

# Critical and Terminal Illness Guidance

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## Introduction

The University believes it has a clear responsibility to provide help and support to any of its employees who are affected in some way by the diagnosis of a critical or terminal illness.

This guidance is to support you, whether you have received a diagnosis of a terminal or critical illness, you have a family member (parent, spouse, partner, child or sibling) diagnosed with a terminal or critical illness and/or you have become a carer for someone diagnosed with a terminal or critical illness.

The University will do all it can to support you. This guidance is based on the following principles:

- 1 Respect your dignity and privacy**  
The University will respect your privacy. No sensitive information of any kind will therefore be shared with anyone without your consent.
- 2 Maintain your involvement and engagement**  
The University will make every effort to communicate appropriately and sensitively with you during any absence from work.
- 3 Adopt a flexible and sensitive approach**  
Managers will work to structure your work schedule and workload in such a way that gives you maximum flexibility to manage your medical treatment and related needs, while maintaining effectiveness and efficiency at work.
- 4 Continue to provide access to development opportunities**  
You will continue to have access to appropriate professional development opportunities, subject to your availability to attend.

**5 Provide you with information and support**

The University will make every effort to link you to available resources that will enable access to information and support about, among other things, treatment, absence from work, as well as successful reintegration into work where appropriate. The University will direct you, to sources of financial and, if needed, legal advice, such as the telephone EAP service offered by the University. The University will also make these resources and information available to your family members living at the same address and work colleagues, where appropriate.

**6 Support the team affected by your situation**

Managers will remain sensitive to the impact on co-workers and provide practical support where necessary.

**7 Provide training and support to those supporting you**

Line managers and colleagues will be provided with training and support to ensure that they/ you are equipped with the right skills to provide the above.

## **Employees diagnosed with critical or terminal illness**

This guidance to reassure you of the support you can expect to receive should you be diagnosed with a critical or terminal illness. You may be worried about telling us however we believe we have a responsibility to support you and will be as flexible as possible in our approach, bearing in mind your personal circumstances and the needs of the business.

### **Telling your line manager and HR**

You don't have to tell us that you are critically or terminally ill however we encourage you to speak to your line manager and allow us to help and support. If you feel unable to discuss this with your line manager, you can speak to your HR Advisor or Business Partner instead. Although this may not be easy for you, it's difficult for us to support you and put in place adjustments if we are unaware of your circumstances. We need to ensure that you are able to take time off to meet your own health needs, attend appointments and treatment and to ensure that your work is covered.

If you feel nervous about talking or just want some support, you can have a companion with you. We will listen, ask questions to understand your situation, be sensitive to your needs and be prepared to make adjustments for you.

We will need to understand

- your need to take time off to come to terms with the immediate diagnosis
- the likely impact of treatment on your work and need for time off for tests, appointments and treatment
- whether you wish to try to work around your treatment or will be too unwell to work. this is your decision alongside your doctors advice.
- Adjustments we can make to support your continued working if that is your wish
- whether you would like colleagues, students or partners to be told about this
- your permission to obtain written advice from your doctor about your illness and recommendations for returning to work and time off.

We understand that all this can and will change during the course of your treatment and that is ok.

Once you tell your manager, you can be assured that they will keep it confidential and they will need your permission to share any information with HR and any other employees. You may not wish to tell your colleagues and this wish will be respected. Equally, you may prefer to tell them yourself which we will support. We encourage you

to do this as soon as you can so that the University can quickly take the appropriate steps to help you.

We are aware that in some circumstances you may not know how unwell you are or will be until you have begun treatment, or had some form of surgical investigation, and there may be a need to take time off at very short notice.

You will be offered information on:

- the University's Absence Management policies
- relevant University benefits
- counselling and other support services including the Employee Assistance Programme
- flexible working and work adjustment policies
- other sources of information and support.

### **Telling your work colleagues and students**

The University respects your wishes for privacy and confidentiality concerning your personal circumstances. At the same time, the University will need to make arrangements to cover sickness absence effectively.

HR and your line manager will agree with you from the outset what (if anything) to tell your colleagues at work (both orally and in writing). If you want your colleagues to know about your illness but cannot tell them yourself, we will agree how this will be done. This will also apply to students and other third parties.

