



# Returning to Work Workshop

*Facilitated by  
Angela Buckley*

*23 March 2023  
@ 10-12noon*

# Workshop Panel of Speakers



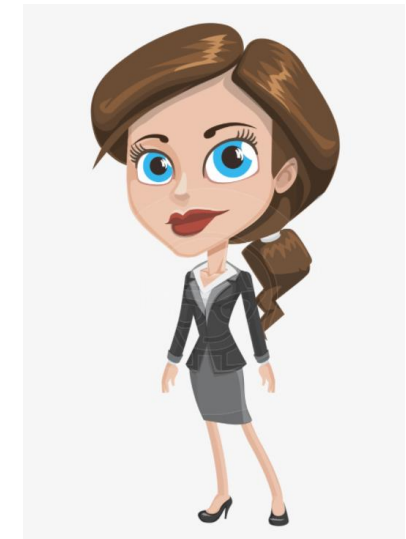
Valerie  
McArdle  
Patient Voice



Angela  
Buckley  
Psychotherapist



Martin  
Sweeney  
Patient Voice

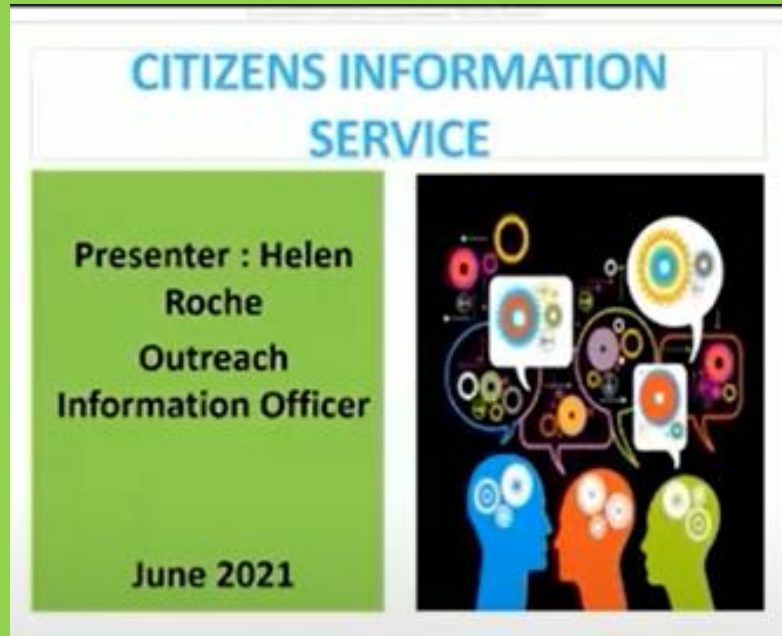


Aisling  
Dunne  
HR Professional

# Resources with links and summaries

1. Helen Roche, Outreach Information Officer, South Munster Citizens Information Service CLG and Una Fannon, Grassroots Advocacy Co-Ordinator recording on Benefits and Entitlements for Cancer Patients at the Living Well With and Beyond Cancer Online Conference 2021 [Benefits and Entitlements for Cancer Patients - YouTube](#)
2. The Answer for Cancer Podcasts [The Answers for Cancers](#)
  - Season 1 Episode 19 Returning to Work after a cancer diagnosis with Naomi Algeo [The Answers for Cancers - Ep19: Returning to work after a cancer diagnosis w/ Naomi Algeo \(google.com\)](#)
  - Season 1 Episode 5 Fatigue with Dr Deirdre Connolly [The Answers for Cancers - Ep5: Fatigue w/ Dr. Deirdre Connolly \(google.com\)](#)

Helen Roche and Una Fannon  
Benefits and Entitlements for  
Cancer Patients  
Living Well With and Beyond Cancer  
Online Conference **June 2021**



### **PRSI Based Social Welfare Entitlements (criteria apply)**

- Supplementary Welfare Allowance (bridging payment)
- Illness Benefit (2yrs) based on annual earnings
- Invalidity Pension (2yrs+) Substantial medical evidence required
- Partial Capacity Benefit (6mths)

### **Means Tested Benefits and Entitlements**

- Disability Allowance – medical and means tested
- Disability Allowance & Work

### **Extra Social Welfare Entitlements**

- Supplementary Welfare Allowance (bridging payment)
- Urgent & Exceptional Needs Payment
- Household Benefits Package
- Fuel Allowance – separate to Household Benefits Package
- Living Alone Increase & Telephone Support Allowance

