



Workplace support for pregnancy after loss

August 2023

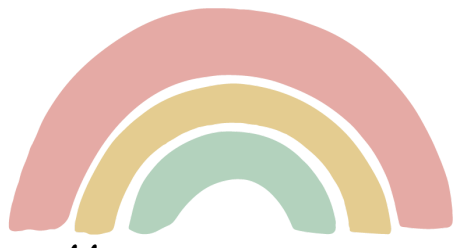
TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2 WHY SUPPORT EMPLOYEES THROUGH PREGNANCY AFTER LOSS?
- 3 WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PREGNANCY AFTER LOSS.
- 6 HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT AN EMPLOYEE THROUGH PREGNANCY AFTER LOSS.
- 7 EMPLOYEE SPACE TO WRITE WHAT SUPPORT THEY NEED.
- 8 SUPPORT PLANNING PAGE
- 10 REFERENCES AND SUPPORT INFO



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The importance of supporting employees through pregnancy after loss (PAL)

In the UK, an estimated 1 in 4 pregnancies ends in loss during pregnancy or birth (Tommy's, 2022). Given the sad prevalence of loss, it is likely that employers will have staff members who are experiencing a subsequent pregnancy after a loss, or trying to conceive after loss. These employees need your support.

People going through PAL may feel:

- Anxiety.
- Mixed feelings of grief, happiness and guilt.
- Not ready to share the news with their team.
- The need for reassurance and additional healthcare support.
- Planning ahead too far may be too difficult.
- The need for extra support with their mental health.

It's important to acknowledge that not all will feel this way, or be comfortable talking to you about these feelings. These issues may also impact the other parent (including dads and all non birthing parents) and support is also important for these employees. There may also be cultural considerations for employees around their experience of loss.



What employers should know about pregnancy and infant loss (PAIL) and pregnancy after loss (PAL) for employees.

We asked our PAIL and PAL communities what they had wished their employer knew to better support them within the work place. Here are some quotes:

'That my ability to be at work fluctuated. Some days I felt ok to be at work and in fact made me feel better, other days I couldn't face getting out of bed. I also tried to hold things together, I wish my employer knew how much I struggled some days to keep my head above water.'

'That I was grieving and not fit to get back to work. Not allowed maternity because my baby died at 20 weeks.'

'That men and non birth parents also hurt as much as the birthing parent.'

'You need time but you might also want to get back to work. People process loss in different ways.'



'That I was still too anxious to share with colleagues who didn't 'need' to know after my 12 week scan, and wasn't ready to talk about my maternity cover and future planning, as I was so worried it wouldn't work out.'

'How triggering certain situations and comments were.'

'I really needed time off, to deal with it and grieve but we were so understaffed, I was made to feel like that wasn't an option available to me at the time.'

'That my entire world just collapsed and I need empathy.'

'How hard it is to work and be pregnant after loss. How hard it is to concentrate. How hard it is to know that you are failing at work because you can't work like you used to when you have just failed at keeping your baby alive and now you have to hold onto hope that this new baby lives. How when you ask for help you really need it.'

'That even though I'm pregnant after loss - it doesn't mean I'm suddenly happy and everything is ok and my loss is in the past. I'm still very anxious and upset and I need support.'

'It's not okay to ask if I'm planning on trying again especially when I'm still grieving'



'That I didn't consider it the loss of a child, but the loss of a pregnancy and potential. I was offered all sorts, but it all seemed mad to me as I didn't feel I'd lost a child and referring to the end of my pregnancy as the loss of a child made it worse. I also wish they had some insight into the fact that it's had a much longer tail than the few weeks I was off. There seems to be somewhat of an expectation that I am back so I'm fine.'

'If I tell you, I don't want ANYONE to know, not even HR - until I'm ready'

'That no two days are the same - 1 day I might be ok followed by a day of anxiety.'

'My anxiety means I can't always focus at work.'

'That I wasn't ill and a back to work interview was heartless.'

'Pregnancy is still a trigger when other people in the team are pregnant.'

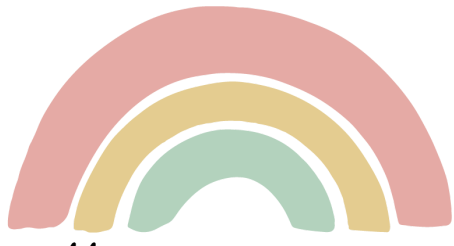
'That it's ok to say my baby's name and to recognise I have children too.'



How can I support an employee through pregnancy after loss (PAL)?

Here are some examples of good support received and ideas from people who have been through baby loss/pregnancy after loss in the work place:

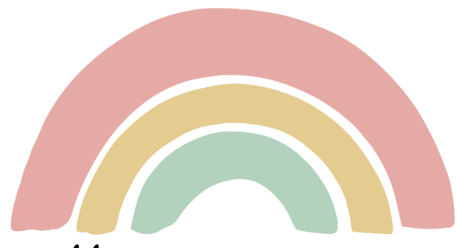
- Work from home where possible.
- Be supportive and accommodating for anxiety.
- Adapt the back to work interview questions.
- Consider how leave is recorded/managed for PAIL and PAL.
- Flexibility for additional scans and health appointments.
- Agree with the employee a suitable time to check in (once a week/month) and adjust to their needs.
- Understand if employees need to step away from their desk.
- Be compassionate and not rush staff back to work.
- Try to reduce work stress and worry.
- Take time to create a support plan together with employees.
- Consideration for extra rest breaks.
- Consider what internal support is available for your employee's mental health and wellbeing – is there access to counselling?
- Cultural considerations – some staff may need additional time off to process loss/attend events with family.



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Employee space – how would you like your company to support you?

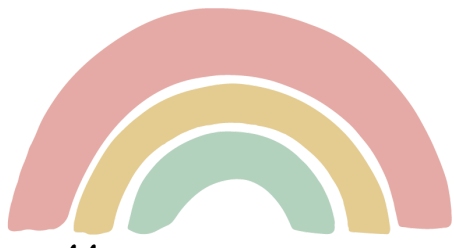
Use this page to write down ideas for support you need.



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Support planning

Use these pages to create a plan with your employees for support. E.g. create a timeline, list in house support, shift changes etc.



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References:

Tommys. 2022. *Baby Loss Statistics*. [Online]. [Accessed 21 July 2023]. Available from: <https://www.tommys.org/baby-loss-support/pregnancy-loss-statistics>.

Information:

Willow's Rainbow Box are a charity supporting families across England through pregnancy after the loss of a baby.

Website: www.willowsrainbowbox.co.uk

Email: hello@willowsrainbowbox.co.uk

Registered Charity Number: 1186779

Instagram: @willowsrainbowbox

Twitter: @Willowsrainbow

Additional support contacts:

SANDS (Stillbirth support charity): <https://www.sands.org.uk/>

Miscarriage Association: www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

Tommy's: <https://www.tommys.org/>

Dad Matters: <https://dadmatters.org.uk/>