### **Payment of salary during sickness absence**

We recognise that you may suffer financial hardship during periods of sickness absence as a result of critical or terminal illness. The University offers a generous occupational sick pay scheme which will support you through initial periods of absence. If you experience longer term sickness absence beyond your sick pay benefit you should raise any concerns with your line manager and HR.

Remember to ask your GP for a fit note to cover any periods of absence, and to send them to your line manager or the HR department as soon as possible to ensure sick pay can be made. Further details can be found in the Absence Management Policy.

An employee diagnosed with a terminal or critical illness will not be subject to the disciplinary procedures within the Absence management policy for the duration of your illness.

## **Counselling and support**

All employees and family members at the same address have access to a 24-hour, confidential and free telephone helpline service for counselling and advice, provided by Health Assured. This service is strictly private and confidential and there is no individual feedback to the University. The helpline number is 0800 028 0199. You can also access this service via their website at [www.healthassuredeap.com](http://www.healthassuredeap.com). The username and password is:

Username: wellbeing

Password: ZoneVoteCoop

In addition, you can speak to the HR department for further guidance and advice on what support may be available.

## **Working during treatment**

Depending on your illness, you may wish to carry on working during your treatment, either full-time or part-time. Before treatment, it's often difficult to know exactly how the treatment may affect you, and it's helpful to let your manager know this so that they are aware you may need to change your work plans at short notice.

Adjustments to work can be discussed and agreed with your line manager and HR, so they can consider the feasibility and arrange for support to be provided.

We can help you by:

- planning a reduced or more flexible schedule, for example changing your hours so that you can travel to and from work at less busy times (outside the rush hour)
- arranging for you to undertake different or reduced duties for a period of time
- asking colleagues to be supportive and to help with some of your work
- allowing you to take a short break every now and again to rest
- allowing you to work from home, if possible.

Equally, you may decide that you cannot continue to work but that you just want to keep in touch with what's happening. Again, we can make arrangements for this.

## **Time off for treatment**

If you decide to return to work either during or after treatment you may need to take time off for medical appointments and follow-up procedures. When it's 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.

If you need to take an extended period of absence, this time off will be treated as sickness absence. You might find you need to take a few days or weeks off. This may be as one period of sick time, or could be a few days every month for a period of time.

## **Keeping in touch**

In the case of an extended period of absence, we will agree regular discussions by phone or in person to keep in touch. Your HR contact or line manager will ask you if you would like your colleagues to keep in contact with you to keep you up to date on work matters, and, if so, how frequent you would like that contact to be.

## **Returning to work after treatment**

After your treatment has finished, and if you have not been working during this period, you will need to decide whether you want or are capable to return to work and, if so, whether this will be on your contracted hours or adjusted hours. Clearly this will depend on your prognosis as well as your personal circumstances and wishes.

We are aware that returning to work after a long period away can be physically and emotionally stressful. We will provide whatever support we can to assist you at this stage in your recovery.

### Meeting your line manager and HR to discuss options

Coming back to work after a break of a few weeks or months can be difficult to adjust to, and you should take the time to think about what's right for you. If you are still coping with some of the effects of treatment, you should discuss any changes that can be made to your work to help you.

Before coming back to work we will arrange a meeting where you, your manager and HR can discuss the options for making the transition back to work. Options you might want or need to consider, which the University will do all it reasonably can to accommodate, are:

- making a 'phased return' to work within a fixed timescale, where you increase your hours gradually over a period of time
- working from home
- working flexible or reduced hours
- changing your role or some of your duties for a temporary period
- telephone conferences to reduce the need to travel
- help with transport to and from work

- making alterations to your physical location or workstation. Don't be over-optimistic about what you can manage at the outset.
- Issuing a temporary permit to park in accessible bays on campus

### **Disability caused by critical illness**

If your illness causes disability that affects your return to work, the University will make reasonable adjustments to enable you to continue to work.

### **Giving up work - is early retirement an option?**

Some people choose to give up work completely when they're diagnosed with a terminal or critical illness. This allows them to focus on themselves, their treatment or to reassess their lives. If work has been a major focus of your life, it can be difficult to adjust to not working. You may want to seek counselling about this to talk this through. The EAP service may help or there are a variety of online modules that can be accessed to help plan retirement,

If a prognosis is given that means the illness is likely to be long term or terminal and you are a member of one of the University's occupational pension schemes in certain circumstances, you may be eligible to receive a discretionary ill-health early retirement pension. Please contact the HR Department to discuss this further, as each scheme has different criteria and depending on the circumstance it may be possible and more beneficial for your family for you to remain in employment due to death in service benefits.