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### **Carers Benefits and Entitlements**

- PRSI based Carer's Benefits
- Means tested Carer's Allowance
- Care share allowed
- Carers Support Grant (do not need

### **Medical Cards**

- Emergency medical card
- Temporary medical card
- Standard medical card (means tested) NB make sure you are using the correct form
- GP Visit Card

### **Medications**

- Long Term Illness Scheme
- Drug Payment Scheme

### **Medical Cover in Europe**

- European Health Insurance Card
- Treatment Abroad Scheme (excluding UK)
- Cross Border Healthcare Directive

### **Irish Cancer Society**

- Free legal advice clinic every month

## Season 1 Episode 19 June 2021

Returning to Work after a cancer diagnosis with Naomi Algeo (Occupational Therapist)



## Highlights 😊

- Trinity - newly created 'Work in Cancer' program
- For entitlements you have a '**Disability**' classification for life once you have a cancer diagnosis – even post treatment
- **Reasonable** accommodations regarding tasks and workplace e.g. phased/graded return to work, working from home, flexibility to working hours, changes to desk etc, technology to support
- **Costs & Grants** for reasonable accommodations
  1. 'Workplace equipment adaptation grant' is available for private sector employees & self employed (€6k max)
  2. 'Partial Capacity' benefit - continue to receive this payment. Criteria
    - Illness benefit for at least 6 months or invalidity pension and
    - Need to have restrictions on capacity assessed and certified (usually by GP) as moderate (e.g. fatigue €100/wk) /severe/profound and
    - **Approved before returning to work**
  3. Paid sick leave not a statutory entitlement
- **Ergonomics**
  - Office - desks, chairs, movement breaks, reach, grouping items
  - Employer and colleague communications
  - Brain Fog & Fatigue - Remembering names, concentration, Pomodoro technique, 4 Ps (Plan, Prioritise, Pace, Posture), CALM App, phased return to work (review date not return date; non consecutive days) ... and more

Season 1 Episode 5  
Fatigue with Dr Deirdre Connelly  
(Occupational Therapist)



## Defining Fatigue

A fatigue that cannot be explained by recent activities

Its an overwhelming feeling of tiredness – all body experience

## Common (invisible) Symptoms

Physical – lack of energy

Cognitively (chemo brain) – concentration, memory, problem solving, multitasking, planning

Emotional – low mood, guilt

**Tips** Pause, stop and think

## 4 Ps

- Plan – think ahead
- Prioritise
- Pace
- Positioning (Posture) and remember the importance of resting

## Fatigue Diary

- List the activity
- Rank it on a scale of 1 to 10
- How important is this activity to you – low importance and high fatigue

