

Pregnancy Loss Guidance

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1 Introduction

The university is committed to fostering an inclusive and supportive workplace where employees have a sense of belonging.

We are dedicated to supporting all employees who experience pregnancy loss, whether it happens to themselves, their partner or a surrogate mother.

This guidance outlines the support and resources available at the university, as well as advice for line managers and colleagues on how best to support employees during this difficult time.

We recognise that this subject may be upsetting for some. Employees are encouraged to speak with their line manager, a member of the People Directorate, or consider using the university's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) as a supportive resource which offers free, confidential support including counselling, 24/7, 365 days a year. Full details are available on the staff portal [here](#).

Reproductive health is a lifelong journey with pregnancy loss intersecting with fertility and menstrual health through to menopause. Employees can find further support in the university's **Fertility Leave and Guidance**, **Menstrual Health Guidance** and **Menopause Guidance** available on the staff portal.

Whilst most people who experience pregnancy loss identify as women, the university acknowledges that non-binary or transgender employees may also experience pregnancy loss. We are committed to supporting all employees through this experience, regardless of gender identity.

2 Understanding pregnancy loss

Pregnancy loss includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- **Miscarriage:** the loss of a pregnancy during the first 23 weeks of gestation. Learn more about miscarriage [here](#).
- **Stillbirth:** the loss of a baby after 24 weeks of pregnancy, before or during birth. Learn more about stillbirth [here](#).
- **Abortion:** a medical or surgical procedure to end a pregnancy, also sometimes referred to as a termination. Learn more about abortion [here](#).
- **Termination for medical reasons (TFMR):** Learn more [here](#).
- **Ectopic pregnancy:** when a fertilised egg implants itself in the wrong place. Learn more about ectopic pregnancy [here](#).
- **Molar pregnancy:** when there is a problem with a fertilised egg and the baby and placenta are unable to develop the way they should. Learn more about molar pregnancy [here](#).
- **Neonatal loss:** the loss of a baby within 28 days of birth. Learn more about neonatal loss [here](#).

Please note we have used the most widely recognised terminology and language to describe the different types of pregnancy loss but acknowledge that individuals may have their own preferred terms.

Pregnancy loss is a deeply personal experience and sadly more common than is often thought. It is estimated that one in four pregnancies end in miscarriage (source: tommys.org) and one in every 256 births are stillborn (source: ons.gov.uk).

Despite its prevalence pregnancy loss is often surrounded by stigma, silence and societal discomfort. This can make it difficult for individuals to speak openly about their experiences due to fear of judgement and misunderstanding. This silence can lead to feelings of isolation and shame, particularly in the workplace where conversations around reproductive health are often avoided. By acknowledging the emotional complexity of pregnancy loss and the cultural taboos that persist, we can foster a more compassionate and inclusive environment at the University of Greenwich.

Creating space for open dialogue, offering support without assumptions, and respecting individual choices are essential steps toward normalising conversations about pregnancy loss and reducing the stigma that surrounds it.

3 The impact of pregnancy loss

Pregnancy loss can be a very painful event with a profound and lasting emotional and physical impact, regardless of the nature of the loss or when it happens. The university make no assumptions about the impact of pregnancy loss and understand that everyone's experience will be different.

The grief associated with pregnancy loss can often be invisible and unacknowledged, which can intensify feelings of isolation or distress. In the workplace, this experience may affect a person's ability to concentrate, engage with colleagues, or carry out their usual responsibilities.

Because pregnancy loss is frequently surrounded by silence and stigma, many employees may feel unable to disclose their experience or seek support. This could lead to increased stress, reduced wellbeing, and absence if appropriate support is not available.

The university can play a vital role in creating a compassionate and inclusive environment where individuals feel safe to share their experiences if they choose to. Recognising the impact of pregnancy loss — regardless of gestation, circumstances, or outcome — is a key step in supporting employee wellbeing and fostering a culture of empathy and respect.

4 Support and information for employees

If an employee has experienced pregnancy loss and they are finding it difficult to cope at work they are encouraged to speak to their line manager initially. Whilst not everyone will want to disclose details of their pregnancy loss, they are encouraged to do so to ensure they can access the best possible support at the university. Employees who do not feel comfortable talking to their line manager for any reason, can speak to a member of the People Directorate (by raising a Help Desk Request via Horizon). Any information shared with a line manager or the People Directorate will be treated sensitively and in confidence.

