

MODEL PREGNANCY LOSS POLICY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND EMPLOYERS

CONTEXT

From 6 April 2026, employees in Northern Ireland who experience a pregnancy loss before 24 weeks' gestation, or whose partner or intended parent experiences such a loss, have a statutory right to Parental Bereavement Leave. Eligible employees and workers may also qualify for Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay, subject to statutory earnings and notice requirements.

This model policy has been developed to support employers in implementing these statutory rights in a way that is clear, and compassionate. It reflects a trauma-informed approach that respects individual experiences, avoids assumptions, and provides flexible, person-centred support. It was prepared by Informing Choices NI (ICNI), a sexual health and rights charity, drawing on its experience in pregnancy counselling, advocacy, and workplace training.

SUMMARY

Who this policy covers

- Staff who experience a pregnancy loss directly (including miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, molar pregnancy, or abortion) before 24 weeks' gestation
- Partners and intended parents (including through surrogacy)
- Line managers supporting affected staff

Core entitlements

- Up to two weeks' Pregnancy Loss Leave (Statutory Parental Bereavement Leave)
- Staff will receive statutory pay or full pay, depending on the organisation's chosen option, and subject to statutory earnings and notice requirements
- Leave may be taken in a single block or split across separate weeks to allow flexibility
- No medical evidence is required for leave; a written self-declaration is sufficient for statutory purposes

Employer actions before adopting

- Insert organisation details in the policy where indicated
- Confirm the chosen pay option (statutory pay or full pay) for Pregnancy Loss Leave
- Decide whether to include optional sections such as:
 - Embryo Transfer Loss
 - Buddying Arrangements
- Add policy approval and review dates, and assign a policy owner in Section 1
- Communicate the policy to staff clearly and sensitively
- Consider arranging Pregnancy Loss Awareness Training, particularly for line managers or staff with first-aid responsibilities

1. POLICY ADMINISTRATION

Policy approved [Insert date]
Review date [Insert date]
Policy owner [Insert role]

2. INTRODUCTION

[Employer Name] is committed to supporting all staff following the loss of a pregnancy. We understand that pregnancy loss can be experienced as a bereavement, and is not limited to women or heterosexual couples.

We do not make assumptions about how staff who experience a pregnancy loss may feel, or how they want to be supported. Instead, this policy outlines the support that is available should staff wish to avail of it. It is trauma-informed, respecting privacy, avoiding assumptions, and providing flexible, person-centred support.

This policy applies to all staff, and forms part of **[Employers Name]**'s wider commitment to dignity, equality, and inclusion at work.

3. WHY IS THIS POLICY BEING INTRODUCED?

While an estimated one in three pregnancies end in loss, it can often feel that society does very little to acknowledge the impact this can cause on individuals, and their family. Pregnancy loss can be surrounded by secrecy, leaving those affected with a sense of isolation.

[Employer Name] believe that staff have the right to acknowledge all their experiences of pregnancy, have those experiences valued, and receive ongoing support in the workplace following any pregnancy loss.

As of 6 April 2026, employees in Northern Ireland who experience a pregnancy loss before 24 weeks of gestation, or whose partner or intended parent experiences such a loss, have a statutory right to Parental Bereavement Leave. Eligible employees and workers may also qualify for Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay, subject to statutory earnings and notice requirements.

These rights arise under the *Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022* and associated regulations. In legislation, these losses are referred to as "miscarriage" and include miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, molar pregnancy, and

abortion. In this policy, the term “pregnancy loss” is used to encompass all such experiences.

4. DEFINITIONS AND LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

[Employer Name] fully supports the introduction of this statutory protection. We believe all pregnancy losses should be acknowledged, and staff are entitled to compassionate, person-centred workplace support.

For the purposes of statutory Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay a miscarriage is defined as:

- The spontaneous loss of a pregnancy before the completion of 24 weeks of gestation; or
- The loss of a pregnancy before the completion of 24 weeks of gestation following a medical or surgical intervention, where it was assessed by the pregnant person or a medical professional, that was needed to protect their physical or mental health; or
- An intervention to manage a serious pregnancy complication, or a fatal fetal abnormality or severe fetal impairment.

