used by Macmillan to call for Health Education England to ensure financial issues are included in NHS and social care workforce training.</p>
Impact: evidence of contribution to Outcomes	<p>Since the completion of the research, the research team has continued to work with Macmillan to produce and distribute learning materials to clinicians via the charity's network of professionals. This has extended the breadth of the research's influence beyond the small group of clinicians that the team originally worked with.</p> <p>An evaluation of the effectiveness of this new approach to addressing financial problems, commissioned by Macmillan, has demonstrated small but positive improvements in the wellbeing of people affected by cancer as a result.</p>

Acknowledgements

The Macmillan Research Impact Framework was developed by Macmillan in partnership with [Cloud Chamber](#).

It was designed in collaboration with people affected by cancer who helped ensure that the framework has the needs, experiences and perspectives of people affected by cancer at its heart.

We are extremely grateful for the invaluable contributions of:

Brian Spark
Lesley Asque
Pete Wheatstone
Alison Walters

As well as other members of our advisory group of people affected by cancer.

Our approach to the Research Impact Framework was also informed by interviews with researchers who shared their ideas and experiences around research impact, and we thank:

Dr Stephen Barclay
Dr Lynn Calman
Dr Derek Kyte
Professor Sara Faithfull
Dr Morag Farquhar
Professor Claire Foster
Professor Diana Greenfield
Dr Chloe Grimmett
Professor Jane Hopkinson
Dr Gillian Horne
Dr Sean Hughes
Professor Daniel Kelly
Professor Alistair Munro
Professor Scott Murray
Professor Emma Ream
Professor Alison Richardson
Dr Karen Robb
Dr Emma Scott
Dr Claire Taylor
Professor Eila Watson
Professor Mary Wells
Dr Isabel White
Dr Penny Wright

When you have cancer, you don't just worry about what will happen to your body, you worry about what will happen to your life. How to talk to those close to you. What to do about work. How you'll cope with the extra costs.

At Macmillan, we know how a cancer diagnosis can affect everything. So when you need someone to turn to, we're here, because no one should face cancer alone. We can help you find answers to questions about your treatment and its effects. We can advise on work and benefits, and we're always here for emotional support when things get tough.

Right from the moment you're diagnosed, through your treatment and beyond, we're a constant source of support to help you feel more in control of your life.

We are millions of supporters, professionals, volunteers, campaigners and people affected by cancer. Together we make sure there's always someone here for you, to give you the support, energy and inspiration you need to help you feel more like you. We are all Macmillan.

For support, information or if you just want to chat, call us free on **0808 808 00 00** (Monday to Friday, 9am–8pm) or visit **[macmillan.org.uk](https://www.macmillan.org.uk)**

**WE ARE
MACMILLAN.
CANCER SUPPORT**