

**MACMILLAN**  
CANCER SUPPORT

# 10 TOP TIPS FOR LINE MANAGERS

Work and cancer series  
– for employers



**When an employee has cancer or is caring for someone with cancer, they will need your support. They may be dealing with physical, emotional and financial issues.**

**These tips will help you support your employee when they have been diagnosed, and through treatment and living with cancer.**

## 10 top tips

- 1** Remember that communication is important
- 2** Be sensitive to your employee's needs
- 3** Respect your employee's right to privacy
- 4** Be prepared to make adjustments
- 5** Check guidelines and policies
- 6** Find out about financial support
- 7** Respect carers' rights at work
- 8** Discuss a return-to-work plan
- 9** Recognise the impact on your team
- 10** Remember that Macmillan is here to help

# 1

## Remember that communication is important

Listen to your employee and try to understand their situation. It is fine to ask questions when they are sharing information with you. It is important to keep in contact with them if they are on sick leave. Agree together how and when you will keep in contact and put this in writing. Remember to review these plans regularly as their situation and how they want to be contacted may change. You may find it helpful to watch our video on talking about cancer at [macmillan.org.uk/workvideos](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/workvideos)

# 2

## Be sensitive to your employee's needs

The physical, emotional and practical effects of cancer, and cancer treatment, are different for each person. What is best for one employee may not be right for another. Make time to understand your employee's individual needs.

# 3

## Respect your employee's right to privacy

Your employee may not want other people in the organisation to know that they have cancer or are caring for someone with cancer. If they do want their colleagues to know, ask them how and when they would like people to be told.

# 4

## Be prepared to make adjustments

Cancer is legally defined as a disability. Under equality laws, you may need to make changes to the workplace or the employee's job that allow them to stay in work, or come back to work. These changes are called reasonable adjustments. If you have a HR manager or occupational health service, they can give you advice.

# 5

## Check guidelines and policies

Check whether your organisation has any guidelines and policies to support your employee and help you manage the situation. These may include guidance about sickness absence, long-term conditions, time off work and occupational health. We have templates you can use to create guidelines. Visit [macmillan.org.uk/employer](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/employer) to find out more.

# 6

## Find out about financial support

Find out whether your organisation offers financial support to people who are off work, such as sick pay. You may also want to check whether there are any other benefits that could help your employee. You could suggest they talk to a Macmillan financial guide or welfare rights adviser. They can call us on **0808 808 00 00**, or visit [macmillan.org.uk/moneyworries](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/moneyworries)

# 7

## Respect carers' rights at work

If an employee is caring for a person who has cancer, they may need your support. Carers have certain rights at work, including taking unpaid time off to care for the person they look after in an emergency. Flexible working could make it easier for carers to keep working. Any employee has the right to request flexible working. Find out more at [macmillan.org.uk/carersatwork](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/carersatwork)

# 8

## Discuss a return-to-work plan

If your employee is off work, agree a plan with them for keeping in contact. When they are ready, talk with them about a return-to-work plan. This discussion can help you find out what support they might need at work before, during and after treatment. Their return-to-work plan might involve a phased return, where they increase their hours slowly over a period of time. Or it might mean you slowly handing over work to them. You could also consider reasonable adjustments to support their wellbeing.

# 9

## Recognise the impact on your team

Be aware of the impact that having an employee with cancer can have on colleagues and on you. If you need more support, talk to your line manager, your HR manager, or call the Macmillan Support Line on **0808 808 00 00**.

# 10

## Remember that Macmillan is here to help

Don't forget that we are here to help everyone affected by cancer, including family, friends, carers and employers. If you or your employees have questions about cancer, call our support line free on **0808 808 00 00**. Or visit **[macmillan.org.uk/work](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/work)** for expert training, resources and advice.



**'My employer was aware of any difficulties and supported me. It helped make the transition into work easier.'**

**Hilary, diagnosed with cancer of the gullet**



## Work and cancer support from Macmillan

Macmillan at Work is a programme that provides:

- expert training
- consultancy
- information and support
- resources, such as **Your work and cancer toolkit**.

If anyone in your organisation is affected by cancer, the toolkit provides guidance and practical tips for you and your employees. It includes the booklet **Managing cancer in the workplace**, which has more detailed information for managers. You can order this separately at [macmillan.org.uk/work](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/work)

You can order the toolkit by signing up at [macmillan.org.uk/atwork](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/atwork) When you are registered, you will also receive our free regular newsletter for employers.

## Disclaimer

We make every effort to ensure that the information we provide is accurate and up to date but it should not be relied upon as a substitute for specialist professional advice tailored to your situation. So far as is permitted by law, Macmillan does not accept liability in relation to the use of any information contained in this publication, or third-party information or websites included or referred to in it. Some photos are of models.

## Thanks

This booklet has been written, revised and edited by Macmillan Cancer Support's Cancer Information Development team. It has been approved by the Working Through Cancer Programme team at Macmillan.

Thanks to the people affected by cancer who reviewed this edition, and those who shared their stories.

We welcome feedback on our information. If you have any, please contact [\*\*cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk\*\*](mailto:cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk)

**This leaflet has tips that will help you support your employee through diagnosis, treatment and living with cancer. It also includes tips for supporting carers.**

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm, or visit **macmillan.org.uk**

Would you prefer to speak to us in another language? Interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use. Are you deaf or hard of hearing? Call us using NGT (Text Relay) on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the NGT Lite app.

Need information in different languages or formats?  
Visit **macmillan.org.uk/otherformats** or call our support line.

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**RIGHT THERE WITH YOU**