

## Factsheet

# Raising awareness of Cancer and its effects in the workplace

### What is it?

Cancer is a disease caused by normal cells changing so that they grow in an uncontrolled way. The uncontrolled growth causes a lump called a tumour to form. If not treated, the tumour can cause problems in one or more of the following ways:

- Spreading into normal tissues nearby.
- Causing pressure on other body structures.
- Spreading to other parts of the body.

There are over 200 different types of cancer because there are over 200 different types of body cells. For example, cells that make up the lungs can cause a lung cancer. There are different cells in the lungs, so these may cause different types of lung cancer.

### Who has it?

Anyone can develop cancer but the occurrence increases with age so most cases affect adults of middle age or more.

### Does this affect many people?

Quite a lot – each year around 10.9 million people worldwide are diagnosed with cancer.

### What effect may it have in the workplace?

The Equality Act 2010 considers a diagnosis of cancer as a disability. People diagnosed do not have to have symptoms or to consider themselves to be disabled by cancer to be covered. But the Act gives them important rights. These rights might affect work for the person with cancer who can negotiate for reasonable changes in their work or workplace. The term reasonable means that any changes or adaptations must be practical for the employer, in terms of cost and effects on other workers.

People don't have to tell their employer they have cancer, but then they can't make any changes to the job or workplace. The employer can be asked to keep the information confidential so only people the person with cancer agrees should have this information are told.

## What should I be doing to support a person who has cancer in my workplace?

People with cancer are deemed to be disabled from the time of diagnosis but many may not regard themselves as such. The Equality Act 2010 and the protection from discrimination apply to people with cancer as to any other form of disability. See also above for the need to make reasonable adjustments. These could involve things like permitting additional time off or flexible working to enable hospital visits, treatment or recovery.

People who have cancer may become tired more easily and may not feel as confident as usual. In addition they may react in a different or unusual way to what you are expecting in general or from them in particular. This may be due to the effects of the cancer or to the treatment that they are having.

Talking to someone may be very important for the person with cancer. Most of us feel that we don't know what to say. But the important thing is not what we say - it's that we're there and that we listen. Listening can help build a relationship between you both that allows you to be even more supportive and to know what your friend needs. Listening may also give you the clue that the person does not want to talk about their cancer today and may want to talk about other things instead or concentrate on work as a way of "taking their mind off it".

People with cancer may also discover unexpected financial problems following their diagnosis. As a cancer diagnosis counts as a disability they may be entitled to benefits. Often though they do not realise this and suffer financial hardship which is an additional strain.

## What should I be thinking about if I am the manager of someone with cancer?

Consider the suggestions above and think particularly about whether any adjustments are needed now or may be needed in future (eg while the person is undergoing therapy or has completed treatment) so that you can plan and the person with cancer will feel more confident and re-assured.

Remember to remind them about NHSBT's independent confidential Employee Assistance programme too. (See below).

If you would like to read more detail then please contact your nearest Disability Advocate.

[http://nhsbtweb/group\\_services/human\\_resources/equality\\_and\\_diversity/information\\_for\\_disabled\\_employees/disability\\_advocate\\_scheme.asp](http://nhsbtweb/group_services/human_resources/equality_and_diversity/information_for_disabled_employees/disability_advocate_scheme.asp)

and request the detailed factsheet from the **Business Disability Forum** of which NHSBT is a member.

More help from Cancer Research UK and Macmillan.

[www.cancerresearchuk.org.uk](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org.uk)

[www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

[www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk) – a charitable organisation helping people learn about potential welfare and benefits payments.

You may also find helpful information about how to talk or listen when someone has received a cancer diagnosis.

<http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/cancer-help/coping-with-cancer/%20?ssSourceSiteId=home>

See our Health and Wellbeing pages on the Intranet:

[http://nhsbtweb/group\\_services/health\\_and\\_safety/health\\_and\\_wellbeing/index.asp](http://nhsbtweb/group_services/health_and_safety/health_and_wellbeing/index.asp)

Capita Health & Wellbeing provide us with Occupational Health and Wellbeing services across the whole service. The benefits include:

Staff can use the Capita Health & Wellbeing website to refer their staff to Occupational Health & Wellbeing.

To view the website and register for an account [http://nhsbtweb/group\\_services/health\\_and\\_safety/health\\_and\\_wellbeing/index.asp](http://nhsbtweb/group_services/health_and_safety/health_and_wellbeing/index.asp)

Medical Helpdesk, Self-Referral and General Information – 0845 601 3247. This can be used to discuss general information regarding health issues and track progress of referrals.

For **carers** and anyone else who has anxieties about family, relationships, personal or financial matters we have our fantastic free confidential **Employee Assistance Programme, Employee Care managed by Capita independently from NHSBT**. You can telephone 0800 716017 to speak to someone and you can access a wealth of information on line. Please visit [www.employeecare.com](http://www.employeecare.com). To log in all you need to do is type the pin code 72992 into both the access code and password boxes. This is an incredibly valuable benefit to all staff and it's free to you as NHSBT employees!