

Cancer Support UK launches new course to train Cancer Support Ambassadors in the workplace

4 years ago



If a work colleague told you they had cancer how would you respond? This scenario is fast becoming a reality, as by 2030 it is estimated that 1.5million people of working age will be living with cancer.

Knowing how to conduct a difficult conversation about cancer, and support those with cancer in the workplace, is at the heart of a new training programme - the Cancer Support Ambassador course - launched by [Cancer Support UK](#).

Developed by Cancer Support UK specifically to give individuals in an organisation the confidence and skills to support colleagues facing cancer, the Cancer Support Ambassador training provides a high-level introduction to cancer and cancer treatments.

The half day course covers the physical and emotional side effects of both cancer and cancer treatments. Most importantly, it contains tools and strategies that equip workplace cancer support ambassadors with the necessary skills and principles to have supportive conversations with individuals experiencing emotional turmoil due to or caused by the effects of cancer.

The training also provides personal wellbeing and resilience guidance, which participants can make use of after difficult conversations.

Marie Gardner, who works as a Cancer Coach volunteer for Cancer Support UK, has been key in developing the Ambassador training. She says:

“When you are supporting someone going through cancer, it’s vital that you work with the other person’s

agenda. You need to recognise that for many, having a conversation in the workplace about their illness can be challenging. The ability to listen is absolutely key and understanding where the person is in their thought process allows you to work out how best to help them. As a Cancer UK Ambassador, you don't need to have the answers. The best support you can give is to listen deeply, question sensitively and show empathy."

Mark Guymer, Cancer Support UK's CEO, said: "With at least 85% of employees saying how important it is for them to keep working after a cancer diagnosis, there is an urgent requirement for employers to understand the needs of colleagues affected by cancer and to support them appropriately.

"We know through feedback from our Cancer Coach groups that there is a lack of support for people either returning to work following cancer treatment or even for those who have just been diagnosed. Our Cancer Support Ambassador training applies the principles of the extensive knowledge gained through our highly successful Cancer Coach course. The skills covered in the training will enable people who are fulfilling an extra-curricular or voluntary role within an organisation to emotionally support and signpost colleagues, which can only bring significant benefit to the workplace as a whole."

Key benefits

- Strategies to manage structured supportive conversations
- Confidence to support someone who has cancer
- Understanding the difference between empathy and sympathy
- An understanding of the change process that people go through when receiving a diagnosis and/or treatment
- Learning the skill of high level listening and how to ask the right questions
- Using the right language
- Self-care tips
- Helps address the issues of isolation in the workplace caused by cancer

Case study - Mondelez International

Cancer Support UK is partnering with Mondelez International (owner of brands such as Cadbury's, Oreo, Belvita, Philadelphia) to provide a Cancer Support Ambassador scheme for over 5,000 MDLZ colleagues.

Commenting on the partnership with Cancer Support UK, Mondelez, said: "It's a harsh reality that one in two people will develop cancer at some point in their lives. However, at Mondelez UK our colleagues won't be facing this alone. Mondelez UK is partnering with Cancer Support UK to launch the Cancer Support Ambassador scheme for colleagues at MDLZ. Our scheme aims to empower our people with training and guidance to better help those with a cancer diagnosis."

Cancer Support UK's Head of Learning and Development, Olivia Gray, said: "We are delighted to be working with Mondelez, providing them with the training and expertise to help them support their colleagues through cancer. Employers have such an important role to play in supporting people with cancer and their carers. For many people with cancer, going to work gives a sense of normality to their lives and can be an aid to recovery, as well as being a financial necessity. So it's vital that people affected by cancer can feel confident that their needs are being met and are able to talk about cancer with confidence. Having supportive co-workers can make all the difference to someone who has just received a

diagnosis. This is where the Cancer Support Ambassador training can make all the difference.”