

# PRIMARY CARE 10 TOP TIPS

## Supporting patients with work

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Next planned review: April 2021

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Macmillan Cancer Support, registered charity in England and Wales (261017), Scotland (SC039907) and the Isle of Man (604). Also operating in Northern Ireland. MAC14531\_Supporting patients with work

- 1** Not everyone with cancer will be able to work. But 87% of people employed when diagnosed say continuing to work is important. For many, work helps with a sense of normality, positivity and self-esteem.
- 2** Under equalities law, employers should make reasonable adjustments. Your conversations with patients about how cancer may impact work can empower them to discuss their needs with employers. This can reduce anxiety and support them to stay in or return to work.
- 3** View the Fit Note as a conversation tool rather than something on your list of jobs to do. It helps you provide advice to patients about the functional effects of their condition on their fitness for work, a bit like a prescription for work advice.
- 4** Encourage patients to discuss work support needs early with line managers or HR. Agreeing communication and return-to-work plans can help people stay in touch with work and ease the transition back.
- 5** The Fit Note comments box is your opportunity to highlight the impact cancer might have on your patient's ability to work. This can help their conversations with their employer or Jobcentre. For example, 'chemotherapy will finish in X weeks, see me about fitness for work two weeks after' or 'visits to hospital required every week for blood test and chemo'.
- 6** Add 'Consider applying for Access to Work: [www.gov.uk/access-to-work](http://www.gov.uk/access-to-work)' into the comments box to signpost potentially eligible patients to Access to Work or Access to Work (NI). These schemes provide practical support at work to people aged 16 and over who have a disability or health condition that makes it hard to do their job or get to and from work.
- 7** Signpost patients to Macmillan's Work Support Service, available Monday-Friday, 8am-6pm on **0808 808 00 00**. This supports people with talking to employers, negotiating adjustments, sick pay and taking time off. It can also refer those with more complex needs to one-off legal advice. Macmillan has information online too: [www.macmillan.org.uk/work](http://www.macmillan.org.uk/work).
- 8** You don't need to be an expert to provide helpful advice. But it's important you work within your competencies. Use the comments box to add suggestions you feel confident about, such as 'Uncertain of adaptations possible – suggest you discuss with your line manager'.
- 9** Cancer Care Reviews are another opportunity to have work-related conversations. Macmillan templates within relevant IT systems prompt holistic conversations, including about work, and provide downloadable information you can share with patients to help them access further support.
- 10** Macmillan's Work Support Route Guides help you discuss work with people living with cancer and provide information about other available support. And the Council for Work and Health has developed Talking Work: A Guide for Doctors.

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