



## **Cancer Support Workers: who they are and how they can support people affected by cancer**

### Background

Research has shown that people who have a cancer diagnosis have various non-medical unmet needs during and after cancer treatment. If non-medical needs are not addressed they can have a negative impact on your quality of life.

Due to the mix of remote, rural and urban populations supported by NHS Highland, particular challenges arise when considering offering support for all people who have a cancer diagnosis. Emerging results from projects in other parts of the country indicates that enhanced community support does indeed address unmet needs for people affected by cancer.

The NHS Highland/Macmillan Person Centred Care Project aims to enhance support for all people affected by cancer from diagnosis onwards, through offering the service of cancer support workers. We have cancer support workers employed throughout the Highlands until June 2021.

### What is the role of the cancer support worker?

The role of the cancer support worker is to offer support to you and your family, for non-medical concerns you may have. As part of this support, you will be offered an initial assessment, called a 'Holistic Needs Assessment', or sometimes called a 'Concerns Checklist'. Based on any concerns you may have, the support worker will create a plan of care with you, and can signpost you to trusted information, as well as local and online support groups. There are a lot of resources that you may not be aware of, and the support worker can guide you to such resources.

The support worker is not a registered nurse, but works closely with your local Macmillan community cancer nurse specialist team. For clinical concerns, the support worker will have access to the healthcare team who are treating you and can connect you to this team if required.

The support worker is employed by NHS Highland, and adheres to NHS Highland employee confidentiality policies.