The university also provides other sources of information and support. Click on each link below to navigate directly to the relevant section:

- [Special Leave following pregnancy loss](#)
- [Sickness absence](#)
- [Time off for health related appointments.](#)
- [Wellbeing Days.](#)
- [Employee Assistance Programme \(EAP\).](#)
- [Mental health and wellbeing support for staff](#)
- [External Support and resources](#)
- [Pregnancy loss and employment rights](#)
- [Menstrual health, fertility and menopause support at UoG](#)
- [Returning to work following pregnancy loss](#)

Special Leave following pregnancy loss

The university's Special Leave guidance sets out staff entitlement to time off following the loss of a loved one (including pregnancy loss). If an employee sadly experiences the loss of a pregnancy they are entitled to take up to five days paid leave. This can be booked in Horizon as follows:

**Time and absences > add absence > absence type (select special leave)
> reason (select bereavement) > submit**

Please refer to the [Special Leave Guidance](#) for full details.

Sickness absence

Recovery from pregnancy loss is different for everyone. If employees find they need to take sickness absence this should be recorded in the usual way according to the [Sickness Absence Policy](#). Absence related to pregnancy loss will be monitored sensitively and will not be considered when assessing absence triggers.

Time off for health related appointments

As with all medical appointments, wherever possible, employees should try to arrange appointments outside of their normal working hours. Where this is not possible and the employee gives their line manager reasonable notice of the date and time of an appointment, time off with full pay will be granted. Full details can be found in the [Sickness Absence Policy](#).

Wellbeing Days

Staff can take up to two Wellbeing Day's during the 12 months between 1st October to 30th September. Staff can take a Wellbeing Day when they have an immediate need to take care of their mental health and wellbeing. Wellbeing days can be booked by an employee in Horizon. Further guidance can be found by searching 'Wellbeing Days' on the staff portal.

EAP (Employee Assistance Programme)

Staff members can access free information, advice and confidential support (including counselling) through the university's Employee Assistance Programme, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. The university encourage staff who are struggling to cope with the impact of pregnancy loss to consider using the EAP as a supportive resource. Full details can be found on the staff portal [here](#).

Mental health and wellbeing support for staff

- Mental health and wellbeing support for university staff can be found [here](#).
- Employees can speak to the Samaritans or access occupational health and wellbeing advice by selecting **wellbeing assistance** through the **SafeZone app** (download the app [here](#)).
- Employees can join the university's Wellbeing Network [here](#)

External Support and resources

The miscarriage association offer support and information to anyone affected by the loss of a baby in pregnancy and works to raise awareness and promote good practice in medical care.

miscarriageassociation.org.uk

ARC (Antenatal Results and Choices) is a national charity offering parents support during antenatal screening and following a termination. arc-uk.org

Sands can offer you support if your baby dies during pregnancy or after birth sands.org.uk.

Baby loss awareness week. Sands also take a lead role in promoting this week raising awareness of the impact of pregnancy and baby loss, every year between 9th and 15th October. babyloss-awareness.org

The ectopic pregnancy trust

Support for anyone who has experienced an ectopic pregnancy.

ectopic.org.uk

Tommy's is a charity that funds research into pregnancy problems and provides other pregnancy related information. tommys.org

Abortiontalk are committed to fighting abortion stigma and offer a non-judgemental and supportive environment to talk about abortion abortiontalk.com

Petals provide specialist counselling services after a pregnancy loss. petalscharity.org

MIND the mental health charity provide people with help, support and information. mind.org.uk

Pregnancy loss and employment rights

Pregnancy loss before 24 weeks.

Where the loss of a pregnancy occurs before 24 weeks, the employee is not legally entitled to maternity leave or pay, however the university provide up to five days of bereavement leave. Please refer to [Special Leave Following Pregnancy Loss](#) in this guidance.

Pregnancy loss after 24 weeks (stillbirth)

If an employee suffers a pregnancy loss after 24 weeks they are entitled to the maternity provisions set out in the university's maternity leave policy and partner's may also be eligible for paternity/partner's leave and pay. Both policies are available on the university's staff portal.

Neonatal loss

Neonatal loss refers to the loss of a baby within the first 28 days after they are born. In this circumstance the birth parent remains entitled to the maternity provisions set out in the university's maternity leave policy. Eligible employee's may also be entitled to **neonatal care leave and pay**, also set out in the maternity leave policy.

Menstrual health, fertility and menopause support at UoG

- The intersection of pregnancy loss with all female reproductive health is recognised and staff can find additional support for menstrual health, fertility and menopause on the staff portal.
- Employees can join the university's menstrual health Teams Hub [here](#).
- Employees can join the university's menopause Teams Hub [here](#).

Returning to work following pregnancy loss

Returning to work following the loss of a pregnancy can be challenging. If an employee is feeling anxious about their return to work, they are encouraged to utilise the support available in this guidance and discuss their return to work with their line manager. If an employee is returning to work from long term sickness absence they should refer to the university's Sickness Absence policy.

