

Supporting Pregnancy Loss Principles

1 What this document covers

GHC understands that pregnancy loss can be a devastating experience if it happens to you or your partner and that it can have a lasting physical and emotional impact. These principles are designed to support you if you or your partner experience a pregnancy loss. This document sets out the support available to colleagues who experience pregnancy loss, including leave that can be taken and help that is available both inside and outside of GHC

Please note, we are very aware it can be hard to find the right language to use when describing and discussing pregnancy loss. Our documentation uses some of the most widely-used and accepted terms, but if there is a specific term or description you wish to use when talking about your experience you should let your manager know.

2 Principles

GHC believes it is important to support employees who experience pregnancy loss and recognises that in the event of experiencing such a loss colleagues' individual needs will differ. We recognise that baby loss can affect people differently due to their spiritual and cultural beliefs. This can make it an incredibly difficult subject for employees to discuss openly and we would encourage all employees to take this into account.

This policy applies to all staff employed by GHC, including employees seconded out to other organisations. It does not apply to bank workers, although they are still able to access the support available to staff.

3 Understanding what pregnancy loss is

Pregnancy loss includes:

- miscarriage – the spontaneous loss of a pregnancy during the first 24 weeks
- ectopic pregnancy – when a fertilised egg develops outside the womb
- molar pregnancy – when an abnormal fertilised egg implants in the uterus
- abortion or termination – a medical or surgical procedure to end a pregnancy

The leave detailed in these principles (in section 4) applies to the types of pregnancy loss in the above list.

Stillbirth is another form of pregnancy loss. In the sad event that a baby is stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy, an employee will be entitled to their maternity leave and any associated maternity pay. Therefore the Maternity Leave Policy should be referred to for more information. In addition, a parent who experiences a stillbirth would also be entitled to parental bereavement leave, details about this are in the Other Types of Leave Policy.

4 Leave available

If you wish to access pregnancy loss leave you will need to contact your manager to advise them you are affected by pregnancy loss and to agree the leave, keep-in-touch arrangements and support. Even if you do not wish to access pregnancy loss leave, you may still find it useful to inform your manager, as that way they are aware of what is happening and can talk to you about how you can be supported at work.

If you experience pregnancy loss you are able to take up to 10 days (75 hours) paid pregnancy loss leave. If you are the partner of someone who has experienced pregnancy loss you are able to take up to 5 days (37.5 hours) paid pregnancy loss leave. This leave is

based on the contractual hours you would have worked on each day and should be pro rata-ed if you are part-time.

This entitlement is available from your first day of employment with GHC and irrespective of how long you have been pregnant or your partner has been pregnant.

A medical certificate is not needed to request this leave and it should not be recorded as sickness absence. If additional time off from work is needed beyond the pregnancy loss leave entitlement because you do not feel well enough to return to work, medical certificates will be required and this additional time off will be recorded as sickness absence. If the medical certificates indicate the reason for the absence is pregnancy-related then the period of sickness absence will not count towards short-term sickness triggers or monitoring purposes.

You may wish to discuss with your manager what information, if any, is shared with your colleagues about your absence.

In addition, you are entitled to a reasonable amount of paid time away from work to attend appointments (or to accompany your partner) relating to pregnancy loss which do not fall within the agreed period of pregnancy loss leave. This could be for medical examinations, scans and tests, and mental health-related appointments if these cannot be arranged outside of your working hours.

5 Returning to work

Returning to work after pregnancy loss can be challenging. You are encouraged to have an ongoing discussion with your manager about your situation and any temporary adjustments that may support you. If you have had a period of time off following a pregnancy loss your manager will contact you before you return to work to start that discussion.

Any request to work flexibly following a loss will be treated with understanding and sensitivity. The reasonable adjustments your manager is able to make will depend on your circumstances and role, but they could include:

- a phased return to work
- more frequent breaks
- adjusting your start and finish times
- reducing your working hours on a temporary basis
- turning your camera off when on Teams calls
- working from a different location or from home, where this is practical and can be accommodated

Any adjustments must be discussed and agreed with your manager and will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure the adjustments continue to be appropriate to meet the needs of you and the service. Your manager may use the Reasonable Adjustments documents as part of your discussions.

6 Confidentiality

If you tell your manager about your own experience or your partner's pregnancy loss they will keep this confidential. They will not share this information with any other GHC employees unless you say it is okay to do so, and in which case they will agree with you what will be shared. The only exception to this would be if your manager has serious concerns for your safety or that of your colleagues or service users.

7 Accessing support

GHC aims to facilitate an open, understanding working place, therefore we encourage you to tell your manager if your experience pregnancy loss to ensure any necessary support can be offered or arranged.

There are a number of sources of support available to you as a GHC employee that you can access directly, these include:

- the Trust's occupational health service Working Well – workingwell@ghc.nhs.uk
- counselling through Working Well – if you wish to access this you can self-refer for it. Email Working Well (WorkingWell@ghc.nhs.uk) and put 'counselling' in the subject field.
- the Employee Assistance Programme via VIVUP offers trained counsellors – www.vivupbenefits.co.uk and 03303 800658.
- Spiritual Care and Chaplaincy Team are able to provide support irrespective of religious beliefs – 0300 421 4787 and spiritualcare@ghc.nhs.uk.
- the Wellbeing Line provides rapid mental health and psychological wellbeing assessments as well as signposting to appropriate services where required – www.thewellbeingline.co.uk, hello@thewellbeingline.co.uk and 0300 241 7500.
- Gloucestershire NHS Talking Therapies – the Trust's Talking Therapies Service (formerly Let's Talk) 0800 073 2200.

There are details of other support options on the Health and Wellbeing pages on the Trust intranet.

8 Sources of external information and support

We would encourage you to speak to your GP when you are experiencing pregnancy loss to ensure you get any appropriate medical support. In addition, the list below has a number of external organisations which you may find it helpful to contact for information and/or support.

- Abortion Talk – www.abortiontalk.com
- ARC (Antenatal Results and Choices) – www.arc-uk.org
- Bliss – www.bliss.org.uk
- Cradle – cradlecharity.org
- Ectopic Pregnancy Trust – www.ectopic.org.uk
- Gloucestershire Hospitals Trust Maternity Bereavement Services – <https://www.gloshospitals.nhs.uk/our-services/services-we-offer/maternity/our-maternity-services/maternity-bereavement-services/support-after-loss-your-baby/>
- Maternity Action – www.maternityaction.org.uk
- Miscarriage Association – www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk
- National Bereavement Care Pathway – nbcpathway.org.uk
- Petals – petalscharity.org
- Sands – sands.org.uk
- Saying Goodbye – www.sayinggoodbye.org
- Tommy's – www.tommys.org/baby-loss-support