

## Could you help someone with cancer in your spare time?

**Talking Health, Safety and Wellbeing.** This week's article talks about becoming a cancer buddy in your spare time to offer help and support to someone diagnosed with cancer.

More than 120,000 people of working age are diagnosed with cancer every year and more than half a million others have to juggle their work with looking after someone with cancer.

Coventry City Council have been working for some time now with Macmillan Cancer Support to help people across the city who are diagnosed with cancer, or have a relative or friend facing treatment.

The Cancer Buddy scheme aims to provide an understanding 'friend', someone who knows what they are going through and can help them cope with the tough times. A Buddy is someone who has had experience of cancer, and is able to provide a real understanding based on this shared experience. The purpose is to help people find ways to cope with their own feelings and concerns. Our Cancer Buddies have helped a number of individuals over the last few years.

We want to raise awareness of cancer in the workplace and offer support to employees to stay in or return to work. It is a pioneering project that we are proud to be part of. We want to ensure employees are aware this support is available to them, whether they are directly affected, or someone close to them. Please help us spread the word.

Angela White, Occupational Health Safety and Wellbeing Service Manager added: "When you hear you have cancer there are all sorts of thoughts and questions going through your head and you need to know there's someone there that you can talk to – someone outside the family and who's been there before and knows what you're feeling. It's a scary time and this is a wonderful way of making it a little bit easier. Having someone to talk to is so important. If you can help the Cancer Buddy scheme, or if you need support and advice, please get in touch."

### How can you volunteer or find a buddy if you have cancer?

You can volunteer by providing support over the phone, in person or by email. We do not expect a buddy to travel. A Buddy will be able to offer support and listen to the issues that the employee is facing. The Buddy is not being asked to provide any medical advice. Sometimes something as simple as a phone call or a friendly chat over a coffee with someone who understands the problems and emotions experienced can make all the difference.

Anyone who wants support from a Buddy will need to contact the scheme coordinator Roseann Tiff. After making an assessment Roseann will identify a suitable Buddy (subject to availability), taking into account any specific requests. You will then be informed of the person who will be the Buddy and will be provided with their contact details.

If you can help, would like to access the support of a Buddy or get more information, contact Roseann from the Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service on ext. 3186 or by e-mail at [roseann.tiff@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:roseann.tiff@coventry.gov.uk). Why not join our team, and let people know that support is here in the Council for anybody who wants it.

Cancer is one of the toughest fights many of us have to face, and if you can give your own time and support, this is a great opportunity for staff to make a real difference to someone's life.

## Where can I get additional support?

There is additional support available by contacting:

- HR helpline - for advice on employment issues – ext. 2454
- Line managers
- Macmillan Information and Support Team, free phone: 0800 808 0000 (Monday to Friday, 9am-8pm), or visit the website at <http://www.macmillan.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/how-we-work/work-and-cancer>. Their information includes benefits, welfare rights and medical advice.

**Further information can be found on Beacon about becoming a [Cancer buddy](#). There is also information to support Line Managers helping employees who have been diagnosed with [Cancer](#). Alternatively you can speak to the Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service, for health advice and one to one counselling - ext. 3285 option 1.**

The next article will talk about reporting incidents that are RIDDOR reportable.