This statutory definition includes:

- **Abortion:** medical or surgical treatment to end a pregnancy. [Learn more about abortion](#)
- **Ectopic pregnancy:** when a fertilised egg implants and grows outside of the uterus. [Learn more about ectopic pregnancy](#)
- **Miscarriage:** the loss of a pregnancy until 24 weeks of gestation. [Learn more about miscarriage](#)
- **Molar pregnancy:** when a non-viable fertilised egg implants in the uterus and cannot develop into a viable pregnancy. [Learn more about molar pregnancy](#)

Please note that losses occurring at or after 24 weeks (including stillbirth and neonatal death), are covered by separate statutory provisions and organisational policies.

Optional - Embryo transfer loss

This section should be retained only if the organisation chooses to provide support for embryo transfer loss¹. If doing so, select one support option and delete the others before publication.

Option A: Flexible Support Approach

[Employer Name] also wishes to support staff affected by embryo transfer loss. We recognise that an unsuccessful embryo transfer during fertility treatment can be emotionally and physically significant. While embryo transfer loss does not fall within the statutory definition of miscarriage for the purposes of Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay, we will provide supportive flexibility to affected staff. This may include temporary adjusted duties, flexible working arrangements, annual leave, carer's leave, or unpaid leave, depending on individual circumstances. Requests will be considered sensitively and in line with operational needs.

Option B: Employer-Funded Leave at Statutory Rate

[Employer Name] also wishes to support staff affected by embryo transfer loss. We recognise that an unsuccessful embryo transfer during fertility treatment can be emotionally and physically significant. Although embryo transfer loss is not covered by statutory Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay, we will provide up to two weeks' paid leave at the statutory Parental Bereavement Pay rate. This leave will be fully funded by **[Employer Name]**. This provision reflects our commitment to inclusive and compassionate support for reproductive loss.

Option C: Employer-Funded Leave at Full Pay

[Employer Name] also wishes to support staff affected by embryo transfer loss. We recognise that an unsuccessful embryo transfer during fertility treatment can be emotionally and physically significant. Although embryo transfer loss is not covered by statutory Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay, we will provide up to two weeks' paid leave at normal full pay. This leave will be fully funded by **[Employer Name]**. This provision reflects our commitment to inclusive and compassionate support for reproductive loss.

¹ Definition: When an embryo transfer during fertility treatment does not result in implantation or ongoing pregnancy.

5. WHO IS THIS POLICY FOR?

Pregnancy loss can take many forms and affects people differently.

This policy supports:

- Staff who experience pregnancy loss directly
- Partners and intended parents (including through surrogacy)
- Line managers supporting affected staff
- Staff wishing to support someone affected by pregnancy loss

Eligible Persons

Statutory entitlement applies to:

- A woman who has experienced a miscarriage (as defined in section 4);
- A person who, but for the miscarriage, would have been the biological or intended parent of the child; or
- The current partner of the woman who experienced the miscarriage

Others Affected by Pregnancy Loss

[Employer Name] also recognise that there may be staff members affected by a pregnancy loss who fall outside of the persons referenced within this policy. This may include, but is not limited to, a family member or close friend of someone who directly experiences a pregnancy loss. We would encourage any staff member impacted by a pregnancy loss to discuss this with their line manager to explore alternative methods of support.

6. ENTITLEMENTS AND KEY POLICY DETAILS

[Employer Name] recognise that recovery from a pregnancy loss does not follow a fixed timeline. Each person's experience and needs are different, and there is no single way to grieve or process loss. We also acknowledge that not all pregnancies occur within traditional partnerships, and that not all staff will carry a pregnancy themselves. Our approach is inclusive of all family structures and personal circumstances.

Entitlement to Leave

All employees are legally entitled to up to two weeks of Statutory Parental Bereavement Leave following a pregnancy loss before 24 weeks' gestation. This is a day-one employment right.

Leave Options

Staff can take leave in the way that best supports them:

- Two weeks together
- Two separate weeks
- Only one week

This flexibility recognises that the timing and duration of support needed may differ for each individual. If additional time off is needed, staff may use:

- Annual leave
- Sickness leave

Notice Requirements

Staff must give notice before taking Pregnancy Loss Leave. How much notice depends on when you're taking the leave.