## Exercise

150 min per week of moderate (sweaty and breathy) intensity exercise

Ref Dr Noel McCaffrey, ExWell Medical

## Diet

## Sleep

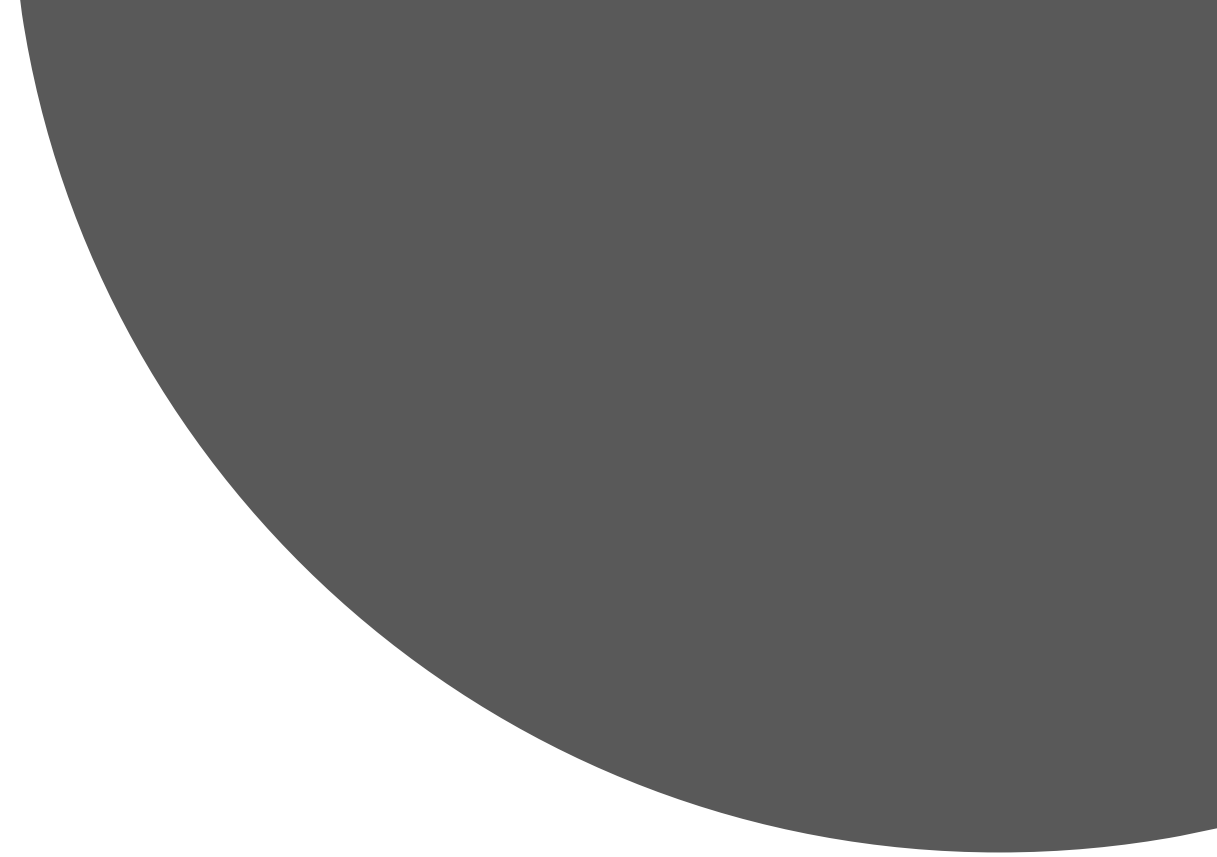
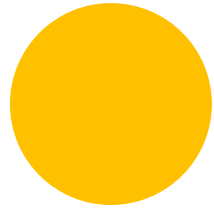
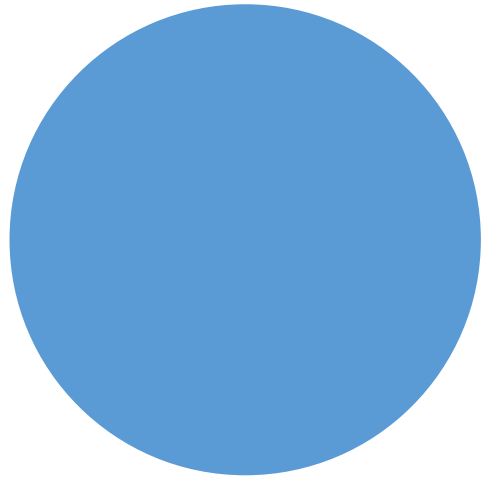
# Additional Publications & Resources

1. Marie Keating Back to Work After Cancer booklet <https://www.mariekeating.ie/back-to-work-after-cancer/>
2. Irish Cancer Society [Returning to work after cancer | Irish Cancer Society](#)  
Brochures <https://www.cancer.ie/about-us/cancer-resources-publications/cancer-information-resources>  
Benefits [Benefits and entitlements | Irish Cancer Society](#)  
Survivorship Education [Survivorship Education \(LACES\) | Irish Cancer Society](#)  
Talking to children direct download link [https://www.cancer.ie/sites/default/files/2019-11/talking\\_to\\_children\\_2017.pdf](https://www.cancer.ie/sites/default/files/2019-11/talking_to_children_2017.pdf)
3. Irish Cancer Society The Financial Impact of Cancer booklet <https://www.cancer.ie/cancer-information-and-support/cancer-support/coping-with-cancer/information-for-survivors/practical-issues-after-cancer>
4. Career Care <http://careercare.ie/>

