

# Supporting Employees Affected by Cancer

Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

## 10 Good Practice Steps

- 1 Encourage an open culture, talk early and stay in touch**

Encourage an open culture where employees can discuss their situation which may include caring for others living with cancer. Try to have open, regular and meaningful contact while employees are off sick. Talk to employees about how they would like to keep in touch.

- 2 Be flexible, listen, understand and ask**

Don't make assumptions. An employee may remain at work throughout their treatment. During treatment or when they return to work, they will need responsive and flexible support.

- 3 Update your policies and review effectiveness of reasonable adjustments**

Remember! Cancer is protected under the DDA from the point of diagnosis so you must make reasonable adjustments which are likely to change over time. Adequate review is essential.

[www.equalityni.org/ReasonableAdjustments](http://www.equalityni.org/ReasonableAdjustments)

- 4 Offer easy access to your guidelines and policies**

Review your policies on Equal Opportunities, Reasonable Adjustments and Absence Management and ensure all staff have access; including employees who have caring responsibilities for someone living with cancer e.g. approval to take time off to accompany a family member to a medical appointment.

- 5 Ensure contact with occupational health service if you have one**

Ensure contact with Occupational Health service (OHS). Seek advice about return to work and reasonable adjustments. If you don't have access to OHS ensure that decisions are based on adequate medical advice and reports.

**6** Ensure a smooth transition back to work

Ensure a smooth transition back to work for your employee. Be prepared to review and amend reasonable adjustments as the employee's needs change.

**7** Provide HR Support and train your managers

Ensure that managers have access to support from Human Resources. Provide guidance on how to engage with employees living with cancer and recognise the impact this will have on a team.

**8** Find relevant support services

Encourage your employee to make use of cancer support services through charities and wellbeing centres. If extra help is needed to identify or accommodate an adjustment check employment support initiatives such as Workable or Access to work.

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/employment-support/work-schemes-and-programmes](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/employment-support/work-schemes-and-programmes)

**9** Seek work and cancer support from Macmillan

Help is available for employers to support employees affected by cancer in the workplace - Macmillan at Work. Resources, training and e-learning for HR, line managers and employees is available.

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

**10** Seek support from the Equality Commission

We can help with information, advice and training on equality law and employers' responsibilities.

[www.equalityni.org/Employers-Service-Providers](http://www.equalityni.org/Employers-Service-Providers)

This guide has been developed in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support to assist employers in supporting employees affected by cancer.

Please note: These steps are also applicable to other disabilities.

For further information contact:

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