

A couple is seen from behind, looking out of a large window with a wooden frame. The woman has long, wavy blonde hair and is wearing a dark top. The man has short brown hair and is wearing a dark t-shirt. The background outside the window is a bright, slightly hazy sky. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

Fertifa⁺

HR Handbook: Understanding and supporting pregnancy loss in the workplace

Understanding and supporting pregnancy loss as an HR manager

The physical and emotional impact of pregnancy loss

Practical ways to support someone

At Fertifa, we use terms like 'man' and 'woman' that refer to an individual's sex that was assigned at birth, but we understand that not everyone identifies with their biological sex. We're here to support anyone who identifies as a man, woman, gender non-binary, gender non-specific or anyone who defines themselves, their gender, or their sexuality in any way we've not mentioned. We want to make our content as inclusive as possible, but we're learning all the time. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you feel that we can make Fertifa more inclusive and representative of you. This guide mentions and describes pregnancy loss, miscarriage, and stillbirth, including the signs and symptoms. We know this can be difficult for some people to read about, so please be aware if this is something that might affect you.

Understanding and supporting pregnancy loss as an HR manager

Pregnancy loss can have a **profound impact** on **a person's life and wellbeing**, and this impact is especially seen in the **absence of workplace support**. Even if you have experienced pregnancy loss yourself or have a close friend or family member who has, you may still feel unsure of what to say or how to support a colleague.

However, as a manager or HR professional, if you work with someone who has gone through pregnancy loss, you play an important role in making their time at work as supportive as it can be after such a life-altering event.

For some people who have experienced pregnancy loss or miscarriage, continuing to work or returning to work can be challenging. A supportive work environment where employees feel valued and understood is essential to helping them navigate this challenging stage of their life.

Remember, an individual's experience with pregnancy loss is unique and personal to them. This guide will not be able to cover everything that someone might be thinking or feeling if they've had a loss, but rather it aims to help **HR teams and managers better understand pregnancy loss**, the impact it can have on someone's personal wellbeing and work life, and **how to support someone through it**.



At Fertifa, we use the term Pregnancy Loss

Life-altering events such as pregnancy loss can have a deep and lasting impact, whether experienced directly or by partners supporting a loved one. It is essential that conversations around this topic use sensitive, appropriate language to avoid causing additional distress.

The term miscarriage may be more common, but at Fertifa, we choose to use the term pregnancy loss for several important reasons:

- **Inclusivity:** The medical term miscarriage does not reflect the wide range of experiences people may go through.
- **Research-led:** In working closely with individuals who have experienced pregnancy loss, we found that most preferred this term when reflecting on or discussing their experience.
- **Sensitivity:** Above all, we use pregnancy loss to create a safer, more compassionate space.

While no term can take away the pain, we are committed to using language that helps people feel respected, supported, and safe when sharing their experiences.



"Pregnancy loss is not just a single event, it's a process that can span weeks or even months, affecting both the body and mind. Whether it happens at 10 weeks or 30, the emotional impact is profound, which is why compassionate, well-informed policies are essential for supporting employees through this challenging time."

Holly Rowland

Head of Clinical Services, Fertifa

How pregnancy loss can impact someone at work

Support in the workplace can help employees get through what is already a very difficult and emotional time.

1 in 5 people who experienced a pregnancy loss received no support from their manager and **only 40%** felt their manager showed an understanding of the associated challenges.
- Tommys

Only **25%** of employees received paid parental bereavement leave following a loss, and just **37%** of employers have formal pregnancy loss policies.
- CIPD

Approximately **20,000** women in the UK will experience pregnancy loss whilst at work.
- Wellness Cloud

Workplace support for pregnancy loss demonstrates a company's commitment to its employees' wellbeing and promoting a compassionate, open, and inclusive culture.

From a business perspective, establishing a positive working culture is important in maximising productivity as well as retaining and attracting the best people, and developing an environment where employees are supported through all reproductive health challenges.

In many countries, including the UK, employers also have a legal responsibility to provide reasonable adjustments, such as parental bereavement leave. It's important to be aware of these to ensure you are compliant with all your legal obligations.



70% of people
who didn't feel supported by their line manager following pregnancy loss said that support would have been beneficial.