- **0 to 8 weeks after the pregnancy loss:** Notify your line manager before your normal start time on the first day of leave
- **9 to 56 weeks after the pregnancy loss:** Provide at least one week's notice

Leave may be taken within 56 weeks of the first day of bereavement.² Staff are encouraged to discuss their needs confidentially with their line manager.

Absences for pregnancy loss will not count toward sickness absence triggers, recognising the distinct nature of bereavement-related leave.

Staff who prefer not to disclose their pregnancy loss may use annual leave or sickness leave instead, although sharing this information allows managers to provide tailored support.

Entitlement to Pay

Employees and workers who meet the statutory criteria for earnings and notice may also receive Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay, so they can take the leave they need without added financial stress.

Select one pay option and delete the other before publication.

² Definition: Date of pregnancy loss or the date the individual becomes aware of the loss.

Option A: Statutory Pay

Eligible staff will receive Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay in line with legislation.

Option B: Full Pay

Staff will receive their normal pay for up to two weeks. This goes beyond the statutory minimum and reflects our commitment to compassionate support.

7. SUPPORT DURING AND AFTER PREGNANCY LOSS

Paid leave for medical appointments

Staff may take reasonable paid time off to attend appointments, or to accompany a partner, relating to a pregnancy loss. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Medical examinations, scans, or tests
- Mental health or counselling appointments
- Follow-up care after a pregnancy loss

Line managers will recognise that appointments may not always be easily scheduled around work, and will support staff in managing their impact.

[Employer Name] also recognise that following a pregnancy loss, additional scans and monitoring may be required in any future pregnancies. Staff will be supported by their line manager to attend these, or to accompany a partner in attending.

Medical support if pregnancy loss occurs at work

Pregnancy loss can occur unexpectedly, sometimes before an employer is aware of a pregnancy.³ If someone suspects that they are starting to lose their pregnancy, they may have bleeding, severe abdominal pain, and may feel faint or collapse. They may also be distressed, embarrassed or frightened.

First Aiders or trained staff should:

- Ensure quick access to privacy and dignity

³ Staff are not obliged to tell their line manager of their pregnancy until 15 weeks before their estimated due date, or as soon as is reasonably practicable thereafter.

- Assist the staff member get home or to hospital, with their consent and if needed
- Call emergency services where appropriate

Once the staff member has gone home or to hospital, their sudden absence will be conveyed in accordance with their wishes. Confidentiality will be respected if they do not wish colleagues to know the details.

[Employer Name] also recognise that if someone at work suddenly learns that a partner, relative or close friend is starting to lose their pregnancy, they may need to leave work at short notice to provide practical and emotional support. Line managers will facilitate this compassionately.

8. RETURNING TO WORK AND ONGOING SUPPORT

Returning to work

We recognise that returning to work following a pregnancy loss may present challenges and will facilitate flexible working wherever possible.

[Employer Name] have an established Flexible Working Policy and allows staff to make a permanent change to their contract. However, should a member of staff require a more temporary change, following a pregnancy loss, working arrangements could include:

- A phased return to work
- Additional breaks or screen-free time
- Adjusted start and finish times
- Temporary reduced hours
- Remote working or flexible workspace

These adjustments should be discussed with line managers and reviewed regularly. Managers should consider requests promptly and reasonably, taking account of operational needs and employee wellbeing.

Optional - Buddying Arrangements

This section should be retained only if the organisation chooses to introduce buddying arrangements.

[Employer Name] offers a buddying system, pairing staff returning from pregnancy loss leave with colleagues trained in Pregnancy Loss Awareness.

- Check-ins can be daily or weekly, depending on the staff member's preference
- Buddies provide peer support, guidance, and a listening ear
- Participation is voluntary and confidential

This arrangement is designed to ease reintegration, reduce isolation, and offer a safe space for staff to process ongoing grief or anxiety.

Please note that buddies are not counsellors and will not replace access to professional support where required.

