



NHS Wales
Pregnancy Loss Support Policy

Fforwm Partneriaeth Cymru
Welsh Partnership Forum

GIG Cymru *yn*
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NHS Wales
Working in Partnership



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Pregnancy Loss Support Policy

1.0 Background

1.1 The aim of this policy is to provide the support employees need during this difficult time in their life, and to help managers and colleagues know how to support people affected, with kindness, understanding and without judgement.

1.2 It supports pregnant employees and employed partners through pregnancy loss and encourages them to feel confident to talk to their manager, colleagues and friends at work about what has happened. It challenges attitudes that pregnancy loss is a taboo subject, and that people have to suffer in silence.

1.3 If an employee is reading this document, it is likely they are either going through or supporting somebody through this very difficult period so please do reach out to your local workforce department or a manager to talk with in order to ensure that you receive appropriate support.

2.0 Scope

2.1 The scope of policy is defined in Appendix 1 and includes, but is not limited to: miscarriage, anembryonic pregnancy, ectopic pregnancy, molar pregnancy, embryo transfer loss and termination of pregnancy.

2.2 This policy applies to employees only. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants, self-employed contractors, volunteers or interns. If you are not an employee but have experienced pregnancy loss, we encourage you to speak with your normal point of contact in our organisation [our Pregnancy and Baby Loss Champion] or a member of the HR Department. They will be able to discuss with you what support is available.

2.3 This policy applies to all employees that suffer a pregnancy loss, at any time before 24 weeks, regardless of whether it has happened directly to them, their partner, surrogate or the adoptive parents in an approved adoption placement. It also applies regardless of the employee's gender, type of contract of employment, length of service, role or base.

2.4 When an expectant employee suffers a pregnancy loss after 24 weeks, they will still be entitled to statutory maternity leave and SMP if their baby is born early; is stillborn after the start of their 24th week of pregnancy or dies after being born. This is in addition to the provisions contained within Section 23: Child Bereavement Leave of the NHS Terms and Conditions of Service Handbook (the provisions equivalent to those contained in section 23 will apply to medical and dental staff); as well as the provisions within local organisational policies.

2.5 If an employee is affected by pregnancy loss but is not the carrier of the pregnancy, the partner of the employee carrying the pregnancy or the intended parent in a surrogacy or adoption arrangement, they should speak with their line manager or the HR Department about how they can be supported.

2.6 The NHS Organisation recognises the distress, both physical and emotional, that may result from pregnancy loss and the impact this may have on individual employees regardless of when or how the loss occurs. This policy has been prepared to provide paid time off and support in relation to pregnancy loss. However, it is appreciated that no situations will be identical, and that pregnancy loss can result in grief unlike other types of grief. Employees are therefore encouraged to discuss with their line manager or a member of the HR Department what support they may need.

2.7 [An employee may prefer to speak with our Pregnancy and Baby Loss Champion in the first instance, while keeping in mind that their line manager or the HR Department may need to be involved in subsequent discussions.]

Note: - An employer may wish to appoint a Pregnancy and Baby Loss Champion. This individual would be trained in pregnancy and baby loss and perhaps have some experience of this type of loss themselves. Appointment of a Pregnancy and Baby Loss Champion would enable employees experiencing pregnancy loss to speak with someone outside of their reporting line and HR who would be well-equipped to listen to their questions or concerns. If an employer appoints a Pregnancy and Baby Loss Champion, appropriate references should be included in this policy.

3.0 Experiencing Pregnancy Loss at Work

3.1 If a pregnancy loss starts while at work, employees are encouraged to speak with their line manager or a trusted colleague. They can then arrange for your preferred contact to be notified and find a suitable place for you to remain while any medical care is organised, or arrangements are made for you to travel home.

3.2 It is recognised how traumatic the experience may be, both physically and emotionally. Consequently, the NHS Organisation wants to ensure that no employee feels that they have to go through the experience on their own or continue with their work. The employee's line manager or colleague should agree with you on how your absence will be communicated to others, if needed.

3.3 The preferred contacts of an employee experiencing pregnancy loss will be allowed to leave work at short notice to provide support.

4.0 Pregnancy Loss Paid Leave

4.1 Those affected by a pregnancy loss, regardless of the reason (See Appendix 1 for further information), before week 24 are entitled to a maximum of ten working days' full pay (pro-rata for part-time staff). Depending on the employee's wishes and needs, the leave may be taken as consecutive or ad hoc days/hours. It is appreciated that some employees may not want to take leave straight away, or at all. If an employee

does want to take leave under this policy, they are asked to take it within 26 weeks of the pregnancy loss.

