

### Hello everyone

Welcome to our April 21 newsletter.

Thank goodness Spring is here and although the virus is still with us and will be for quite a while, there are strong signs that the vaccine is bringing down the number of infections and deaths.



Will we ever 'get back to normal'? Unlikely, I think. Life will be different I'm sure, but hopefully with more flexible working especially working from home, those recovering from cancer and other chronic illnesses will find it a little easier to return to work during or after treatment.

In this spring issue we have:

- A blog by Maggie Stephens, business copywriter, editor and presenter. Maggie talks about dealing with her secondary breast cancer diagnosis during lockdown last year
- Dealing With 'Chemo Brain' at Work, an article by associate Isabel van der Ven
- An update about our campaign to raise awareness about working with Advanced or Metastatic Cancer and the story of one of our contributors to that campaign
- An overview of the presentation Stephen Bevan and I made at the virtual 2021 Health and Wellbeing at Work conference **'Cancer Survivors at Work - The Unspoken Truths'**
- Working With Cancer news including new products and services under development
- Exciting news about our workshops, which are all now featured on Eventbrite.

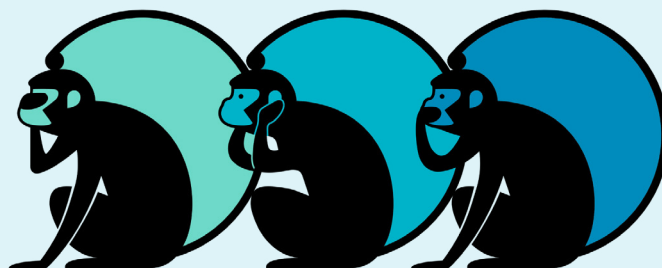


to secondary breast cancer when a CT scan showed it had spread to my lung. Since then, I've been taking drugs to contain and control the cancer. It's still only a few months since my diagnosis, so I'm currently awaiting my first scan since starting the treatment. Fingers crossed.....January became February, and still no-one outside my family knew. With the exception of having to reschedule a couple of meetings because of a late-running hospital appointment, it caused no disruption to anything workwise; no-one would be any the wiser. Did I even NEED to tell anyone?

The full article can be found [here](#).

### Working with advanced or metastatic cancer

We are increasingly working with people who have advanced or metastatic cancer, those who doctors occasionally describe as 'treatable but incurable', who are returning to work or looking for employment. People in this group can survive and work successfully for many years post diagnosis (if they wish to and have the opportunities to do this) but often face ignorance or prejudice at work.



In the UK people in this group are protected by the Equality Act but can still be dismissed by their employer on the grounds of 'capability'.

This year we are working to raise awareness of this issue and have invited those with advanced or metastatic cancer, and who are still working, to contribute their stories and photos. People can remain anonymous if they wish.

**To read about the changes we would like to see to improve the working lives of all those with either primary or advanced/metastatic cancer, please see the article below: 'Cancer survivors at work - the unspoken truths'**

As you will have read above, Maggie Stephens has a secondary breast cancer diagnosis and discusses how it has affected her life and her work.

Here is another story, by Neil Walker, who was diagnosed with Stage 4 Prostate Cancer at the age of 49.

### Living and working with secondary cancer; my story

Maggie Stephens

There's no good time to be told that you have secondary breast cancer, but just before Christmas in the midst of a Covid-19 lockdown definitely wouldn't have been my first choice.



My diagnosis story will be familiar – I found a lump, went to the doctor, had biopsies and was initially diagnosed with primary breast cancer. A month later that diagnosis changed



### My story

Neil Walker

It was July 3rd 2018 when I went to Northampton General Hospital for, what I assumed to be a routine MRI scan to get to the bottom of what had been causing me severe back pain for a couple of months. It had got to the point where I had taken more than a week off work for the first time in 30 years of work. I was a local authority accountant, and in stereotypical fashion, I would spend hours hunched up over a laptop in the least ergonomic positions possible. There was no doubt this was to blame, I thought.

I knew something was wrong the minute I came out of the MRI machine. The technician had been sent to find a consultant, and within minutes, the consultant had demanded I be taken into A&E without delay, as from an initial view of the scan, it appeared my back might fracture at any minute. I was subjected to further observations, scans and tests overnight, and by the next morning, the news was relayed. At the ridiculously premature age of 49, I had been diagnosed with Stage 4 – terminal - prostate cancer. To read more [click here](#).

If you'd like to contribute your story to our campaign, please contact us at [www.workingwithcancer.co.uk](http://www.workingwithcancer.co.uk) or at [admin@workingwithcancer.co.uk](mailto:admin@workingwithcancer.co.uk)

### Presentation to the 2021 Health and Wellbeing at Work Conference: 'Cancer survivors at work - the unspoken truths'

In March Stephen Bevan and I made a presentation at this year's virtual Health and Wellbeing at Work Conference about 'Cancer survivors at work - the unspoken truths.' We made a number of recommendations about the changes we would like to see to improve support for cancer survivors in the workplace, including those with advanced or metastatic cancer.

