

# Improving employer support for those working with cancer

## The Bevan report

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# Acknowledgements

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  - All the survey and case study participants



# Dedication



*“I have been remarkably lucky. My employer has been textbook in how you would like a return-to-work to be. I have learnt a lot about the challenges that others less fortunate have had with employers that are less understanding. So, I feel very privileged that my employer has been brilliantly supportive.”*

*(Stephen Bevan)*

# Cancer and work

- 1 in 2 people will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime, but with improved diagnosis and treatment there is an increased chance of survival.
- 160,000 new cancer diagnoses are for people of working, age with cancer rates in the younger generation also increasing.
- Research has shown that unemployment is consistently higher for people living with cancer, with many barriers impeding a successful return-to-work:
  - Clinical barriers
  - Psychological barriers
  - Organisational barriers



# Research aims and methodology

- The research used a mixed methodological approach comprising of a survey of over 200 HR Managers or individuals with HR responsibilities, and 4 organisational case studies.
- The survey sought to explore:
  - Current employer policies and practices in relation to supporting employees with cancer.
  - Strengths and challenges to current organisational approaches.
  - Further support requirements.
- The case studies aimed to:
  - Develop a more in-depth understanding of organisational approaches towards supporting a person with a cancer diagnosis.
  - Understand the implications of organisational policies and practices for the organisation and individual.
  - Provide an opportunity to reflect on what policies and practices could support individuals in the future.

# Key Findings: Policies and practices

- Organisations are not doing enough to prepare or support employees living with cancer
  - Policies were very generic
  - Limited consideration of the challenges that people working with cancer experience
  - A tendency to focus on meeting legal obligations
  - Absence of a strategic approach
- Limited recording and monitoring of numbers affected
  - Only 18% of HR Managers reported that their organisations collected data on how many employees have or have previously had cancer.
- Knowledge gaps in relation to employers' legal obligations – 25% reported a lack of understanding of the Equality Act
- Only 54% knew about the Access to Work scheme

# Key Findings: Employee benefits

- The results highlighted a range of employee benefits offered to employees working with cancer, the most common being:
  - Flexible work
  - Access to Employee Assistance Programmes
  - Referrals to Occupational Health
- Access to health-related coaching and vocational rehabilitation which provide more specific support was much less common
- There was evidence of inconsistency regarding communication of employee benefits

# Key Findings: Line manager capability

- One of the main challenges reported by HR Managers was in relation to line managers
  - 58% reported concerns about management capability
  - 57% reported limited training for managers about how to manage cancer at work
  - 53% said that line managers had limited experience of managing cancer at work
- However, there were gaps in the support that HR provided to managers:
  - Only 11% of organisations provided line management training and coaching
  - 33% reported their line managers do not have the time to undertake people management responsibilities effectively
  - Specific line manager training for supporting employees with cancer was rare
  - Some evidence of a lack of senior management support for providing employees with further support



# Recommendations

- HR Policies
  - Consider the benefit of collecting and keeping data on the prevalence of cancer in organisations
  - Consider the need for policies to cater specifically for cancer or other long-term conditions
  - Fill any current policy gaps
- Line Manager Capability
  - Line managers to receive training and/or coaching
  - Review of line manager expectations
  - Consider any support needs of line managers
- Employee Benefits
  - Review current benefits to check if they are fit-for-purpose
  - Consult with employees to determine what further benefits would aid a return-to-work
  - Use support or expertise from OH, VR and patient charities for recommendations on a case-by-case basis

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