4.2 If the NHS Organisation employs the employee affected by pregnancy loss and their partner, they will both be entitled to apply for pregnancy loss leave in their own right.

4.3 If an employee suffers more than one pregnancy loss in a calendar year, they will be entitled to receive the maximum amount of paid leave, per loss.

4.4 In order to apply for leave following a pregnancy loss, the employee should contact their line manager in the first instance who will advise them on any local arrangements. An employee may self-certify any leave taken in accordance with this policy. They will not be required to provide a Fit Note or letter from a healthcare professional. The employee and their manager can complete the application process retrospectively, following the return to work, as long as they have discussed and verbally agreed the leave.

4.5 It is recognised that it will not always be possible to request pregnancy loss leave in advance. However, an employee is encouraged to speak with their line manager or a member of the HR Department as soon as possible if they are considering taking pregnancy loss leave in accordance with this policy.

5.0 Additional Leave

5.1 Emotional and physical recovery from a pregnancy loss does not have a time limit. Grieving could go on longer than the initial bereavement event.

5.2 The employee may therefore require a further period of absence from work, following the period of paid leave. The additional absence by the employee could be facilitated by the Managing Attendance at Work Policy and / or the Flexible Working Policy or by taking unpaid leave. Leave taken under this policy will not count for monitoring purposes under the Managing Attendance at Work policy. Where appropriate, and with the consent of the employee, consideration will also be given to an occupational referral or temporary redeployment.

5.3 The NHS Organisation recognises that flexibility is often important to employees that are suffering a pregnancy loss. Managers should therefore, where possible, aim to facilitate flexible working requests for these employees, wherever possible. Further guidance around Flexible Working can be found in the All-Wales Flexible Working Policy.

5.4 We recognise that returning to work after pregnancy loss may be challenging and the preferred support will vary from employee to employee. With this in mind, we encourage employees to speak with their line manager about how they can support a return to work. If an employee has any suggestions for steps that can be taken as to support you during this time, they should discuss these with their line manager.

6.0 Paid Time Off for Medical Appointments

6.1 Employees will be entitled to receive additional paid time off to attend pregnancy loss related appointments, or to accompany their partner, should they not fall within the agreed period of paid pregnancy loss leave (10 working paid days, pro-rata part-time staff). This will include but is not limited to medical examinations, scans and tests, and mental health-related appointments.

6.2 Managers should recognise that it would not always be possible for employees to arrange these appointments around the demands of their work, due to the nature of pregnancy loss. Therefore, they should support employees in managing the impact of time away from work, in these circumstances.

7.0 General Support

7.1 The NHS Organisation aims to facilitate an open and understanding working environment. Employees are therefore encouraged to inform their manager that they are suffering a pregnancy loss at an early stage. This will help to ensure that they are provided with the necessary support, in a timely manner.

7.2 Where an employee does not initially feel comfortable discussing the issue with their direct line manager, they may find it helpful to have a confidential conversation with, e.g.

- A trusted manager or colleague;
- The Staff Psychological Wellbeing Service;
- A member of the Occupational Health Team;
- A Health Board Maternity Bereavement Officer;
- The Chaplaincy Service;
- An external bereavement support charity or organisations (See Appendix 2);
- Member of Workforce & OD Team; or
- A Trade Union representative

8.0 Responsibilities

8.1 Everyone is expected to be sensitive to the impact of pregnancy loss and to consider their colleagues with kindness and understanding.

8.2 It is the manager's responsibility to support the employee with kindness, compassion and flexibility. Each person is different, and individuals may also need temporary work adjustments, or other levels of support.

8.3 Employees who have experienced pregnancy loss are actively encouraged to reach out and talk to someone they trust at the earliest opportunity, if they feel they need additional support or signposting.

9.0 Talking about a loss

9.1 It is entirely the employee's decision whether or how much to talk about their loss. The organisation will endeavour to provide an open and welcoming environment in which an employee can do so.

9.2 Equally, it is appreciated that there may be circumstances in which an employee may want to limit the number of individuals who know about their pregnancy loss, to the extent this is possible in the circumstances. If an employee chooses to discuss their pregnancy loss with their line manager, they are encouraged to speak with them about how they would like any related absences from work to be communicated to colleagues.

9.3 Any information you provide to us about your health will be processed in accordance with our Data Protection Policy. We recognise that this data is sensitive and will handle it in a confidential manner.

