Critical & Terminal Illness Support & Guidance Document

**Introduction**

Evidence has shown that it is important to support those who want to, to continue working with a terminal illness and when its time, allow staff to leave with dignity.

Workplaces:

* Are where people spend a large proportion of their time and are often an important ‘community’ for staff.
* Can provide stability and social networks at a time that is deeply uncertain and often isolating.
* Are well-placed to provide support through the emotional and practical challenges of a terminal illness diagnosis.

The University strives to ensure that all staff with a terminal illness do not face stigma and insecurity in the workplace; Through provision of adequate workplace support the possibility of better outcomes in all areas of a person’s life, including mental health and economic prospects will be fostered.

The University believes it has a clear responsibility to provide help and support to all staff who are affected 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:

* 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.
* Maintain your involvement and engagement - The University will make every effort to communicate appropriately and sensitively with you during any absence from work.
* 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.
* Continue to provide access to development opportunities - You will continue to have access to appropriate professional development opportunities, subject to your availability to attend.
* 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.
* Support the team affected by your situation - Managers will remain sensitive to the impact on co-workers and provide practical support where necessary.
* 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

**Staff diagnosed with a critical/terminal Illness.**

This guidance is to outline the support you can expect to receive should you be diagnosed with a critical or terminal illness. The University has 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 about your terminal illness**

You do not 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 designated HR Officer 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. It is important to ensure that you can 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 workplace adjustments for you.

We will need to understand:

* Your need to take time off.
* The likely impact of treatment on your work and need for time off for tests, medical 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.

We understand that flexibility is required and that plans can change during treatment and that is ok. 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.

**Information will be offered on:**

* The University’s Absence Management policies
* Relevant University benefits.
* Support services including the Employee Assistance Programme.
* Flexible working and 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 plan 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 verbally 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 because 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.

A GP fit note is needed to cover any periods of absence, and it is important to share these with your line manager as soon as possible to ensure your sickness absence can be accurately recorded. Further details can be found in the Sickness Absence Procedure.

[Sickness Absence Procedure.pdf (bangor.ac.uk)](https://www.bangor.ac.uk/humanresources/policies/leave/Sickness%20Absence%20Procedure.pdf)

* **Employee Assistance Program Support:**

All staff have access to a 24-hour, confidential and free telephone helpline service for in the moment support, counselling and advice, provided by VIVUP. This service is strictly private and confidential and there is no individual feedback to the University. The helpline number is 08000239387. You can also access this service via their website at <https://bangoruni.yourcarewellbeing.net> In addition, you can speak to the HR team for further guidance and advice on what other 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 leave or could be a few days every month for a period.

* **Keeping in touch**

In the case of an extended period of absence, your line manager will agree regular discussions by phone or in person to keep in touch. Your 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. This will depend on your prognosis as well as your personal circumstances and wishes. Returning to work after a long period away can be physically and emotionally stressful. We will endeavour to provide whatever support we can to assist you at this stage in your recovery. This may include seeking Occupational Health guidance.

Occupational Health provides advice and guidance to assist staff who are working with a critical/terminal illness. They can add insights on how symptoms you may be experiencing (or might experience in the future) could affect your ability to perform your role. They can help develop solutions and suggest adaptations that will enable you to continue to work safely.

**Occupational Health role:**

- assess and advise on fitness for work

- provide health assessments for your staff working with a terminal illness

- provide recommendations to line managers on workplace adjustments

- manage and monitor cases over time

- support your staff to manage their health and wellbeing

- advise on eligibility for ill health retirement and commissioning medical evidence in support of an application.

Occupational Health have a professional duty to protect patient confidentiality and will not disclose any information without your consent, unless someone may be at risk of serious harm, and in line with the law.

* **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. Before coming back to work a meeting will be arranged 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**:

The University will do all it reasonably can to accommodate:

* Making a ‘phased return’ to work within a fixed timescale, where you increase your hours gradually over a period.
* Working from home where possible
* Working flexible or reduced hours

[flexible\_EN.pdf (bangor.ac.uk)](https://www.bangor.ac.uk/humanresources/policies/family/flexible_EN.pdf)

* Changing your role or some of your duties for a temporary period
* Using assistive technology such as MS Teams to reduce the need to travel.
* Making alterations to your physical location or workstation. Don’t me over-optimistic about what you can manage at the outset.
* Issuing a temporary permit to park in accessible bays on campus.

**Giving up work – Is Ill Health 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 and this can be accessed via our free and confidential EAP Service.

Where a prognosis is given and 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. You may wish to contact Eluned Hughes the Pensions Officer to discuss this further: eluned.hughes@bangor.ac.uk

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.

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

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 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 schedule
* Enabling use of carers leave

[Carer's Leave\_2024\_EN (1).docx (live.com)](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bangor.ac.uk%2Fhumanresources%2Fpolicies%2Ffamily%2FCarer%27s%2520Leave_2024_EN%2520(1).docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)

* Enabling use of emergency leave under the Time off for Dependents/Emergency procedure

[emergency\_EN 2023.docx (live.com)](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bangor.ac.uk%2Fhumanresources%2Fpolicies%2Ffamily%2Femergency_EN%25202023.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)

* Reallocation of work
* Enabling work from home where possible
* **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 plan for any absence arising from the situation. HR and your line manager will agree with you from the outset what, if anything (both verbally and in writing), to tell your colleagues at work. This will also apply to students and other third parties.

* **Bereavement Leave**

The University recognises the sensitive and often very distressing nature of bereavement and will endeavour to support colleagues affected by allowing a reasonable time off work to deal with such situations.

[bereavement\_EN 2023.docx (live.com)](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bangor.ac.uk%2Fhumanresources%2Fpolicies%2Ffamily%2Fbereavement_EN%25202023.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)

* **Parental Leave**

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.

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**

VIVUP Employee Assistance Program:

[What is an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)? (bangor.ac.uk)](https://my.bangor.ac.uk/humanresources/eap/index.php.en)

Working with terminal illness:

Marie Curie

Work and terminal illness

[Work and terminal illness (mariecurie.org.uk)](https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/diagnosed/practical-emotional-support/about-work)

Macmillan

Work & Cancer

[Work and cancer | Macmillan Cancer Support](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/impacts-of-cancer/work-and-cancer)

Stopping work:

[Thinking about stopping work because of cancer | Macmillan Cancer Support](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/impacts-of-cancer/work-and-cancer/stopping-work)

Resources for Line Managers:

Working with Cancer

Best Practice Guide:

[Working with Cancer](https://workingwithcancer.co.uk/)

Talking about death and dying:

Marie Curie

Bereavement & Grief at work

[Grief and bereavement at work (mariecurie.org.uk)](https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/bereaved-family-friends/work)

Workplace Compassion:

Marie Curie

Create a compassionate culture

[How to create a compassionate culture (mariecurie.org.uk)](https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/bereaved-family-friends/work/employer-resources/create-compassionate-culture)

Financial Wellbeing Information:

A free service provided by the money and pensions service

[Free and impartial help with money, backed by the government | MoneyHelper](https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en)

[How to sort out your money if you become ill or disabled | MoneyHelper](https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/family-and-care/illness-and-disability/how-to-sort-out-your-money-if-you-become-ill-or-disabled)

[Death and bereavement | MoneyHelper](https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/family-and-care/death-and-bereavement)