

# Standing side-by-side to give cancer the cold shoulder

A cancer diagnosis can lead to loss of income and worries about heating the home, but npower and Macmillan Cancer Support are out to change that



■ Ann (second left) with her husband Graham (far right)

ANN and Graham lost two businesses and plunged into spiralling debt as a result of the recession – all on top of Graham's diagnosis with prostate cancer.

Happily married for 36 years, both had lost their jobs. Devastated by the diagnosis and determined to look after Graham during his treatment, Ann became her husband's full-time carer.

Because the couple owned their house and Graham had a pension, they were told they weren't eligible for any benefits to help pay their bills and were left facing serious financial difficulties.

Three years later, both were still out of work and struggling financially, going to bed at 5pm to keep warm.

Ann's call to their energy provider npower, and referral to the Macmillan Support Line team, proved to be a lifeline. npower has been working in partnership with the cancer charity for 11 years and the support team is there to help those affected by cancer manage their fuel bills.

The team's advisers found more than £3,500-worth of benefit entitlement for the family. Via referral to npower and Macmillan's joint Fuel Management Programme, their full debt was written off and a minimum payment of £20 per month agreed for a year to help the couple out of fuel poverty.

Graham is now doing well and Ann has gone from speaking to npower in tears, with little hope of paying her mounting bills, to being able to manage her household's energy, with help from the Macmillan Support Line advice team. "I can't explain just how relieved I was when the lady at npower said they could help. They turned our lives around," says Ann.

Birmingham and the Black Country sees 33 people diagnosed with cancer every day. The number of people living with cancer in this area will increase by 78% between 2010 and 2030.

Macmillan reports that the financial impact on families struggling to cope with supporting a loved one can be devastating. Indeed a YouGov poll of UK cancer patients reveals that more than half of those diagnosed within the last two years are worried about heating their homes.

Many find themselves losing one or even two incomes as a partner steps

into the role of carer, and escalating heating bills, due to cancer patients being at home more and feeling the cold more acutely, add to the stress.

npower's 11-year partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support is making a difference, says the charity. To date, the partnership has helped more than 17,500 people. Together they have created a Fuel Management Programme for customers affected by cancer. It has wiped out more than £2million of debt and made sure people do not have to pay more than they can afford.

Aiming to ensure those who need it most can keep warm without the worry of increased energy bills during times of treatment and recovery, npower caps charges for customers referred to the scheme. It also funds an Energy Advice Team on the Macmillan Support Line, and offers emergency heating grants with Macmillan for those affected by cancer - whoever their energy provider is.

npower has funded 2,300 energy grants and helped more than 2,500 customers out of fuel poverty via the Fuel Management Programme. This lifeline enables people affected by cancer to put the heating on when they feel cold, which is vital for their wellbeing, and their recovery.

■ Find out more about how npower stands up for customers at [npower.com/StandUp](https://npower.com/StandUp) or call Macmillan free on **0808 808 0000** for more information.

## MACMILLAN & NPOWER: CHANGING LIVES FOR THE BETTER



■ Macmillan nurses offer a wide range of care, support and advice

npower's 11-year partnership with Macmillan has brought valuable insight into the real challenges faced by the energy provider's customers who are affected by cancer.

Macmillan's first-hand experience has seen the partnership move on from pure fundraising, adding important practical measures that will help change npower customers' lives for the better.

Every day almost 930 people in the UK are

diagnosed with cancer, and there are currently 2.5million living with the disease nationwide. Macmillan services are in local communities across the UK every day and the charity says people affected by cancer don't just worry about what will happen to their body, they worry about what will happen to their lives.

Macmillan nurses help with more than care. They're there for talking through

money worries and giving advice about work, providing someone who'll listen and help make the choices that will allow people to take back control.

They aim to be a source of support, helping with all the things people affected by cancer want and need which is why this year's employee fundraising campaign at npower is to raise £203 each - the equivalent of funding a

Macmillan nurse for a day. They're there to help carers, families and communities as well as those who have been diagnosed with the illness.

The charity funds nurses and other specialist health care professionals and builds cancer care centres.

Other support comes in the form of time off for a carer or a lift to hospital as well as emotional support.

People also often need financial help to cope with the extra costs cancer can bring.

So Macmillan gives benefits advice and grants for anything from heating bills to travel costs.

Macmillan's aim is to reach and improve the lives of everyone affected by cancer, which would be almost impossible without the continued support of valued partners like npower.