Pregnancy loss includes but is not limited to:

- **Miscarriage:** the spontaneous loss of pregnancy until 24 weeks of gestation. [NHS Information on Miscarriage](#)
- **Termination:** a medical or surgical procedure to end a pregnancy. [NHS Information on Termination](#)
- **Ectopic Pregnancy:** when a fertilised egg implants and grows outside of the uterus. [NHS Information on Ectopic Pregnancy](#)
- **Anembryonic Pregnancy:** when the cells of a baby stop developing early on, and the tiny embryo is reabsorbed. However, the pregnancy sac, where the baby should develop, continues to grow. [Miscarriage Association Information on Anembryonic Pregnancy](#)
- **Molar Pregnancy:** a rare form of pregnancy in which a non-viable fertilised egg implants in the uterus and will fail to reach full term. [NHS Information on Molar-Pregnancy](#)
- **Embryo transfer loss** – when the embryo does not transfer during fertility treatment and results in no pregnancy. Learn more about embryo transfer loss www.liverpoolwomensnhs.uk

External Bereavement Support Charities and Organisations

Many charities in the UK that provide help, support and information to those are suffering from a pregnancy loss. The following are some of the largest and where applicable, local charities:

♥ [ARC](#)

Is a charity that offers non-directive information and support to parents before, during and after antenatal screening; when they are told their baby has an anomaly; when they are making difficult decisions about continuing with or ending a pregnancy, and when they are coping with complex and painful issues after making a decision, including bereavement.

Telephone: 0207 713 7486. Helplines are answered by trained staff Monday to Friday, 10.00 to 17:30pm.

♥ [Cruse Bereavement Care](#)

Trained bereavement volunteers, who offer emotional support to anyone affected by bereavement, staff the Cruse Bereavement Care free phone national helpline.

Telephone: 0808 808 1677

Email: helpline@cruse.org.uk

Helplines are open Monday-Friday 09.30 to 17.00 (excluding bank holidays), with extended hours on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, when they are open until 20:00.

♥ [London Friend LGBT Bereavement Helpline](#)

Support for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people expecting or experiencing bereavement.

Telephone: 0207 7837 3337 Tues 19:30 to 21:30

Webpage: www.londonfriend.org.uk

♥ [Miscarriage Association](#)

Provides advice and support to those who had experienced miscarriage, molar pregnancy or ectopic pregnancy.

Telephone: 01924 200799

Website: www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

♥ [NHS Bereavement Helpline](#)

Qualified nurse that can provide guidance and support to individuals who are suffering a pregnancy loss runs the NHS Bereavement Helpline.

Telephone: 0800 2600 400 – Helpline is open every day 08:00 to 20:00.

♥ [Petals - The Baby Loss Charity](#)

Petals provide a free, counselling service to support women, men and couples through the devastation of baby loss. Their counselling programme meets the needs of those who have suffered pregnancy complications, pregnancy loss or the death of a baby. Their counsellors

are experts in this field and have years of experience between them of counselling people after all types of baby loss.

Telephone: 0300 688 0068

Email: counselling@petalscharity.org

Website: Petalscharity.org

♥ [Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society \(SANDS\)](#)

Welcomes calls from anyone affected by a stillbirth of a baby.

Telephone: 020 7436 5881

Email: helpline@uk-sands.org

Website: www.sands.org.uk

♥ [The Ectopic Pregnancy Trust](#)

A registered national charity established to meet the needs of people who have experienced ectopic pregnancy and the health care professionals who care for them.

Telephone: 020 7733 2653

Website: www.ectopic.org.uk

♥ [Tommys](#)

Tommys believe that every baby lost is one too many. Tommys exists to support, care for and champion people, no matter where they may be on their pregnancy journey. They provide expert, midwife-led advice for parents before, during and after pregnancy, working together towards safer, healthier pregnancies. Click her for [Tommys Baby Loss Support Information](#)

If you would like to speak to one of the Tommys midwives about your pregnancy, or need support and advice following a pregnancy loss, you can contact the team directly.

Telephone: **0800 014 7800** (Monday to Friday, 09:00 to 17:00).

Email: midwife@tommys.org

Website: www.tommys.org

♥ [The Samaritans](#)

24-hour helpline support every day of the year for anyone in distress, including those who are bereaved.

Telephone: 08457 90 90 90

Website: www.samaritans.org

♥ [Canopi \(nhs.wales\)](#)