CIPD

**The physical and emotional
impact that pregnancy loss can
have on an individual**

Some of the different types of pregnancy loss

Pregnancy loss can take a considerable physical and emotional toll on a person and can involve lots of difficult decisions. Some people may wait for the loss to happen naturally, some may take medication, and others may have surgery. Receiving the news that a pregnancy has ended can be an incredibly drawn-out and difficult experience. Many people find themselves in a state of limbo — coping with ongoing medical care, multiple appointments, and uncertainty that can last for weeks. It's common for individuals to need extended time off work during this challenging period.

First trimester loss

Pregnancy loss within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. This can include chemical pregnancy and early miscarriage.

Second trimester loss

This is a pregnancy loss after 13 weeks and before 24 weeks of pregnancy. A loss after 24 weeks is considered a stillbirth, or neonatal death.

Ectopic pregnancy

When a person becomes pregnant, but the embryo implants outside the uterus. Emergency medical intervention is often required.

Molar pregnancy

A rare complication where foetal cells grow abnormally. This often requires extensive treatment and specialist medical intervention.

The emotional impact of pregnancy loss

Pregnancy loss is a very personal journey for each and every individual. It does not matter how long a person has been pregnant, they will often feel a real connection with the pregnancy inside of them.

The partner of someone who experiences pregnancy loss will feel an emotional impact too, and this can sometimes be difficult to express, as they are not the one physically going through it.

There is no right way to feel during this time, and people will express their emotions in different ways, sometimes appearing a lot more reserved, angry, or anxious than usual.

Others may find difficulty in other aspects of their life, for example, finding it hard to make decisions. They would have had to make lots of very difficult decisions in a short amount of time, leading to decision fatigue.

Grief is one of the most common feelings after a loss, both for the loss itself and also grief for the future they had envisioned. Many people also experience deep **sadness** alongside grief.

Lots of people feel **confused** about why this is happening and about grieving someone they've never met. Others might feel **frightened** about the current situation, as well as **worry** about if it will ever happen again.

Some people experience **anger** and about why this has happened to them, whilst others become very **numb** and don't know what to feel.

Guilt is a common feeling after a miscarriage. People might think it's their fault or wonder what they did wrong. Some people may also feel as if they've **failed** somehow. These are not necessarily rational feelings, but can still deeply affect someone. If someone has experienced pregnancy loss, it's important for them to know it was **not their fault**.



29% of people

who go through pregnancy loss
experience symptoms of PTSD.

Imperial College London

The physical impact of pregnancy loss

Along with the emotional impact of a pregnancy loss, individuals will also need to manage the physical changes their body goes through.

Some of the common symptoms of miscarriage include cramping or pain in the lower tummy, vaginal bleeding or spotting, and fluid or tissue discharge from the vagina.

In some cases, the pain can be very severe and the bleeding very heavy. Sometimes people experience prolonged vaginal bleeding lasting for several weeks.

Some people may also experience other symptoms or side effects, including chills, nausea, diarrhoea, confusion or memory loss, and dizziness.

The physical changes to a person's body after a loss can have a large emotional impact on them too. It is a signal to say the pregnancy is no longer there and can serve as a reminder of their loss.

Depending on the type of pregnancy loss, the person may need medical or surgical intervention, and it can take some time to physically recover.

An employee is entitled to take sick leave during and after a pregnancy loss and any time off taken should be considered a pregnancy-related illness.

There is no time limit on sickness following a pregnancy loss and employers must count this separately. It cannot be used against someone for disciplinary or redundancy purposes.



1 in 8

know pregnancies end in a loss, and
1 in 100 women experience recurrent
miscarriages.

NHS

Practical ways to support someone who experiences pregnancy loss

Why your company should consider a pregnancy loss policy

Establishing policies is an important practice at any company. By having a pregnancy loss policy in place, your employees will know exactly what is available to them and it allows you to give direct and clear advice if they come to you asking for help or advice. Make sure you know what they are entitled to in terms of time off, and where to go if they need further support.

[Download Fertifa's Pregnancy Loss Policy Template to get started](#) →

It will guide your employees towards the right support

You may have great support structures in place for pregnancy loss or baby loss at your company, but if it's not clearly outlined in a policy, employees may not know what they have access to.

It helps build a workplace that's inclusive, champions equality and employee wellbeing

A pregnancy loss policy will help ensure that all employees are treated equally and fairly should anything happen in their lives that may affect their work. Your policy will also demonstrate that employee wellbeing is a priority for your company.

