

Work, Cancer and Caring: What to do?

A diagnosis of cancer has a profound impact on the person diagnosed and it also affects their family, friends and colleagues. The emotional and psychological toll on the person diagnosed is well documented but it is also important to recognise the impact of a cancer diagnosis on the person who is a carer and who is working.

Caring for someone with cancer usually takes place within an existing relationship of love and affection and the contribution that carers make to an individual's health and wellbeing, to family stability and to society more broadly is hard to overestimate.

It can sometimes be very hard to manage work and caring at the same time, and many carers will feel torn between caring for their loved one and fulfilling their work responsibilities. As a result, the early months of becoming a new carer can sometimes be the trigger for a carer to consider leaving their employment or significantly reducing their working hours, especially if the employer is not supportive.

Planning ahead, looking after themselves, being ready and willing to ask for support from family, friends and specialist agencies as well as talking as openly and honestly as possible with their line manager and colleagues will be very important to any new carer as they try to balance working and caring responsibilities.

Anyone new to caring for a loved one with cancer clearly has a lot going on in their life and will benefit greatly from working within a company that has a policy and set of initiatives for working carers and a companywide enabling culture in which talking about cancer is already accepted practice and talking about cancer and caring is the norm.

Here are six key messages for working carers:

- 1. Recognise you are a carer and let your line manager know what is going on***
- 2. Ask for support from family, friends and specialist agencies***
- 3. Talk to your line manager and HR colleagues as early as possible about having more flexibility in working hours or responsibilities***
- 4. Look after your own health and wellbeing***
- 5. Stay connected with work as your caring responsibilities change.***
- 6. Make a gradual transition back to work if you have had to have time off.***