

Ref: FOI/GS/ID 6544

Please reply to:
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Freedom of Information Act 2000

I am writing in response to your request for information made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in relation to Cancer Services.

You asked:

- 1) What support do you offer for the family members of patients being treated for cancer within your NHS trust? (Support can include anything that would contribute to the emotional well-being of an individual, such as support groups, counselling or advice).*
- 2) Does your NHS Trust provide any tailored support specifically for young people (under 25s) who have family members being treated for cancer?*
- 3) If so, please could you provide details.*
- 4) Are services actively offered to patients' family members, or do they have to approach the Trust themselves to request support?*

Trust response:

1) The Macmillan Information & Support Centre is staffed by a combination of Trust staff and volunteers, the team are able to provide information, signposting and low level emotional support to patients and their supporters. This service is largely based at Maidstone Hospital currently however, we have identified an area in main reception at Tunbridge Wells Hospital and will soon take delivery of a flexible information 'pod' kindly provided by our partners at Macmillan Cancer Support, the staffing model will reflect the one at Maidstone Hospital initially. The Information Centre team, Clinical Nurse Specialists and other staff are all able to provide advice, information and signposting to other services including support groups and community based organisations. We are able to offer a professional counselling service to patients and those important to them following a cancer diagnosis. We work closely with our local hospices, referring patients and their families to their services as appropriate. We offer Health and Wellbeing events to many of our patients following treatment and actively encourage patients to bring a guest

should they wish to, these events provide information but also a valuable opportunity for both patients and their supporters to gain informal peer support.

2) We do not currently offer any tailored support for children and young adults with family members affected by cancer but staff are able to provide support to patients and their families as well as signposting a variety of specialist resources. We have also produced a specific flyer/poster detailing organisations both local and national, specifically aimed at children and young people either when they are patients themselves or when a person they love is affected by cancer, this has been circulated to staff and would also normally be available for patients to help themselves to within the department.

We do have close links with a local support group for younger patients who also offer support to their families/supporters.

A Teenage and Young Adult Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) has been in post for the last twelve months to support young people who themselves have received a cancer diagnosis locally, we have just secured a second year of funding from the Teenage Cancer Trust. Whilst the role of this CNS is to support young patients we are able to benefit from her experience and contacts when supporting young people who have a family member with a cancer diagnosis.

We have a very engaged patient/supporters voices group who are keen to champion greater support for families/supporters so this is likely to be an area for development in the future. We also hope to establish greater links with the local community including local schools.

3) As above

4) Staff aim to provide holistic care to patients throughout their cancer experience and are aware of the impact that a cancer diagnosis can have on someone's support network as well as the individual themselves, wherever possible they would endeavour to proactively provide low level emotional support, information and signposting to patient's supporters or refer to colleagues/ other services such as counselling where appropriate. Should a supporter/family member require specific or additional support/information they can access a member of the Oncology team directly.