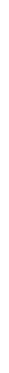


# Resources shared by past participants

1. Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed – disability allowance <https://www.inou.ie/information/other-social-welfare-payments/disability-allowance/>
2. Exwell Fitness [Home \(exwell.ie\)](http://exwell.ie)
3. Kristen Neff Book on Self Compassion
4. The Cancer Survivor Handbook: Your Guide to Building a Life After Cancer
5. After the Treatment Finishes - Then What? Dr Peter Harvey [After the Treatment Finishes - Then What? \(workingwithcancer.co.uk\)](http://workingwithcancer.co.uk)
6. Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre, Managing Cognitive Changes: Information for Cancer Survivors <https://www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/patient-education/managing-cognitive-changes#:~:text=Our%20neuropsychologists%20at%20Memorial%20Sloan%20Kettering%20%28MSK%29%20have,can%20help%20reduce%20the%20effect%20of%20cognitive%20changes.>
7. Harvard Medical, general cancer info <https://www.health.harvard.edu/topics/cancer/all>
8. Macmillan Cancer Support UK <https://www.macmillan.org.uk/>
9. NHS General Cancer Info <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cancer/>



# How to Build Your Emotional Resilience



*“Resilience is the strength and the speed of our response to adversity”*

*“When something bad happens, big or small, how much are we able to overcome it or how well do we persevere in the face of it ”*

***This is a set of skills that can be learned***

*Adam Grant, organisational psychologist*

*Resilience*  
*How to find strength in the face of real hardship?*

*Expressing gratitude for the good things in our life*

*Talk about your loss and hardship - the elephant in the room - no one likes to pass along bad news (Mum effect) – **sharing painful experiences** helps to overcome isolation*

***Fight permanence** – we tend to overestimate how bad and how long the pain / fatigue will last – feels like it will never lift or end – we tend to overestimate our pain. We fight permanence by firstly believing it will get better. Start by replacing words like ‘always’ and ‘never’ with ‘sometimes’ and ‘lately’.*

***Self confidence** – Cancer is a primary trauma and loss. How cancer expands into the rest of our lives is called secondary loss like confidence in returning to work. Journal three things you **do well** at the end of every day. Focusing on small wins can help build confidence. You don't have to believe this to get the benefit 😊*

*Self compassion – stop feeling guilty, stop apologising, having cancer is not your fault! Approaching yourself with the same **kindness and compassion** you would show to a friend or yourself as a child. Check our **Kristin Neff book on Self-Compassion***

*Resilience*  
*How to find strength in the face of real hardship?*

*The platinum rule of friendship – friends tend to offer help based on their perceptions of your needs and not **as you** would want. Give to your family and friends the **gift of giving**. Ask for help and be specific.  
Remember parents, we will also be role modelling this for your kids.*

*Start by taking one step at a time to get to the top of the road. Respect your feelings. **Know that you matter as a person in your own right**. You also matter to others – that you are noticed, cared for and relied upon. Check out this lovely novel - **The Midnight Library by Matt Haig***

*Three responses to adverse effects. 1. Broken – depression, PTSD. 2. Bounce back to where you were before. 3. Bounce forward - **seek meaning** in your life and for your suffering. Use your cancer to decide your legacy. Use your experience to help others*

***Take back joy**. Feeling joy and then feeling guilty for being happy. This is called survivor's guilt. Guilt can stop us from doing the things that we love. Give yourself permission to enjoy the small things in your life. **Happiness is the frequency of positive experiences not the intensity**. Write down three moments of joy (small wins) every night. You don't have to believe this to get the benefit 😊*

*Isolation – **share with peers and family** – when you open up and share, you encourage and inspire honesty in others.*



# 3 Tips for Transitioning Out of Cancer Treatment

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- Be prepared for withdrawal of care
- Be aware of possible ongoing side effects
- Hold on to your social support

*Doug Mackenzie 2017*

<https://www.cancer.net/blog/2017-09/3-tips-transitioning-out-cancer-treatment>

# 15 things mindful people do differently

1. They don't believe their thoughts – and they don't take them all seriously
2. They don't try to avoid or deny emotions
3. They understand that all things come and go
4. They do one thing at a time
5. They turn everyday tasks into mindful moments
6. They practice being curious
7. They get outdoors and embrace the beauty of nature
8. They enjoy every bite when they eat

9. They slow down when reading and truly take the information in
10. They are fully present when listening without trying to control or judge
11. They take mini breaks every hour or so when working or studying
12. They laugh at themselves
13. They focus on what they are doing
14. They challenge existing beliefs
15. They nourish their bodies