

# Creating a cancer-positive culture

Your guide to supporting colleagues  
in preventing, living with and caring for  
someone with cancer



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## Meet the authors

Lisa Jaques and Rachel Rawson are experienced cancer nurses with more than 30 years of experience between them. They have worked in the NHS and with leading charities, Macmillan and Breast Cancer Now, and are passionate about bridging the gap in care for those impacted by cancer. They are the Lead Cancer Nurses at Perci Health, working with our extensive range of cancer experts, including psychologists, nutritionists, physiotherapists, and menopause experts, to curate personalised care teams for our members.



## Cancer in the workplace: the facts

These statistics help to give you an idea of the impact cancer has for employers.

### CANCER IS AFFECTING YOUR WORKFORCE

**3 MILLION**

people in the UK are living with or beyond cancer, of which, half are of working age

**1.4 MILLION**

is the estimated number of cancer carers in the UK, although the true number is thought to be much higher

**85%**

of people who were employed when diagnosed with cancer, said it was important for them to continue to work

### THERE IS LIMITED ACCESS TO IMPORTANT LONG-TERM CANCER SUPPORT

**50,000**

cancer diagnoses were missing in the UK at the end of 2020, compared to before the pandemic

**77%**

of cancer patients say they cannot access the support they need at the time they need it

**100%**

of PMIs do not classify cancer as a chronic condition, limiting access to important support

### CANCER INCURS DISPROPORTIONATELY HIGH COSTS

**10%**

of your healthcare budget will go towards cancer, although only 1.5% of your workforce will be diagnosed with the disease

**£140,000**

is the average annual cost of one employee with cancer.

**£7.6 BILLION**

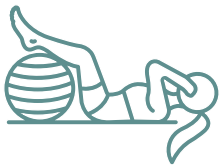
is the estimated loss in productivity due to cancer causes in the UK

## Embracing the business case for cancer support



### **Cancer is becoming more prevalent in the workplace**

Not only are cancer rates increasing (one in two people will now experience cancer in their lifetime) but due to improved early detection of cancer and treatment advances, people today tend to become aware they have cancer earlier, recover, and return to work. However, often with a fear that their cancer might return.



### **A high number of cancer cases are preventable**

The World Cancer Research Fund estimates that 30–50% of cancer cases are preventable. Not smoking, maintaining a healthy weight, doing regular physical activity and eating a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables, all lower the risk of developing cancer, and can be supported with interventions in the workplace.



### **Everyone's experience of cancer is different**

Every employee with cancer is on a unique journey, potentially with unique symptoms, effects and outcomes. When it comes to cancer support, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. An EAP does not provide the tailored support each employee requires.



### **There are four common treatment types**

These are chemotherapy, radiotherapy, immunotherapy and surgery. An employee might require a combination of treatments or a rarer treatment, like a stem cell transplant. Typically, the more types of treatment someone has, the more side-effects they will experience, and the more advanced the treatment, the higher the cost.



### **Treatments may last many months**

They usually happen in several cycles. While for some people, primary treatment will end, others will have maintenance treatment for years, or sometimes for their entire lives. Employees with cancer take an average of 12–18 months off work while undergoing treatment, and employers are expected to provide tailored return to work plans.



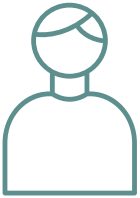
### **The effects aren't only physical**

The psychological effects of cancer are significant (rates of depression and anxiety are higher in the cancer population than in the general population) and can occur well after treatment ends. There are often practical considerations, too. Clinically effective, holistic solutions are required to support employees who are struggling.



### **Living beyond cancer is still challenging**

Fear of cancer recurrence (FCR) is a commonly reported challenge and one of the most prevalent areas of unmet needs for those living beyond cancer. The periods leading up to scans can be particularly anxiety-inducing for the person affected. Specialist workplace support is required for this group.



