

The typical 'journey' back to work – how it works - Stage 2

Last week we looked at how to manage work when you've had your cancer diagnosis confirmed. This week we're going to look at how to manage work when you're in active treatment.

During active treatment: Keep in touch

By active treatment I mean surgery or chemo or radiotherapy or, for example, during treatment with Herceptin; in other words when you are still having treatment in the hospital or clinic or at home, regularly and frequently. This is when the doctors take control of your life and make it their own. I found it weirdly comforting as suddenly they were making all the decisions for me – I just had to turn up on time and find a space in the car park (doing both wasn't always possible!).

So, if you haven't done this already, before active treatment starts it is important to sit down with your manager to discuss what you know about your treatment plan (which may change by the way, so you need to mention this) and the implications for work. Most importantly of all, you and your workplace colleagues will need to be flexible and learn to live with uncomfortable uncertainty. What not to do is to commit to deadlines or the kind of work where your presence or your input is essential: the impact of treatment on your body and your emotions can be debilitating and there are no medals for coming into work when you are clearly unwell and unable to function properly.

Next week we'll be reviewing how to prepare yourself to return to work once active treatment has ended.