

businesses working with the third sector to support vulnerable customers

Businesses teaming up with charities is by no means a new development and it's great for employee engagement and flexing a company's philanthropic muscle. But an increasing number of businesses are recognising that charities can help them fully understand and respond to the issues that matter to their customers. Done correctly, this is good for business, helping firms stand out from their competition.

For us here at Macmillan, our ambition is to help ensure no one faces cancer alone. If this is something we can do through utilising existing partner services or tailoring them somehow, then we want to be able to do that and expand our reach to those who need it.

Since we partnered with Nationwide 23 years ago, much has changed both in the financial sector and in terms of cancer survival rates. One thing that has remained is the need for financial support to those who are going through treatment and those around them, such as carers.

In 2011 together Macmillan and Nationwide launched the [Macmillan Financial Guidance Service](#), a service which helps people affected by cancer navigate the financial services sector and improve their financial capability. In 2015, it provided advice to 5,733 people affected by cancer, and identified over £1.9 million in financial gains. But this service relies on people coming to Macmillan, and we know we can't reach everyone who might need us. In 2015, we took things further, working with Nationwide to directly support their customers with cancer. Together we have, trained and implemented a [Specialist Support Service](#), aimed at assisting their more vulnerable members, particularly those affected by cancer.

And we aren't the only ones — in 2015, domestic-violence charity Refuge joined forces with cooperative partner The Co-operative Bank to offer a financial guide for those suffering from financial abuse at the hands of a partner — something which often goes unmentioned but can play a huge part in domestic violence.

Similarly, Save the Children's partnership with Glaxo Smith Kline is focused around GSK's initiative to reinvest 20% of the profits it makes in the world's least developed countries back into projects which strengthen their healthcare infrastructure.

Going forward, it's clear that charities will continue to push the boundaries in terms of what they can deliver to their customers, while business-savvy companies will find that third-sector expertise can help them best meet customers' needs.

Mandy Griffin, Nationwide's Head of Customer Experience Delivery:

'By joining forces with Macmillan, not only can Nationwide help raise funds to support people affected by cancer but we can also help at a ground roots level, offering a specialist support service that will really benefit people at a time when money should be the last thing on their mind. We are always looking for ways to expand our services and increase employee engagement — both of which are achieved through this partnership.'

[Find out more about Macmillan's work with corporate partners](#)