

# SUPPORTING YOUR STAFF THROUGH CANCER

## Ways to help



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## SUPPORTING YOUR STAFF THROUGH CANCER

### Line Manager desk-aid

### SOURCES OF SUPPORT

#### Your HR/Wellbeing team

Investigate the support available through your department. Your HR or Wellbeing Team should be able to signpost you to the policies, resources and support that your department offers specifically for Line Managers supporting people working through cancer or supporting someone with cancer. Ask your HR Department, or navigate to the Wellbeing section of your Intranet for more information.

It's worth investigating the support available through networks in your Department. You can find these by approaching your HR / Wellbeing Team. There are many good Working Through Cancer Networks in Departments that bring together Line Managers supporting staff who are working through cancer or who are supporting someone with cancer. There is also the **Cross-Government Working Through Cancer Network** who you can approach if your department doesn't currently have a cancer network.

#### The Charity for Civil Servants offer Wellbeing Conversations

**Wellbeing Conversations** allow staff to talk confidentially 1:1 with one of our Wellbeing Team. Line Managers may want to encourage staff to request a Wellbeing Conversation as these are how we are best able to help people who are facing the most complex times so that we can really understand all the ways we can help. It may help to read about **people we've helped**.

#### Civil Service Learning

There are several courses available on **Civil Service Learning** for attendance, diversity and inclusion that may be helpful for Line Managers supporting staff who have a diagnosis of cancer or who are supporting someone with cancer.

## WHAT SHOULD I ASK THEM ABOUT THEIR WORK PLANS?

- Avoid asking immediately after diagnosis
- Ask them if they intend to continue working
- Once they know their treatment plan, have a discussion about their working pattern and what their plans are
- Discuss with your HR team about them making up time, phased or reduced hours
- Ask them how they want to check in with you
- Ask them how their treatment affects them. Some treatments are harsher than others; some people are able to work through, some may find it hard immediately after treatment but easier after a few days
- Ask your HR Team whether they recommend any tools, for example some workplaces use a **Workplace Adjustment Passport** to facilitate a conversation around any workplace adjustments if they are planning on returning to work

## WHAT SHOULD I SAY IF SOMEONE IN MY TEAM TELLS ME THEY HAVE CANCER?

- "Don't worry about work"
- "What do you need right now"
- "I am here for you whenever you need me"
- "I'll find out what we need to do"
- "How would you like me to contact you? Phone, text message or email?"
- "I don't want to overwhelm you or make you feel you have to reply straight away"
- "I am going to be led by you - I am here to manage the work side of things and see how we can support you and your family"

## HOW ELSE CAN I SUPPORT THEM?

- Ask them what they would like support with
- Signpost to the Employee Assistant Programme (may be called PAM Assist, Health Assured – if you're not sure check with your HR/Wellbeing Team), The **Charity for Civil Servants** and the **Cross-Government Cancer Support Network**
- Ask if they want you as their manager, to pass on the news to their colleagues or if they wish to remain private and how they want their absence handled

## IMPACT OF ABSENCE ON THEIR PAY

One aspect that might be worrying my member of staff or that they might want to consider, is the impact of any potential absence on their pay position. Should I mention this to them? Not in the first conversation – explain that you need to speak to HR Team and Payroll and that you will investigate their pay and trigger point situation and come back to them.

## **WILL THE PERSON BE FIGHTING FIT WHEN THEY RETURN TO WORK?**

Some people may have regular check-ups, some may take medication for the rest of their lives. Some people may have a terminal diagnosis which is with them forever. Every person and their cancers are different.

## **I FEEL GUILTY FOR CONSIDERING WHAT THE IMPACTS ON THEIR WORK MIGHT BE**

Speak to your own manager, contact the EAP, link in with the **Cross-Government Cancer Support Network**; get emotional support for yourself as well as possible.

## **SHOULD I OFFER ADVICE ON THE TREATMENT OPTIONS I KNOW ABOUT?**

No. Everyone's treatment is different. It's important to listen and appreciate someone's personal journey and choices.

## **SPEAK TO HR ABOUT IDEAS OUTSIDE THE BOX!**

Maybe think about how you and/or the team can support their colleague. Use volunteer time to do their shopping or to take them to treatment if they would welcome that support. Remember that every person is different and people may be more or less keen to take up any support offered which is fine.

Most importantly - see the HR policies as guides for you and your HR Team to come up with a workable and tailor-made approach to each colleagues' diagnosis and support.

The law protects anyone who has, or has had, a disability. When a person is diagnosed with cancer, they are automatically classified as disabled for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010 in England, Scotland and Wales and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in Northern Ireland. This protection from discrimination continues even when there is no longer any evidence of the cancer. So even if the cancer has been successfully treated, employees will continue to be protected against discrimination.