



*Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute
Valuation Joint Board*

Cancer Support Policy

Version Control

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CANCER SUPPORT POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1** Cancer is recognised as one of the main causes of death in Scotland. Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board (“The Joint Board”) recognises that cancer can affect an individual’s role as an employee and the decisions they make about work, in different ways, and at different times. The Joint Board aims to support employees through the various stages of the cancer experience that they may go through from the time of diagnosis to after treatment.
- 1.2** From the point employees are diagnosed with cancer they are considered disabled for the purposes of the Equality Act. The Joint Board recognises the implications of, and its responsibilities under, the Equality Act 2010 and this policy seeks to provide a framework for supporting employees affected by cancer, their colleagues and to provide guidance to managers.
- 1.3** The Joint Board recognises that from time to time employees may be affected by cancer and may have difficulty balancing work and health issues. The Joint Board seeks to provide support at these times by being as flexible as possible, taking into account the employees individual circumstances and the needs of the organisation. This approach benefits the Joint Board by retaining skills, knowledge and experience and improving staff wellbeing, resulting in improved engagement, loyalty and retention.

2. KEY STAGES

Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board recognises that an employee’s needs will change over time. The following section discusses the various stages which may be experienced.

On diagnosis

- 2.1** The Joint Board recognises that facing a cancer diagnosis is stressful and is committed to supporting employees, and their families and friends at this difficult time.
- 2.2** You should talk to your line manager although you may feel this is difficult initially. The best way for us to provide the correct level of support to you is for you to engage with us as soon as possible.
- 2.3** Line managers may be able to help with, for example, emotional support and for assistance in communicating the situation to your colleagues. An early discussion with your Line Manager will help identify what these may mean for you. Managers can also help to access a range of employee benefits which may be helpful during this time and in the difficult months to follow

Timefor Talking

Counselling is a type of talking therapy that allows a person to talk about their problems and feelings in a confidential and dependable environment. A counsellor is trained to listen with empathy (by putting themselves in your shoes). They can help you deal with any negative thoughts and feelings that you have.

'Timefor Talking' is a free confidential counselling service to all employees of West Dunbartonshire Council and their partners. It offers dedicated counselling and 24 hour confidential support service to Joint Board employees.

To find out more telephone 'Timefor Talking' on 0800 9703980 or speak to your line manager who can support you with a management referral and arrange time off to attend.

Occupational Health Service

Occupational health advisers provide advice to employees and managers. They can help you understand your responsibilities and options and can also assist your manager to make decisions about:

- reasonable workplace adjustments
- return-to-work plans
- on going employment
- release of benefits such as pensions

Occupational health advisers can also help managers carry out appropriate risk assessments for employees with cancer. This is to ensure that, from a health and safety perspective, the work you do is appropriate for you.

Your manager is obliged to organise a referral to the Occupational Health Service.

Special Leave Scheme

The Special Leave Scheme specifically covers family friendly issues to help employees balance work, family life and leave together with special circumstances. It covers time required for medical appointments and emergency special leave.

For more information on Special Leave provisions speak to your line manager.

MacMillan Cancer Support

The MacMillan Cancer Support Charity aims to offer a range of practical, emotional, financial and social support that is tailored to the individual clients' needs. The range of support offered is provided by trained carers and volunteers.

For more information on the support provided by MacMillan see Appendix 2.

Sick pay provisions

Service at commencement of absence from duty	Full allowance for	Half allowance for
Less than 26 weeks	Nil	Nil
26 weeks or more but less than one year	5 weeks	5 weeks
1 year but less than 2 years	9 weeks	9 weeks
2 years but less than 3 years	18 weeks	18 weeks
3 years but less than 5 years	22 weeks	22 weeks
5 years and over	26 weeks	26 weeks

Cancer and your finances

Having cancer can affect you financially. If you need specific financial advice and require benefit support contact the MacMillan Money Advice team on 0800 980 9070.

For more information on any of the above please click on the links or ask your line manager.

There are other policies and schemes which are available to support you during the coming months and these are detailed in Appendix 1.

Working during treatment

- 2.4** MacMillan, cancer support specialists advise that “you may also find that working during treatment gives you satisfaction and helps to focus on something other than the cancer. It’s impossible to predict how you will react to treatment until it starts. This uncertainty makes it hard to look ahead and decide how much work to take on. MacMillan recognises that it is important that your line manager knows this, so that they are aware that you/they may need to change your/ their work plans at short notice.”