A policy can help ensure statutory rights are respected

Employees in the UK have legal rights to sick leave following a pregnancy loss before 24 weeks and statutory maternity, paternity, and parental bereavement leave following a neonatal death (loss after 24 weeks of pregnancy). Legislative changes to the Employee Rights Bill announced in 2025 mean there will soon be changes to bereavement leave entitlements following a pregnancy loss.



"Thinking about your workplace culture is very important when it comes to supporting pregnancy loss and miscarriage. It needs to come from the top. Make sure people are living the values, and policies are not just aspirational but are actually practiced. There is no point in having the policy if employees are not able to use it. Make sure there are clear communication channels to explain the policy, and that it is easily accessible for people who need to use it during what is an already traumatic and stressful time of their lives."

Céline Crawford

Head of People and Operations at Fertifa

How can you open up the workplace conversation?



When dealing with sensitive topics such as pregnancy loss, many people find value in **support groups**. It lets them know they are not alone in experiencing these emotions and connects them to people who have had similar experiences. Consider a dedicated person in HR or another employee to help run a support group.



Create **leadership buy-in** and **psychological safety** by working with senior employees in the company to help them share their own experiences of accessing support and dealing with health issues and work.



Encourage members of staff to make and attend medical appointments by clarifying the availability of flexible hours to accommodate these priorities, especially emphasising that it is acceptable to attend appointments within working hours. Be clear about how to book said **appointments** in your HRIS.



Mark relevant **awareness days** in shared calendars. Plan events and develop resources for these dates to maximise their impact on educating and supporting colleagues. But equally, be mindful when it comes to **trigger warnings**.



Think about nominating a **Fertility lead or 'champion'** at work who can help build awareness of fertility and family forming issues including, but not limited to, pregnancy loss to generate dialogue to encourage openness, gather feedback, identify gaps in support, and improve the uptake of help across teams.



Make sure your employees know where to find trustworthy sources of information about their health. This could be done by creating an **Employee Assistance Programme** or a dedicated space on the intranet or wiki where useful resources are provided.

When grieving a pregnancy loss, people will most often need **support, understanding, and kindness**, not solutions.

- Tommy's

The dos and don'ts

Normalising the conversation around a very sensitive topic can be difficult. Creating a safe space for emotional conversations to take place is an important first step.



Some things to avoid

- Don't make assumptions about someone's situation. Everyone will feel and cope differently with loss so try not to compare their experience to another person's.
- Try to avoid telling people what to do or what to feel grateful for, and avoid trying to 'cheer them up', unless you've been asked to do so.
- Don't avoid your colleague or employee for fear of saying the wrong thing. This can be very painful and isolating for those experiencing grief.
- Avoid making 'Lunch and Learn' or awareness events on miscarriage mandatory. While it's important to educate everyone on the topic, you don't know what someone has been through in the past and what might be too difficult for them to revisit at this time.



Some things that might help

- Educate yourself, leadership and other members of your HR team as the more you know, the better understanding you'll have about what your team and colleagues might be experiencing.
- Signpost to resources that can help someone in a distressing situation if you're not the right person for that.
- Be mindful of baby-related announcements in the workplace and other events that might cause emotional distress.
- Provide (optional) training for managers on how to be there for people in a difficult time. This could be specifically related to pregnancy loss, or broader training on loss and grief. Include practical tools, like conversation starters to help open these important conversations.

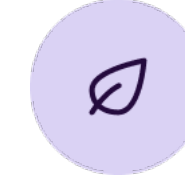
What to say and what not to say

Offering comfort after a loss can be challenging, and sometimes, in an effort to fill the silence, comments may come across as insensitive or not well considered. Since it's impossible to know the journey someone has taken to reach this point, it's important to be mindful and thoughtful with your words.



Acknowledge someone has gone through a loss and offer your sympathy

- "I'm very sorry for your loss."
- "Whatever you are feeling is valid."
- "Grief has no timeline, it's okay to take your time."
- "How are you feeling today? I'm here if you need anything."
- "You did nothing wrong."



Try not to be dismissive, comments like these can be very disheartening

- "Don't worry you can have another."
- "At least you already have children."
- "It wasn't meant to be."
- "Everything happens for a reason."
- "You are young, and you can try again."

Get in touch with us
at enquiries@fertifa.com if you have
any questions or you're looking to
support your people with reproductive
health benefits using Fertifa.

Fertifa helps you create a workplace
where everyone feels supported, every
step of their journey and more.

[Book a call](#)

