

Over a quarter of employers concerned about cancer for older staff

12 months ago



Twenty-seven percent of employers cite living with serious ill-health, including cancer, as a concern for their Baby-boomer staff, 23% of employers have the same concern for Gen X staff, 13% for Millennial employees, and 11% for their Gen Z workforce, according to new research¹ conducted during January 2025 by [GRiD](#) and released for [World Cancer Day](#) (4 February 2025).

The industry body for the group risk sector also found that this concern about serious ill-health including cancer, is echoed by 18% of all staff themselves (versus 12% in 2024), rising to 27% of those over 55 (also up from 19% in 2024)². Indeed, this increasing concern is not unfounded, with the latest NHS figures showing that cancer diagnoses have reached a new record high level³.

Concerns of employees diagnosed with cancer and their employers

GRiD's findings are corroborated by other research. Sadly, 71%⁴ of people working whilst having cancer said they felt their HR team wasn't sufficiently prepared to help them through their health crisis, and 35% said they were left feeling isolated at work during their cancer experience. Research also shows that seven in ten (69%)⁵ employers are concerned about the potential financial impact cancer could have on organisational costs, and more than half (54%) have recently noticed an increase in employees affected by cancer within their workforce.

Katharine Moxham, spokesperson for GRiD, said: "No matter how long an employee has had their worries or been going through tests, being given a formal cancer diagnosis is completely blindsiding. Therefore, employee cancer support needs to be both flexible and comprehensive to help the individual, and to also

support their employer in helping staff, acting sensitively and making appropriate adjustments.”

What does cancer support look like?

Support for the condition itself may include access to specialist cancer care pathways, oncologists, second medical opinion services and virtual GPs, preparation for consultations and navigating the NHS. On diagnosis or if unable to work, support can provide a fiscal safety net to help people meet their financial commitments. Fast track access to mental health support is often also required, as a diagnosis can lead to depression or anxiety, and practical support should not be overlooked to help with changes in physical appearance or adjustments in the home.

All of the above support, which can be accessed via group risk benefits (employer-sponsored life assurance, income protection and critical illness) will help an employee manage their immediate situation and expedite a return to work if that is their desired pathway. Many advisers will also support HR departments and line managers to help their staff, as well as join the dots between the individual, the employer and the insurer.

Katharine Moxham said: “All employers need to ask themselves how they can best support a member of staff during a cancer diagnosis. With diagnoses at an all-time high and so many support options available, there is no reason not to be prepared.”

1 Employer research was undertaken by Opinium from 7-15 January 2025 among 500 HR decision-makers at UK businesses..

2. Employee research was undertaken by Opinium from 7-10 January 2025 among 1,250 employed adults, aged 18+.

3. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2024/10/nhs-diagnoses-thousands-more-cancers-as-cases-rise-by-5/>

4. <https://www.reframe.co.uk/resources/research-report-living-and-working-with-cancer>

5. https://grouprisk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Perci-Employer-and-Cancer-Research-Report-April-2024_.pdf