You may be able to carry on working during treatment all or some of the time and, to support this, the Joint Board can consider a range of flexible working options, for example;

- Working from home
- Planning a reduced or more flexible work schedule, for example changing hours to that you can travel to and from work at less busy times (avoiding rush hour)
- Arranging for you to undertake “light” duties for a period
- Allowing you to take short breaks as required
- The Joint Board may seek advice from the Occupational Health provider on certain adjustments in order to support you at work

All options can be discussed with your line manager and we will do all we can to support you to remain at work.

Time off during treatment

- 2.5** There may be a need for medical appointments and follow up procedures. Where it is necessary to do this during working hours, you should, as far as possible, let your line manager know in advance so that any cover arrangements can be made. For details of entitlement to time off for these medical needs, please refer to the Special Leave Policy and the Disability Leave Scheme, which can be found on the intranet, or speak to your line manager.

Keeping in touch

- 2.6** The Health and Safety Executive advise that keeping in contact is a key factor in helping employees to return to work after sickness absence. They believe without contact, those who are absent may feel increasingly out of touch and undervalued.

It is therefore vital that you and your line manager keep in touch with each other. This will help you keep up with what is happening at work and ensure that you still feel part of the team. Regular attendance review meetings are encouraged to discuss and review individual circumstances and the Joint Board will normally seek advice from Occupational Health about the best way to support you.

The next steps

- 2.7** Very often a diagnosis of cancer will lead an individual to rethink their lifestyle and their priorities. Some people choose not to return to work or cannot return to work. Others are able to resume their everyday lives, including their working lives.

Returning to work after treatment

- 2.8** The Joint Board is aware that returning to work after a long period of absence can be challenging. The Joint Board will provide whatever support it can to assist you at this stage in your recovery. The Joint Board will normally be guided by Occupational Health about the best way to help each individual employee including, where appropriate, a phased return and a Tailored Adjustment Agreement. We are also committed to supporting you back to work at the earliest possible opportunity. Your manager will meet with you at an Attendance Review Meeting to plan your return to work in accordance with medical advice.
- 2.9** 'Access to Work' is a support service provided by the Department of Work and Pensions which may be able to assist in easing this process, for more information on the services provided by 'Access to Work' see Appendix 2 – Key Contacts.
- 2.10** The Joint Board recognises that people who have been diagnosed with cancer

can feel very tired for a significant period of time, even after treatment is finished. The Joint Board will do its best to accommodate changes to working arrangements while taking into account the nature of the role and the needs of the organisation.

If you cannot return to work

- 2.11** Should you decide not to return to work, or be unable to return to work, the following information may be helpful to you;

Ill Health Retirement

If you are a member of the relevant pension scheme you may be entitled to Ill Health Retirement benefits. This will be determined by an Occupational Health assessment. Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) has three categories of ill health retirement, these are;

1. Serious ill health
2. Tier 1 – the employee will not work again
3. Tier 2 – the employee may be able to take up alternative employment in the future.

Entitlement to ill health retirement benefits should be discussed with your line manager.

Normal Retirement / Early Retirement

If you have reached normal retirement age you may wish to retire and receive your pension benefits. If you have not yet reached normal retirement age it may be possible to explore early retirement and you should discuss this with your line manager who will explain the decision making process. Your pension scheme administrator may also be able to provide information.

Capability Dismissal

If you are unable to continue in your current role we will do our best to support you to find an alternative role. If we are unable to find you alternative employment, and when all other options have been exhausted, your employment may be ended on the grounds of capability.

Death in Service

We would encourage you to ensure your beneficiaries' nomination form is up to date. You can do this by contacting your pension provider.

Pension Members

Should you die whilst in service with the Joint Board and are a member of SPFO, the Joint Board, along with West Dunbartonshire Council's Human Resources team,

will liaise with your next of kin to complete the paperwork in order to progress your entitlements.

Salary Payments

Any outstanding salary payments, including outstanding annual leave will be paid by cheque to your next of kin.

3. CARING FOR SOMEONE WITH CANCER

3.1 You may not think of yourself as a carer, but a carer is anyone who provides unpaid support to a partner, family member or friend who could not manage without this support.

The partner, relative or friend you are looking after may have been told they have cancer, their cancer has spread or come back; or perhaps that it can't be cured. You may still be trying to come to terms with this and experiencing a range of strong emotions.

Everyone's situation is different, and everyone has different ways of coping. Some people find they need to talk through their feelings and fears before they can begin to make plans and decide on practical matters. Others manage better by beginning with the practical things.

The Joint Board will do what it can to support you. Below are some of the supports we can offer you at this time. In the first instance, we always recommend that you speak to your manager.