5 If pregnancy loss occurs during work time

A pregnancy loss can happen unexpectedly and at any time, day or night, therefore it could happen during working hours, either on campus or whilst working remotely. If an employee experiences a pregnancy loss whilst working, our priority is to ensure they receive the best support possible and are treated in a sensitive and respectful manner.

There may or may not be any signs or symptoms of a pregnancy loss but some individuals could experience vaginal bleeding or spotting and/or abdominal pain or cramping. The Miscarriage Association provide more information on [symptoms and diagnosis](#) and [emotions after pregnancy loss](#).

If an employee becomes aware they are experiencing a pregnancy loss whilst working, either on campus or working remotely, they are encouraged to seek help and support in a way that feels comfortable for them, depending on their circumstances and the urgency of the situation. This could mean contacting a partner, family member or friend or speaking to a line manager or colleague. The employee's line manager and colleagues may not be aware of their pregnancy but this should not deter them from seeking their support. When more urgent assistance is needed:

- Use the **SafeZone app** (download the app [here](#)):
 - a. Press **red** for **emergency assistance**
 - b. Press **green** for **First Aid**
 - c. Press **blue** for **help** and non-emergency assistance.
- Alternatively dial **999** for emergency services (then contact the campus security team immediately so they can direct emergency services to your location. **Campus security** numbers can be found [here](#))

How managers and colleagues can help

If a colleague is experiencing a pregnancy loss line managers and colleagues could support in any of the following ways, whichever is appropriate:

- **Responding to immediate support:** If a colleague informs you they are experiencing pregnancy loss you are advised to respond with empathy and discretion. Ask them what you can do to help them. If they are unsure you could suggest finding them a private space or helping them to leave work if they wish. They may ask for your help in contacting their partner or a family member.
- **When emergency medical assistance is required:** Line managers and colleagues are advised to use the **SafeZone app** ([download here](#)) to request emergency assistance by pressing the red emergency button on the home screen. Alternatively dial 999 for emergency services then contact the campus security team immediately so that they can direct emergency services to your location. Campus security numbers can be found [here](#).
- **Privacy and confidentiality:** The employee's privacy must be respected at all times. Information about the incident should only be shared on a need-to-know basis and with the employee's consent.
- **Follow-up support:** After the incident, line managers should check in with the employee (at a time that feels appropriate) to offer support and signpost to relevant services such as occupational health, counselling, or the EAP. Line managers should also refer to [6.Guidance for Managers](#) in this document.

6 Guidance for managers

Whilst line managers are not expected to be experts on pregnancy loss, they are encouraged to:

- Familiarise themselves with this guidance.
- Review the support and information available for employees in this guidance [here](#).
- Ensure the employee is aware of their entitlement to Special Leave for a bereavement following the loss of a pregnancy and how to request the time in Horizon.
- Ensure conversations are led by the employee and avoid intrusive questions.
- Treat all parents and partners fairly.
- Listen without judgement or assumptions.
- Treat any information shared with sensitivity, discretion and confidentiality.
- Not share any information with anyone without the employee's consent.
- Be mindful of the impact on an employee's mental health and ensure they are made aware of the EAP service.
- Ensure that any sickness absence related to pregnancy loss is recorded and reported in line with the Sickness Absence Policy. This absence should be dealt with sensitively and **should not be considered when assessing absence triggers**, however if the absence is approaching a trigger in accordance with the policy, the line manager should notify the People Directorate by raising a Help Desk Request via Horizon to ensure that the employee is supported in the best way possible.

- Consider flexible working options if appropriate with tailored temporary support if this would be helpful e.g. a phased return to work or adjusted hours. Refer to the university's [Working Principles and Guidelines](#) when considering hybrid working.
- If the employee is seeking a permanent change to their working arrangements refer to the university's [Flexible Working Policy](#) and respond to any request appropriately and within timescales set out in the policy.

Line managers are advised to ensure that nobody experiences less favourable treatment because of their pregnancy loss. Be mindful of the sensitive nature of this and ensure that derogatory comments or inappropriate behaviour are dealt with promptly. If further advice is required related to this please contact the People Directorate by raising a helpdesk request via Horizon.

7 Related policies and guidance

All of the following policies and guidance can be found by searching the university staff portal:

- Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure
- Flexible Working Policy and Procedure
- Working Principles and Guidelines (hybrid working)
- Menopause Guidance
- Menstrual Health Guidance
- Maternity leave and pay policy
- Paternity/Partner's leave and pay policy
- Adoption Leave Policy
- Shared Parental Leave Policy
- Special Leave Guidance
- Fertility Leave and Guidance

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