

Introducing our volunteer: Mike Hindle.

My name is Mike Hindle and I am writing this blog in association with Working With Cancer. They are a social enterprise who support those affected by cancer. As I'm sure is the case for many of you, cancer is something that has affected my life drastically, and supporting those trying to cope with cancer is close to my heart.

That is the purpose of this blog: to share my experience of cancer, as well as providing recruitment and human resources advice for those of you who are affected by cancer - whether that be as a cancer survivor who wants to get back into the world of work, or a carer juggling their job as well as providing the best care they can to a close friend or family member.

I can hear you asking two questions, firstly why would I volunteer my time to blog about these things and secondly what makes me a suitable advisor about getting a job?

Cancer has affected my family since the time I lost my uncle - who I was named after - when I was young. Too young to really remember what was going on. I still remember flashes, seeing my uncle at home with lots of wires and tubes going in and out of his body and my 13-year-old cousin's reaction at the funeral. Thankfully, since then research into curing cancer has come on massively and more people are surviving cancer than ever before - in fact the survival rates have doubled in the last 40 years and the way things look to be going, more and more people will do so.

My dad is a cancer survivor. In January 2016 he noticed there was a problem with his appetite and he was struggling with his mobility. He was later diagnosed with high-grade (meaning rapidly spreading) Mantle Cell Lymphoma, which was an unusual cancer for his age, normally appearing in those 10-20 years older than him.

Due to his age, his consultants advised upon an initial course of chemotherapy, followed by a further, more intensive course of chemotherapy treatment where they destroyed his immune system and then built it up from scratch using his stem cells. There were a lot of times throughout his treatment when his blood counts did not recover as quickly as planned and as a result they had to delay the next round of treatment while he recovered. During these times, when his blood cell counts dropped too low, he became neutropenic, which meant his immune system was compromised and something as simple as a cold could potentially be fatal. Because of this, he was often kept in an isolation ward, where he mostly passed his days sleeping, with regular visits from the rest of the family. For the first couple of weeks I had a persistent cold so I didn't really see him much because I daren't risk it. Eventually, I was confident that I wouldn't infect him and went to visit him. He looked exhausted and gaunt, struggling to move around the bed, which hit home how ill he really was.

Thankfully, with time he made a full recovery and returned to work. He didn't really know what he was doing and tried to return on a full-time basis for a while before coming to the realisation that he physically couldn't do that anymore, the fatigue was too much. Yet, after a further 8 months or so he was able to return to full time work and still pushes himself to go above and beyond, because he enjoys what he does, even if it means that he needs to recover over the weekend.

I am sure my dad is not the only one who, after surviving cancer did not know what he or she was doing with regard to returning to work and that is something that as a volunteer for Working With Cancer I would like to help with.

So, how can I help people affected by cancer to find a job? I am a HR Advisor, qualified with the Chartered Institute of Professional Development (CIPD). I work for a large US Company specialising in recruitment and employee relations for part of the South West of the UK. I have worked there for over three years providing advice on a variety of cases including managing employees on long-term sick leave, dealing with employee relation cases and recruiting for a wide variety of positions. As a volunteer at Working With Cancer, I am able to provide recruitment and/or HR advice to those affected by cancer who require it.

Over the next few months I will be blogging on a semi-regular basis providing advice on a number of general recruitment topics including; what makes a solid CV and providing general interview tips. If you have any topics that you want me to write a general advice piece on or if you wish to get individual advice about a certain topic, then please get in touch either via the website or using my email address: mike.hindle@workingwithcancer.co.uk