- The Joint Board has adopted the WDC Special Leave Scheme covering time off for circumstances such as the sudden and unexpected illness of a near relative or dependant, or the emergency hospitalisation of a near relative or dependant.
- In the case of you wishing to attend regular planned treatments with your dependant then paid or unpaid Special Leave, Flexi Time or Time off in Lieu may be requested via your line manager. If you wish to support someone who is not your dependant then talk to your line manager to see if there is anything else we can do.
- From time to time you may find the need to provide long term care for someone with cancer. The Carers' Leave Scheme can provide a period of unpaid leave, the cost of which can be deferred and spread over a period of time to lessen the financial impact.
- The Carers Leave Scheme provisions aim to provide you with good solutions to meet your caring responsibilities. They aim to encourage you and your managers to have open and honest discussions and to resolve any difficulties in a mutually acceptable manner. A flexible approach should be adopted to support you to

balance work and caring responsibilities.

- For more information on the Carers Leave Scheme please visit the intranet or speak to your manager.

4. WHEN YOUR COLLEAGUE HAS CANCER

4.1 When a colleague has been diagnosed with cancer, people can react in different ways. Some may have dealt with cancer before – perhaps they've had a family member who had cancer, others may not have dealt with cancer or any other serious illness before, and they may feel at a loss to know what to do. Some people may feel too embarrassed to say anything at all.

4.2 You may think it's best to carry on as normal, as if nothing is wrong, but it's quite natural to feel upset or worried if your colleague has been diagnosed with cancer. You may find it important to talk about your feelings, especially if it has a big impact on you at work.

4.3 Your colleague may have told you themselves that they have cancer. Or you may have been told by someone else or your line manager. If your colleague tells you themselves, you could ask them how you can help and whether they'd like you to ask after their health, or if they would rather not talk about it. You could ask who else knows about their situation, and if they want to keep it to only a few people or if it is general knowledge. Take the lead from them about how they want to handle the situation.

4.4 MacMillan suggests that there are some things that can generally help:-

- Don't go quiet when your colleague walks into the room.
- Respect your colleague's wishes for privacy and confidentiality.
- Don't over sympathise. Your colleague may be trying to keep life as normal as possible where they can – too much sympathy may just remind them of the cancer. However, don't avoid speaking to your colleague because you think they'll be embarrassed talking about their cancer or because you're embarrassed and don't know what to say.
- Remember to invite your colleague to any social arrangements or other events. They will appreciate the invitation even if they are unable to come
- Keeping in touch can be very helpful. If your colleague is going to be off sick for a while, find out the best way to keep in touch. This might be a regular phone call, text or visit or maybe e-mails or using a social networking site. You can ask your colleague what they'd like to know about and how often they would like to hear from you.

4.5 It may be emotionally distressing for you and you may find it helpful to talk to your manager, other colleagues or people outside of work. Timefor Talking can assist and offers counselling for Joint Board employees.

5. REVIEW

- 5.1** The impact and progress of the Cancer Support Policy will be reviewed one year after implementation and every two years thereafter in order to assess its effectiveness from both a personal and organisational perspective and to reflect best practise and legislative changes.

APPENDIX 1 FURTHER POLICIES AND SCHEMES

Carers Leave Scheme

The Joint Board acknowledges that many of its employees have to deal with the daily demands of caring for dependants and dealing with emergency situations. However, from time to time you may find the need to provide long term care for a seriously ill dependent. The Carers' Leave Scheme provides a period of leave, the cost of which can be deferred and spread over a period of time to lessen the financial impact.

For more information on the Carers Leave Scheme see the intranet or contact your line manager.

The Right to Request Flexible Working

This above scheme has been designed to enable you, where eligible, to make a request for flexible working and for your manager to consider the request.

Flexible working arrangements may help you to balance your work and caring responsibilities. The Joint Board is committed to supporting your work/life balance.

For more information on the Right to Request Flexible Working Scheme see the intranet or contact your line manager.

Tailored Adjustment Agreement

A Tailored Adjustment Agreement is a record of the reasonable adjustments that have been agreed between you and your line manager. The purpose of the agreement is to provide a framework for discussions between you and your manager in order to agree adjustments required, record the outcome of these discussions and to provide any new manager with details of agreed adjustments.

For more information on tailored adjustment agreements see the intranet or contact your line manager.

Disability Leave Scheme

The Disability Leave Scheme sets out what disability leave is, when it is available and the procedure for applying for it.

Disability Leave is paid time off work which may be granted where you are absent as a result of your disability, but for reasons other than sickness, e.g. appointments, treatments etc.