### **The impact on carers can be even greater**

Almost 90% of people looking after someone with cancer are also juggling a job. They typically report increased levels of stress and anxiety, as well as worsened mental and physical health. It's vital that cancer interventions in the workplace target this under-supported group.



### **Cancer support in the workplace is changing for the better**

Digital health allows employees to receive high-quality care at lower costs with reduced waiting times, leading to improved outcomes. It allows people to see specialists without having to leave work for hours or wait months for an appointment. It also means you can provide equitable benefits to people regardless of where they're located.



# What you can do to support your employees impacted by cancer

From prevention, to diagnosis and treatment, and ongoing support for those living beyond cancer and their caregivers, the best workplace cancer initiatives have several touchpoints.

1

## Prevention

Providing high-quality **health and wellbeing education**, including smoking cessation support as well as opportunities to be active and make healthy food choices, is a cornerstone of cancer prevention in the workplace.



2

## Detection and diagnosis

Encourage employees to seek preventative care and to attend **screening programmes**. More employers are beginning to cover additional screening services, over and above what is offered via the NHS. If you can't afford full screening for your whole workforce, provide **education** about the NHS programmes available to them based on their age and sex, and ensure they have time to attend.

If an employee has worrying symptoms, access to a virtual GP can help to avoid long delays in the NHS.



3

## Treatment

Cancer care is complex. Employers can help staff who have been diagnosed with cancer to navigate the healthcare system to get the best treatment and outcomes.

Ensure you have a **cancer policy** so staff understand what support they can expect and how their pay will be impacted. Think about support for carers and family members as part of this policy. Most **PMI** plans cover the cost of treatment, so consider offering **tailored support and navigation** for your entire workforce.



4




## Survivorship

People often describe a sense of abandonment once treatment ends and access to their hospital healthcare team falls away. At this stage, employees require a greater level of support, as some symptoms persist long after treatment, new challenges arise and they face the prospect of potentially returning to work. Focusing on mental health as another dimension of cancer care is really critical to optimising your employees health.

We recommend continued access to a **multidisciplinary team** to manage ongoing physical and psychological side-effects, and specialist **vocational support** for people returning to work.

## Cancer support solutions available

A digital cancer platform like Perci Health can complement and enhance the in-person care provided by your health plan, over and above what is offered by an EAP, PMI or NHS.

	 Employee assistance programme (EAP)	 Private medical insurance	 Perci Health
Screening education and support	X	X	✓
Targeted health and wellbeing education	X	X	✓
Cancer policy advice	X	X	✓
Line manager training	X	X	✓
Nurse navigation	X	✓	✓
Multidisciplinary personalised support	X	X	✓
Vocational support	X	X	✓

## More about Perci

Perci Health is a cancer support platform for people living with and beyond cancer, and their caregivers. We connect employees to high-quality experts across multi-disciplinary fields, who are focused on the physical, psychological, and practical impacts of cancer. Created to fill the gaps in current NHS provision, as well as areas that private medical insurance often overlooks, our unique digital platform offers quick and easy access to more than 20 evidence-based types of cancer support, all in one place.



### What we offer

- Cancer support for every stage – from prevention, through to treatment, survivorship and the return to work
- One-to-one virtual clinics with cancer experts
- A dedicated cancer nurse specialist for every employee
- Content created by our specialists and tailored to the employee experience
- Training and toolkits for managers



### Why we are unique

- The only cancer platform developed by the UK's leading oncologists and cancer surgeons
- The UK's broadest cancer support clinic, with over 20 different cancer specialisms
- The only provider supporting carers, employers, and those diagnosed, from prevention to survivorship
- The only end-to-end digital cancer solution



*"Perci has brought together a group of experts who obviously have vast experience of working with cancer. Their knowledge and understanding of the journey we face going through cancer is invaluable and provides a safe haven where I felt able to share all my darkest, most difficult thoughts and struggles without having to edit my experience. Thank you."*

**Nicola - Perci Member**