

Pregnancy Loss Policy Guide

This document is designed to be used alongside the pregnancy loss policy we have created. It sets out what the key things are for you, as an employer, to consider when introducing a policy. It provides examples of what other companies have introduced and offers tips on how to roll out the policy to employees effectively.

Why it's important to address pregnancy loss

Pregnancy loss is much more common than many people realise. As many as one in four pregnancies end in loss, be that a miscarriage (if the baby is lost before 24 weeks of pregnancy) or stillbirth (if the baby is lost after 24 weeks of pregnancy). 20% of women in the UK are likely to suffer a miscarriage. This won't just affect them; their partners will suffer the same feelings of grief. This means a huge proportion of the workforce will experience, and must deal with, this anguish. It is important to also consider those women who have an abortion.

It is estimated that one in three women will have an abortion in their lifetime(i) . While 95% of women don't regret their abortion(ii) , this doesn't mean it can't have a physical and emotional affect on them and their partner. It is never an easy to decide to make and offering support and understanding as an employer is important.

It makes sense for employers to acknowledge pregnancy loss no matter the circumstances, provide appropriate support and encourage their employees to reach out for help. Not talking about the issue will not make it go away and will make the experience much more difficult to deal with.

What are the key things to consider when implementing this policy?

- This is not just an issue that affects women. Men whose partners suffer a pregnancy loss will also be grieving. It's important to include everyone in the conversation.
- This is a very sensitive topic, which many people will find hard to broach. Make sure your employees know about the policy but it's important you give anyone affected by pregnancy loss time and space to cope with their experience in their own way.
- No two experiences will be the same. This is a very personal issue which requires empathy and understanding, particularly from line managers.
- Most pregnancy losses occur in the first 12 weeks after conception. This may well be before an employee has told anyone that they are pregnant, so raising the topic may be especially difficult. In the past, women are likely to have hidden what has happened from their employer, meaning they have had to deal with this issue alone.
- Late miscarriages and stillbirths are much rarer occurrences. Only 1 to 2% of pregnancies end in miscarriage between 12 and 24 weeks. One in 250 pregnancies end in stillbirth, but this still equates to eight every day.
- The older a woman is, the more likely she is to have a miscarriage. In those under 30 there is a one in 10 chance, between the ages of 35 to 39 there is a two in 10 chance and over the age of 40 there is a five in 10 chance.
- A significant proportion of employees who suffer a pregnancy loss will experience some form of mental illness, such as post traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression. It makes sense to integrate your pregnancy loss policy with your mental health policy.
- Pregnancy loss may also be connected to fertility issues. If you have a fertility policy, it makes sense to link these.

Pregnancy loss policies from other organisations

Fintru

Fintru is a RegTech company established in 2013 and is based in Northern Ireland. In 2020 it was named as one of the top 50 fast growing companies in the UK. It has 750 employees. Their policy caters for the pregnant member of staff and their partner. The female employee who has suffered a pregnancy loss is entitled to two weeks paid leave. An employee whose partner has suffered a pregnancy loss is entitled to one week. This will be flexible to help them support their partner and be there for them when it is most useful. All line managers will be given training on managing pregnant employees, how to support someone who has lost a child and how to manage sensitively their return to work. For more details go to <https://www.fintru.com/fintru-pregnancy-loss-policy>

Channel 4

Channel 4 is a publicly-owned and commercially-funded UK public service broadcaster. It has over 900 employees, of which around 56% are women. They have been a pioneer in developing HR policies that reflect modern life, support employee wellbeing and promote inclusion. The policy covers all types of pregnancy loss, including abortion and recognises that pregnancy loss is not limited to women and heterosexual couples. It offers two weeks' leave on full pay, paid leave for medical appointments, flexible working and resources including medical support, counselling and a buddy scheme to help employees return to work. They have also appointed a "Pregnancy Loss Champion" within its People Team. The policy was developed with the help of charities and also internal employee networks supporting parents, carers and mental health. For more details go to <https://www.channel4.com/corporate/pregnancy-loss-policy>

Monzo

Monzo is an online bank, built to meet the needs of modern life. It was founded in 2015 and has over 1,600 employees. They also state the number of parents working in the organisation has increased by 7% since 2018. Monzo's policy was introduced as part of their drive to safeguard their employees' mental health. It allows an employee who suffers pregnancy loss of any kind up to 10 days' additional leave over and above their annual entitlement. The policy also applies to partners and surrogate mothers. For more details go to <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-57063143>

Talker Tailor Trouble Maker

Talker Tailor Trouble Maker is a creative communications agency, established in 2016. It has around 20 employees. They will provide a minimum of two weeks paid leave for those who suffer a pregnancy loss, including partners, surrogates or adopters. The new policy is spearheaded by their female senior management team and also covers fertility treatment and those transitioning gender. They have also recently introduced a "period policy" for staff suffering menstrual or menopausal pain. For more details go to <https://www.prweek.com/article/1721338/agency-reveals-policiespregnancy-loss-gender-transition-pet-death>

NHS England

NHS England In March 2024, NHS England announced that any of its employees who miscarry in the first 24 weeks of pregnancy can take 10 days paid leave, partners can take five days and employees who miscarry after 6 months of pregnancy will still be offered paid maternity leave. After a trial in Humber Teaching NHS Foundation Trust, it is being rolled out nationally.

How will a pregnancy loss policy benefit employers?

Impact on the bottom line

- New research from Tommy's suggests miscarriage costs the UK at least £471 million a year.
- This figure is made up of direct health service costs and lost productivity.
- When considering the longer-term impact, scientists expect the figure to surpass £1 billion a year.
- This lasting impact is associated with both mental and physical health, which can affect employees for years.
- Pregnancy loss policies that support the health and wellbeing of those affected could reduce these figures significantly.

Becoming an employer of choice

- Policies like this signal to prospective and current employees that their lives outside work matter.
- It demonstrates an employer's commitment to supporting employees no matter what they are going through, helping to increase diversity and inclusion.
- Showing employees that they will be treated with respect and compassion is vital and there is no issue that is a taboo.

Tips on how to communicate your pregnancy loss policy

- Make a conscious effort to ensure all employees know about the policy and where to find it.
- Find someone in the senior leadership team who is willing to be a spokesman for the policy and speak about it when appropriate both internally and externally.
- Work with your internal communications team to use a variety of methods to communicate the policy.
- Combine the launch of the policy with training on how to talk about bereavement and pregnancy loss, especially for line managers.
- Promote the policy on a regular basis, so anyone who is affected knows where to turn to for help.
- Understand that many people may want to keep their loss private, so make sure employees can access the policy at any time and on any device.
- Create a pregnancy loss champion who anyone going through this loss can approach for additional help and support.
- Use awareness events, like Baby Loss Awareness Week in October to remind employees about the policy and talk about the issue.
- Make sure this and other policies supporting health, wellbeing and inclusion are included in company materials, such as your website and job advertisements.
- Encourage line managers to discuss this and other health and wellbeing policies in their regular 1-2-1s.

Tips on how to measure the impact of your pregnancy loss policy

- Survey employees regularly, for example every six months, to see if they know about the policy and understand what it contains.
- Encourage employees to share ideas about how to improve the policy and better support colleagues going through pregnancy loss.
- Speak to anyone in the organisation who has experienced pregnancy loss to see if there is any other support that they would appreciate.
- Make sure feedback can be given anonymously to protect people's privacy.
- Review what others are doing and update your policy if you see an appropriate initiative that would suit your employees and your organisation.

References

- <https://www.mschoices.org.uk/news/blog-smashing-six-abortion-myths/> ii
- <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/12/abortion-women-do-not-regret-study>