The effect of impairment depends on the individual and their circumstances. To accommodate this requires some flexibility, and consequently disability leave, may

be taken on a planned or unplanned basis dependant on an individual's circumstances.

Disability Leave is considered a subsection of WDC's Special Leave policy, which can be paid or unpaid, and should not be counted towards a trigger within the attendance management purposes.

For more information on the Disability Leave Scheme see the intranet or contact your line manager.

APPENDIX 2

USEFUL CONTACTS

MacMillan Cancer Support

Telephone Breathing Space 0800 83 85 87. A first point of contact for anyone who is struggling to cope emotionally with cancer or just needs to talk about how they are feeling.

MacMillan Carers Services

For more information on the support the MacMillan Volunteer Service can offer, or for more information on becoming a volunteer, please contact the MacMillan Volunteer Service on 0141 951 6141.

MacMillan Volunteers Services

The MacMillan Volunteers Service works closely with the Macmillan Carers Service. The Carers Service provides a range of support to enable someone with cancer to stay in their own home. Those who are caring for a relative or a friend are also offered support and respite by the highly trained MacMillan carers. For more information, contact the MacMillan Carers Service on 01389 608128.

West Dunbartonshire Council

Money Advice and Welfare Advice Section

Money advice and support can be obtained from West Dunbartonshire Council's Money Advice and Welfare Advice section on 0800 980 9070.

MacMillan Cancer Care and The West Dunbartonshire Macmillan Carers Services provide care to clients at any stage of their cancer journey.

The MacMillan service aims to deliver a flexible service by offering a range of practical, emotional and social supports that are tailored to the individual client's needs. The range of support offered is provided by trained carers and volunteers.

MacMillan Carers Support can provide:

- Flexible support during the day, at evenings and weekends
- Sensitive help to meet your needs
- Help with practical issues
- Psychological and emotional care
- A listening ear
- The opportunity for carers to get a break.

To contact the West Dunbartonshire MacMillan Carers Services call 01389 608010.

Others

Access to Work

[Access to Work](#) is a scheme run by the DWP, which provides financial support to disabled people or people with a health condition traveling to work as well as providing help at work, such as with equipment or support workers.

Access to Work might pay towards a support worker or the equipment required at work. It can also pay towards the cost of getting to work should the use of public transport not be possible.

For more information telephone: 0141 950 5327.

Strathclyde Pension Fund

To contact Strathclyde Pension Fund call 0845 213 0202 or email spfo@glasgow.gov.uk. You can also find information on the website www.spfo.org.uk



APPENDIX 3 MacMillan Top Tips for Line Managers

1. *Be sensitive to your employee's needs* - Every person has a different cancer experience. Cancer treatments, and physical and emotional reactions to cancer, will vary from person to person. What may be best for one employee may not suit another. Make time to understand your employee's individual needs.
2. *Respect your employee's right to privacy* - If your employee wants others in the organisation to know that they have cancer, ask them how they'd prefer this to happen. Keep in touch, taking into consideration the employee's treatment, decide together on the best way to do this. It is vitally important to keep in touch and have regular meetings with the employee.
3. *Listen, understand and ask* – Listen to your employee without judgement and try to understand their situation. It's fine to ask questions when they are sharing information with you.
4. *Check guidelines and policies* – Ensure you understand and follow the relevant policies, for example, Attendance Management Policy, Cancer in the Workplace Scheme, Special Leave Scheme. If in doubt contact WDC's HR for further advice.
5. *Be prepared to make adjustments* – Cancer is legally defined as a disability so you may need to make reasonable adjustments, just as you would with any other disability. These are changes to the workplace or working arrangements that allow someone with a disability to work. WDC's HR department together with Occupational Health can offer advice.
6. *Recognise the impact on your team* – Be aware of the impact that an employee's cancer diagnosis can have on the wider team, the rest of your colleagues and, of course, on you. If you feel you need more support ask your own line manager, WDC's HR department or the MacMillan Support Line on 0808 808 00 00.
7. *Check financial entitlements* – Check the employee's contract to ascertain entitlement to occupational sick pay. You may also want to contact the Welfare Advice service or MacMillan for further benefit advice that could help your employee.
8. *Respect Carer's Rights at Work* – Keep in mind that employees who are caring for a person affected by cancer may need your support too. Be aware that the information contained here also applies to carers and also the Carers Leave Scheme.
9. *Discuss a Return to Work Plan* – If your employee needs to take time off work, talk with them about a return to work plan. This will help to identify any further support that might be needed before, during and after cancer treatment. This may include a phased return to work or gradually handing over work. You could also consider flexible options for working hours to support your employee's well-being.