If, having considered your options, you decide that you want to take early retirement on health grounds, or for personal reasons, it is essential that you take appropriate advice.

Consider your own circumstances carefully, taking your health into consideration, as well as your finances, before deciding what to do.

### **Unfair treatment**

If you feel that you've been treated unfairly as a result of your illness, you should raise this with your line manager and/or the HR Department, who will try to resolve the problem informally.

If you're unable to resolve the issue, you can progress your concerns through the formal Grievance Procedure.

# **Carers or family members affected by terminal or critical illness**

## **Scope**

If you are a partner or family member of someone who has a terminal or critical illness, you may need to request to take time off work to look after them or deal with issues arising from their condition.

The University believes it has a responsibility to support employees affected in this way and will be as flexible as possible in its approach, bearing in mind each individual's personal circumstances and the needs of the business.

## **Telling your line manager and HR**

Once you are clear about the nature of the illness and its potential impact on your work and family life, you should tell your line manager about your circumstances. Although this may not be easy for you to discuss, it's difficult for your manager, and therefore the University, to support you if we are unaware of your circumstances. Practically, it's also difficult for you to take time off to support your partner or family member without your manager knowing the reason why, and what's involved.

Once you disclose your situation to your manager, they will need your permission to share that information with HR and any colleagues who may be affected by your absence. Equally, you may prefer to tell them yourself. If so, you should do this as soon as you can so that the University can quickly take the appropriate steps to help you.

The kind of help we can give you is:

- planning a reduced or more flexible working schedule
- allowing emergency leave under the Time off and Special leave Policy
- asking colleagues to be supportive and to help with some of your work
- allowing you to work from home, if possible.

## **Telling your work colleagues and clients**

The University respects your wishes for privacy and confidentiality concerning your personal circumstances. At the same time, the University will need to make arrangements for any absence arising from the situation.

HR and your line manager will agree with you from the outset what, if anything (both orally and in writing), to tell your colleagues at work. This will also apply to students and other third parties.



## **Counselling and support**

All employees and family members at the same address have access to a 24-hour, confidential and free telephone helpline service for counselling and advice, provided by Health Assured. This service is strictly private and confidential and there is no individual feedback to the University. The helpline number is 0800 028 0199. You can also access this service via their website at [www.healthassuredeap.com](http://www.healthassuredeap.com). The username and password is:

Username: wellbeing

Password: ZoneVoteCoop

In addition, you can speak to the HR department for further guidance and advice on what support may be available.

## **Impact on work and family**

You are entitled to reasonable time off to make necessary arrangements to deal with an unexpected or sudden problem concerning a dependant. This leave is unpaid, alternatively you may take TOIL or annual leave.

Dependants are defined as your parents, spouse, partner, children or someone who lives as part of the family.

Where a dependant is critically ill, compassionate leave may be taken in the following circumstances:

- to deal with the death of a dependant
- in the event of worsening of condition
- in the event where the dependant is unlikely to recover and death is imminent.

The Time Off and Special Leave Policy details compassionate leave benefit, however you are advised to speak with your HR contact or line manager in case of the above.

## **Parental leave**

In addition to the support we can provide detailed in section 2, if you are the parent of a child who is critically ill, you will be entitled to up to 18 weeks' parental leave to look after your child. This leave is usually unpaid but may be paid at the University's discretion, or the University may allow you a longer period of leave depending on your individual circumstances.

In any situation the University is here to support you through difficult times and encourages you to discuss your concerns with your line manager or HR. Each case is treated individually and in confidence.

## Resources

Employee Assistance Programme

[www.healthassuredeap.co.uk](http://www.healthassuredeap.co.uk)

Username: wellbeing

Password: ZoneVoteCoop

Employee Assistance Helpline Freephone **0800 028 0199**

Additional resources and information on organisations who can support staff through difficult times can be found on the Wellbeing pages of the staff intranet.

<https://mynorthamptonac.sharepoint.com/sites/staff/Pages/Health-and-Wellbeing.aspx>

Macmillan - The Essential Work and Cancer Toolkit – request a copy from HR