

WELFARE REFORM COMMITTEE
THE FUTURE DELIVERY OF SOCIAL SECURITY IN SCOTLAND
WRITTEN SUBMISSION FROM MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT

Introduction

Macmillan Cancer Support welcomes the opportunity to respond to the committee's call for views on issues around the delivery of welfare powers.

The number of people living with cancer in Scotland is expected to grow from 220,000 in 2015 to almost 400,000 in the next 20 years, and 30,000 people are expected to receive a cancer diagnosis every year. This will have huge implications for welfare and for welfare services, particularly as the pension age rises more working age people will be diagnosed with cancer.

Benefits Advice & Uptake

Macmillan Cancer Support has pioneered information and benefits advice to cancer patients in hospitals and in partnership with Local Government in Scotland. Together with the Scottish Government we fund face-to-face benefits advice around the 5 cancer centres in Scotland. We believe that this is an invaluable service to patients/families going through cancer treatment as this is both an emotionally difficult but also financially difficult time. Having **access to benefits advice in the hospital setting** means we can get all the information to people as they need it exactly as their need arises. This is of course true for information around devolved benefits as well as reserved benefits – and our advisers deal with every aspect of people's needs and claims.

People affected by cancer tell us that they need services that will proactively navigate the benefits system for them when their ability to do so is impaired by the diagnosis or to offer the appropriate level of support and information to aid their own investigation of their entitlements.

The key thing for cancer patients, and indeed many other long-term conditions, is for their financial situation to be part of their overall diagnosis – and **we need patients to be routinely sign-posted to benefits advice by health professionals**. The healthier a patients' financial and other benefits situation is, the better for their overall health.

Sign-Off for Benefits

We believe that the principle of utilising and trusting the specialist knowledge of cancer health professionals should underpin access to benefits for cancer patients. Going through a cancer journey can have a dramatic effect on all aspects of people's lives. We believe oncologists, GPs, Cancer Nurse Specialists and a whole host of other health professionals should be trusted in their judgements on a person's physical and mental wellbeing.

A good example is where the UK Government has changed the ESA50 form to use the analysis of the patients' health professional to avoid face to face assessments for cancer patients going through intense treatment like chemotherapy. This is the type of delivery system we would want replicated in Scotland – but it must work in practice as well as in principle.