Our recommendations were as set out in the slide below:

Recommendations	
<b>Employers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Implement best practice</li><li>• Upskill line managers</li></ul> <b>Policymakers - Amend the law</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dying to Work campaign;</li><li>• Continuing right to workplace adjustments</li><li>• Day 1 right to flexible working</li></ul>	<b>Health Professionals</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make returning to work a clinical outcome</li><li>• Intensive training in patient communications</li><li>• Improved specialist training in cancer for OH</li><li>• Integrated care: medical team/OH/employer</li></ul>

school for social entrepreneurs 9

You can find a copy of the full presentation [here on our website](#) and we hope to post a video of the recorded presentation on our website next month.

### Dealing with 'chemo brain' at work

Isabel van der Ven



Chemo brain refers to the cognitive impairment that can occur after cancer treatment. It's not limited to people who have chemotherapy (surgery and radiation can also contribute), but it's more noticeable if you have had it. For many years doctors refused to believe it was a real condition and put it down to, for example, female hysteria. Interestingly, those experiencing Long Covid have also described having similar symptoms after their initial recovery. This is clearly an area where further research is needed.



In this article, Isabel explains what 'chemo brain' is, its impact, how it affected her and most importantly, what you can do to overcome the challenges and frustrations it can cause.

The full article can be found [here](#).

### WWC's workshops for 2021

eventbrite

One in two of us will be diagnosed with cancer in our lifetime so it's highly likely that an employee in your organisation will be affected. By attending one of these workshops, you will feel better prepared and equipped to support anyone affected by cancer in the workplace.

Below you'll find a list of choices. You can find out more about each workshop and book your place [here at Eventbrite](#).

**'Understanding the challenges of managing work and cancer'** for HR professionals.

This is a free, 1-hour interactive session which will give you a greater understanding of the most common cancer challenges in the workplace and the impact of cancer on your business.

Next dates: **20 May, 7 September, 17 November**. [Book your place here](#)

**'Work and Cancer Masterclass'** for HR, Line Managers and OH.

This highly interactive masterclass of 2.5 hours will equip you with the skills and knowledge to help employees manage work and cancer. The main topics we cover are:

- The physical and emotional impact of cancer, its treatment and side-effects and how they affect an employee's work

- How to communicate well
- The legal framework and reasonable adjustments
- Creating a flexible return to work plan

Brought to life with real case studies and examples.

Next dates: **8 June, 21 September, 2 December**. [Book your place here.](#)

### Managing advanced cancer and work

For HR business partners, line managers and Occupational Health professionals



Changing the conversation about work and cancer

‘**Managing advanced cancer and work**’ for HR, Line Managers and OH. In this interactive 2-hour workshop we explore:

- How employees can continue to work successfully with secondary or advanced cancer, and how to manage the challenges
- Managing disease progression and changing needs
- The legal framework and reasonable adjustments
- Having difficult conversations about work, life and cancer

Next dates: **15 April, 28 October**. [Book your place here.](#)

Alongside these workshops, we also offer bespoke training on:

**Cancer awareness:** with a focus on basic information about what cancer is, its treatment, side-effects, its impact on work, and when and how to talk about cancer at work (e.g., Lunch & Learn, Health and Wellbeing events).

**Train the trainer workshops:** where we train your staff to a level where they will be able to train other staff (or new staff) within your organisation about how to manage work and cancer.

**Bereavement:** to support your organisation and/or a team after the death of a colleague from cancer.

**Managing chronic illness in the workplace:** Managing and supporting a colleague diagnosed with a chronic health condition like cancer.

### Working With Cancer® news and new products and services

#### Our work in Europe

Having contributed last year to various events and initiatives connected with the [European Beating Cancer Plan](#), published on 3rd February, and notably the

[Transforming Breast Cancer Initiative](#),

I was recently invited to join the [Survivorship and Quality of Life Network Steering Committee of the European Cancer Organisation](#).



One of the key issues we are discussing is how we can advance the rights of EU cancer survivors to return to work and not to be discriminated against in accessing financial services. Unfortunately, most EU countries do not treat cancer as a disability and do not have the legal protections against discrimination that we have here in the UK.



We are also active members of the

[Advanced Breast Cancer Global Alliance](#).

They recently recorded an event on the ‘Covid-19 Vaccines and Breast Cancer: Ask the Experts’. Feel free to [click here](#) to access the recording which contains some very useful information.

#### New products and services

Last year we developed our [4 Best Practice Guides](#) and our [Career Coaching Workbook](#) for anyone affected by cancer.

*We are currently considering what new services to develop this year for our corporate, charity and individual clients and have a few things in mind but if there is a service or product you think we should be offering please [get in touch](#) with us.*

The good thing about being a small, but perfectly formed (!) social enterprise is we can move pretty quickly when we see something needs doing or a gap in our services needs to be filled.



### And finally....

WWC is always happy to arrange speakers for conferences and events - if you would like to book us for an event, do please [contact us](#). And if you would like further information about our services please contact: [admin@workingwithcancer.co.uk](mailto:admin@workingwithcancer.co.uk) or call 07910 835585.