

## Macmillan Cancer Support in Scotland -

### Social Security Committee Consultation Response August 2017

#### **“Beating Cancer: Ambition and Action”**

The Scottish Government Cancer Plan “Beating Cancer: Ambition and Action” published in March 2016 committed the new Social Security system to “giving a rounded assessment of people’s needs, streamlining the administrative process, and seeking to fast track for those that qualify and are living with a terminal illness such as cancer.”

Macmillan Cancer Support wants to work with the Scottish Government to deliver these aims in the new Social Security system:

#### **Innovative Benefits Services**

Macmillan Benefits Services currently provide the opportunity of face to face support for people affected by cancer through 22 partnerships that cover 27 of the 32 local authorities throughout Scotland. As an example of that work, the first 6 months of 2016 saw the services provide support to over 8000 people with financial gains of over £20 million. It is essential moving forward that we ensure face to face provision is an option for those cancer patients requiring benefits and financial advice.

Recent work at the Spinal Unit based at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Glasgow showed that here is a real opportunity to change how decisions are made for people with longterm conditions working closely with nurses, physios and consultants to provide supporting letters of how the person’s injury impacted on their life, resulting in a quicker decision based on expert opinion. Macmillan believes a similar exercise could be extended to people affected by cancer, saving time and money for the new system.

#### **Improving the Cancer Journey – Deprived Communities**

The 2016 SNP Manifesto and the Scottish Government Cancer Plan in March 2016 – both commit to the spread of Link Workers to improve the health of the population. Link Workers are vital to ensure an Holistic Needs Assessment for people to ensure their care is properly co-ordinated, and signposting to existing vital services always takes place. (The joint Macmillan/Scottish Government Transforming Care After Treatment programme is demonstrating how vital an holistic needs assessment is for cancer patients).

The Cancer Plan commits to “Invest £9 million over 5 years to support access to health and social care services during and after treatment, via for example, Link Workers to provide support in the most deprived communities and initiatives such as Macmillan’s Improving the Cancer Journey”. Macmillan believes this roll-out will have a beneficial impact on the well-being of people with cancer in the most deprived areas – and will ensure benefits and financial advice – as well as housing and other social needs – are recognised whilst tackling health conditions of the population. Too often these services are unconnected, and we need to ensure that Health & Social Care Integration also dovetails with the work of the new Social Security Department’s services.

#### **Vocational Rehabilitation**

Macmillan Cancer Support is clear that running alongside a successful new Social Security system must be a successful back to work programme for people with long term conditions including cancer. We do not want to see a system that (through good intentions) could write-off the ability of people to survive cancer and return to work, both during and after their treatment.

As the retirement age rises to 68, more and more working age people will be diagnosed with cancer -we need a new Social Security system that is closely integrated with vocational rehabilitation services linked to both healthcare systems and an understanding by employers across Scotland of their responsibilities.

### **ESA WRAG**

Macmillan Cancer Support has campaigned vigorously to keep the ESA WRAG payment for cancer patients. At their most vulnerable moments after treatment ends, cancer patients need support to start their journey back into the workplace. There is a clear distinction between people on JSA and those receiving ESA WRAG. Claimants in the WRAG have, by definition, been assessed to have only a 'limited capability' for work and cannot be reasonably required to work. Instead, they need to be given time to recover and properly supported to return to work if and when they are ready and able. The removal of the £29pw payment is causing huge hardship to cancer patients and making it harder to support them returning to work. With the new powers of Work Able Scotland, together with a drive toward better vocational rehabilitation, Macmillan believe the new Scottish Social Security System should re-instate the weekly payment to cancer patients who will not receive this payment to help them return to work.

### **PIP waiting times and statistics**

Macmillan believes people living with and beyond cancer should receive PIP in a timely manner to help them cope with the often immediate support and financial needs they face following their cancer diagnosis and treatment.

Following campaigning by Macmillan in 2014, we were pleased when the UK Government committed to publishing quarterly statistics on end-to-end clearance times for PIP normal and special rules claims, as this has increased transparency about the time people living with cancer are waiting for their claims to be processed so that any problems can be identified and addressed quickly. We are also pleased to see that waiting times have largely met the 11 week wait for normal rules claims and 7 days wait for special rules claims for terminally ill, which Macmillan also called for, which is the maximum amount of time we believe these claims should take.

It is vital that when the Scottish Government takes on responsibility for PIP, it continues to publish this data on waiting times and commits to ensuring that people living with cancer can access their PIP payments in a timely way.

Macmillan believes that the availability of good data on benefits claims is vital to ensure that people are receiving the benefits they need when they need them. We would therefore welcome any additional information that the Scottish Government could publish in addition to that already published by their Westminster counterparts.

### **Personal Independence Payment (PIP) 28-day rule**

Last year, following successful campaigning by Macmillan and others, the Westminster Government confirmed that they would be amending regulations to ensure that when people who are terminally ill transfer from Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to Personal Independence Payments (PIP) they will no longer have to wait 28 days or more to receive any increased payment. This will help ensure people with cancer who are terminally ill can access vital support at a time when they need it most.

We were pleased that the UK Government listened to our concerns and agreed to make this much-needed change; however, we know this delay in accessing increased support is also experienced by people with cancer who don't have a terminal illness.

We believe it is vital that the Scottish Government ensures that terminally ill people in Scotland continue to benefit from this change when PIP is devolved and believe it should explore whether this could be extended so that everyone moving from DLA to PIP whose daily living and/or mobility needs have increased can access vital additional funds without delay.

### **3-month qualifying period for PIP**

When PIP was introduced in 2013, Macmillan successfully campaigned against the Westminster Government's proposal to extend the qualifying period for the benefit from three to six months. We were against this as we know that many people living with cancer and claiming PIP have significant needs and increased costs because of their cancer diagnosis and treatment and need to receive financial support to help them with these as soon as possible.

We were pleased when the Westminster Government acknowledged Macmillan's concerns and agreed to retain the three-month qualifying period when PIP replaced DLA. It is vital when the Scottish Government takes on responsibility for PIP that the qualifying period is no greater than three months.

### **Paper-based PIP special rules application**

The impact of cancer and its treatment can be varied, wide ranging and severe. It is therefore important that people affected by cancer are able to access the benefits to which they are entitled as easily and equitably as possible. It is therefore imperative to offer multiple channels of access for people affected by cancer and professionals supporting them with claims. For example, Macmillan has worked with the Department for Work and Pensions to implement a paper-based pilot for claims made under PIP special rules. This allows Macmillan professionals to complete a paper-based PIP 1 form for special rules applications and return it with a DS1500 form, rather than make a lengthy application call. In addition, a shorter call can be made in order to protect date of claim – meaning that any subsequent award will be payable from the date of the call, rather than the date the form is received.

We would welcome the Scottish Government continuing this approach when it takes on responsibility for PIP. We would also be keen to discuss other opportunities to increase the channels available to people affected by cancer for other benefits.

### **Attendance Allowance forms**

At present, Macmillan's UK-wide Support Line is accredited by the DWP to send out Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance (for children) forms directly to cancer patients. This improves the customer experience for people affected by cancer as it means they don't need to call up separately to request a claim form. This simplifies and speeds up the claims process and is beneficial for the DWP too as it reduces the number of calls requesting claim forms that they need to handle.

Macmillan would welcome this continuing when Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance (for children) is devolved to the Scottish Government and would be keen to work with government to explore whether there are opportunities to do this with other benefits.