9. ZERO TOLERANCE AND COMPLAINTS

[Employer Name] has a zero-tolerance approach to:

- Discrimination or harassment related to pregnancy loss

Staff can raise concerns:

- Informally with their line manager or a senior manager
- Formally through the grievance process
- Externally with the Labour Relations Agency, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, or a Trade Union representative

[Employer Name] commits to confidential, impartial, and timely handling of all complaints.

10. ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Staff will:

- Familiarise themselves with this policy
- Treat colleagues affected by pregnancy loss with dignity and respect
- Report discrimination or harassment promptly
- Communicate with their line manager to arrange support as required
- Participate in Pregnancy Loss Awareness training where offered, particularly where their role involves first aid responsibilities

Line Managers will:

- Promote awareness of this policy within their team
- Respond to requests with empathy, fairness, and confidentiality
- Facilitate compassionate conversations and ongoing support
- Arrange pre-return and regular check-ins, especially for remote workers
- Complete Pregnancy Loss Awareness training where offered

[Employer Name] will:

- Promote awareness and understanding of pregnancy loss in the workplace
- Provide resources to implement this policy effectively
- Ensure policies and procedures comply with statutory Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay requirements
- Ensure no employee is subjected to detriment for exercising statutory rights
- Investigate complaints confidentially and treat misconduct as a disciplinary matter
- Consider commissioning Pregnancy Loss Awareness training for managers and staff

11. DATA PRIVACY, MONITORING AND POLICY REVIEW

Pregnancy loss information will be treated as special category data under UK GDPR:

- Accessed only by authorised personnel
- Stored securely and separately from general HR files
- Retained in line with our data retention policy
- Never used for employment-related decisions

This policy will be reviewed annually based on:

- Legal developments
- Sector best practice
- Anonymised staff feedback and lived experience

This policy is not only a framework for internal care; it is also an expression of our values and a call to challenge stigma around pregnancy loss.

Legal Disclaimer: *This model policy is provided for guidance purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Organisations adopting it are responsible for ensuring it is tailored to their specific operational, contractual, and legal circumstances.*

APPENDIX 1 – PREGNANCY LOSS (STATUTORY PARENTAL BEREAVEMENT LEAVE) FORM

Please return this form to your line manager.

Staff are not required to disclose the specific nature of their pregnancy loss. For statutory Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay purposes, this form constitutes a self-declaration of eligibility. No medical evidence is required. This declaration will be retained confidentially in accordance with applicable data protection requirements.

Staff Section

I confirm that I meet the statutory eligibility requirements for Parental Bereavement Leave and/or Pay

I confirm that the loss occurred before 24 weeks of gestation and falls within the statutory definition of miscarriage (including ectopic pregnancy, molar pregnancy, or abortion).

Date of pregnancy loss: [Insert date of pregnancy loss / date you became aware of the loss]

Leave Requested:

- Two weeks
- One week

Proposed start date of leave: [Insert date]

Reasonable adjustments requested (if any):

Staff signature: _____

Date: _____

Line Manager Section:

I acknowledge receipt of this form and confirm that statutory notice requirements have been met.

Line Manager Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX 2 - FURTHER INFORMATION

- **NI Direct:** Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay
Website: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/>

Miscarriage, Stillbirth, and Neonatal Loss

- **Cruse Bereavement Care:** Support for all types of bereavement
Website: www.cruse.org.uk
- **The Miscarriage Association:** Information and support for miscarriage
Website: www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk
- **Sands:** Support for stillbirth and baby loss
Website: www.sands.org.uk
- **Tommy's:** Advice and support for pregnancy complications and loss
Website: www.tommys.org.uk

Abortion

- **Informing Choices NI:** Post abortion counselling
Website: www.informingchoicesni.org

Antenatal Diagnosis

- **Antenatal Results and Choices (ARC):** Support for complex or difficult pregnancy diagnoses
Website: www.arc-uk.org

Ectopic Pregnancy

- **Ectopic Pregnancy Trust:** Information and emotional support
Website: www.ectopic.org

Fertility and Embryo Transfer Loss

- **Fertility Network UK:** Guidance and peer support for fertility challenges
Website: www.fertilitynetworkuk.org

Please note that accessing these resources is entirely voluntary.