

FOI 3030

18th April 2025

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – INFORMATION REQUEST

I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 regarding support services available to haemato-oncology and leukaemia patients at your NHS health board:

Support Workers:

Do you provide cancer support workers, or similar roles (e.g., navigators, cancer care co-ordinators) to your haemato-oncology patients?

Response:

Yes

If yes: How many do you employ, and what is the Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)?

Response:

1 person equating to 0.25 FTE Band 3 Cancer Support Worker for Haematology patients

1 person equating to 0.8 FTE Band 4 Personalised Care Support Worker for Haematology patients

What is their average caseload?

Response:

The Cancer Support Worker does not have a caseload.

How many are employed by a third party (e.g., charity), and what is the FTE?

Response:

None

What is their caseload?

Response:

N/A

What percentage of your leukaemia patients have accessed their services?

Response:

Information not held.

Counselling Services:

Do you provide counselling or psychological support for leukaemia patients through:

Mental health professionals?

Response:

Patients are referred to the Trust's mental health services if required by a member of the clinical team looking after them though this is not specific to Leukaemia patients.

Digital platforms (e.g., apps)?

Response:

Patients can be referred to Leukaemia Care for online support via their helpline or website. There are online support groups, buddy support and a webinar library available for Leukaemia patients.

The Macmillan support line and website is available to all cancer patients and there is information on their website that is specific to Leukaemia patients available in different formats: digital, audio or translated into different languages.

Macmillan have two Apps available in partnership with Big Health for all cancer patients: sleepio – sleep management programme and daylight app – support with anxiety.

Any other relevant services?

Response:

Action Cancer provide counselling in Newry and Lurgan, Charis charity provide counselling and is based in Cookstown and Lilac cancer care provide counselling and are based in Cookstown. Counselling can be provided face to face or over the telephone. These services are not specific to Leukaemia patients but are available to all cancer patients.

Action cancer and Macmillan also provide peer support for all cancer patients – they match the patient to a buddy with a similar cancer diagnosis.

How many staff do you employ to provide cancer emotional support, and what is the FTE?

Response:

The Trust's Macmillan Information and Support Service employs one full-time (x1 FTE) Health & Wellbeing Manager and two full-time (x2 FTE) Support Workers. As part of their role the staff provide cancer emotional support through the provision of a listening ear service for all cancer patients and their families.

Emotional support for cancer patients is also provided to patients by the Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialists either during appointments or via follow-up telephone calls. The Trust employs x4 Haematology Clinical Nurse Specialists 3.6 FTE for all Haematology patients which will include Leukaemia patients.

**What are:
The average,
The minimum, and
The maximum waiting times from referral to first appointment or first access point for emotional support services?**

Response:
Information not held

How do patients get referred to these services (e.g., clinical nurse specialist, GP, self-referral)?

Response:
Patients are referred to the Macmillan Information & Support Service (MISS) by their cancer nurse specialist or another healthcare professional, by their GP or the patient may self-refer. Patients are provided with information about the MISS service in their core information pack provided by their Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist after diagnosis. They may also be referred during their holistic needs assessment appointment if this is identified as an issue or concern by the patient. Information about support services is also provided at the annual cancer health and well-being events.

Are there any limits on the number of sessions or amount of time cancer patients can access counselling?

Response:
No

What percentage of all cancer patients you care for access emotional support in-house?

Response:
Information not held for in-house emotional support.
In relation to the Macmillan Information & Support Service, approximately 25% of the patients who availed of the service accessed emotional support in the last financial year.

What percentage of leukaemia patients you care for access emotional support?

Response:

Information not held.

Welfare Support:

Do you offer welfare advice or practical support (e.g., benefits, financial help, transport) to:

All cancer patients?

Leukaemia patients?

Response:

The service is available to all cancer patients including Leukaemia patients.

How do patients access this support, and how is the information shared with them?

Response:

Patients, their carers, family members can ring 03001233233 Option 1 or email info@macmillanbenefitsservice.co.uk or be referred into the service by any Health care professional. Patients are provided with information about the service in their core information pack provided by their CNS after diagnosis. They may also be referred during their holistic needs assessment appointment if this is identified as an issue or concern by the patient. Information about the service is also presented at the annual health and well-being events for cancer patients post-treatment.

How many staff and FTE staff are responsible for delivering welfare support services?

Response:

The Macmillan Welfare Benefits Service has a total of 23 staff at present. 17 FTE welfare benefits staff across NI. There are 2.5 based in the Southern Trust area.

**How many leukaemia patients accessed welfare support in the past 12 months?
What percentage of the total leukaemia patients you care for does this represent?**

Response:

From 1/4/24 - 31/3/25: 598 Patients with blood cancer accessed welfare support services across NI. It is not possible to provide a breakdown per type of blood cancer. 152 of the 598 were from the Southern Trust.

Email: Foi.Team@Southerntrust.hscni.net