

Baby loss awareness resources

Resources, initiatives, and policy updates to improve support in the workplace for individuals who have experienced pregnancy loss.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Organisational
Topic	Leadership, development and learning Wellbeing
Organisation	West Mercia Police
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Region	West Midlands
Partners	Police Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	May 2024

Key details

Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Families Workforce

Aim

- to deliver education on the topic of baby loss, to enable more open conversation and to break down taboos and remove stereotypes of this often misunderstood topic
- to create support networks
- to enable managers to effectively support staff through the development of appropriate policy

Intended outcome

- increase the understanding of baby loss across the force
- ensure line managers are equipped with the knowledge to support their team members after a baby loss
- ensure those who have experienced baby loss feel supported by the organisation
- to ensure appropriate policy guidance for baby loss pre 24 weeks gestation

Description

Prior to this intervention, West Mercia Police Force had a policy in place for baby losses that took place post 24 weeks of pregnancy, but not for loss pre 24 week gestation.

Individual lived experience and internal feedback identified a gap in policy guidance for losses pre 24 week gestation and an opportunity to improve overall awareness and education on the impact of baby loss within the working environment. This was supported by external national campaigns to break down the stigma and taboo associated with baby loss.

In October 2023, the force recognised baby loss awareness week for the first time. As part of this, a survey provided an opportunity for any one affected baby loss to feedback on their experiences at work during this time. The survey was designed by people with lived experience and was

accessible for three weeks on the force intranet. 75 people responded.

Recognising baby loss awareness week

The findings of this survey informed a strategy of internal and external communications. At the start of baby loss awareness Week (9 October to 15 October), the chief constable shared a message with the force, demonstrating support for members of their workforce who had experienced baby loss. Quiet spaces, such as force chapels, were also utilised during the week as part of a non-denominational event for anybody who wanted to reflect and light a candle in memory of a baby loss.

The force also ran an initiative where people could plant a flower bulb (white, blue, and pink flowers) that could be planted next to the chapel in memory of a baby loss. West Mercia Police Force also shared information and resources about baby loss on their force intranet and on their social medias.

Line manager workshop

As part of this strategy, the force partnered with [Power of the Parent](#) who's mission is to empower parents and employers within the workplace, by enabling parents to thrive and employers to attract, retain and develop employees with parental responsibility.

The force ran a workshop for 15 line managers to educate on the topic of baby loss, including:

- different types of pregnancy loss
- how pregnancy loss impacts both partners
- how to have honest and open conversations around pregnancy loss
- the impact of a miscarriage physically and mentally
- how best to support a team member who has gone through pregnancy loss
- personal testimonies of those who had experienced baby loss

The workshop was attended by 15 line managers, including police staff managers, operational managers, and senior leaders. There was a cost associated with this workshop, which needed to be approved by formal processes within the force.

Updating policies

In February 2024, internal policies relating to baby loss were updated to include pregnancy loss before 24 weeks. Members of the family network with lived experience of baby loss helped develop this policy to ensure it was as inclusive and appropriate as possible.

The new policy outlines:

- line manager responsibilities
- leave entitlements
- partner support
- support services available for individuals who experience pregnancy loss before 24 weeks

Additional support and guidance

West Mercia Police also created additional resources for line managers to assist them in supporting team members with pregnancy loss, both post and pre 24 weeks.

- A pregnancy loss line manager's guide, specifically created to support individuals who have suffered pregnancy loss before 24 weeks. For individuals who suffer pregnancy loss 24 weeks or over, there is a separate supporting bereaved parents policy. This guide details the steps line managers should take if the individual experiences pregnancy loss whilst at work, including who to contact and what they may need. The guide also outlines when it is appropriate to contact the individual after pregnancy loss and things to discuss with the individual, such as whether they have any boundaries, if they would like to talk about it and if there is anything they do not want to discuss. The guide explains how to manage a period of leave due to pregnancy loss and how to navigate their return to work. Finally, the guide has a section dedicated to supporting partners who has experienced pregnancy loss, again, outlining what is appropriate to say and how they can best be supported.
- Return to work discussion template – the force also provides line managers with a template to help facilitate a supportive return to work discussion. The document can be shared with an individual in advance so that they are aware of what will be discussed and can be prepared. The framework has specific prompts to assist line managers throughout the conversation and ensure they have all the relevant information necessary.

Furthermore, West Mercia Police have established a peer support network where those with lived experience can volunteer to offer peer support to colleagues going through baby loss. This was a

recommendation from the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) family support guidance.

The miscarriage association pledge

Finally, the force signed the miscarriage association pledge, a commitment to supporting their staff through the distress of miscarriage. Any business or organisation can sign this pledge and agree to uphold standards set out by the [Miscarriage Association](#).

These standards include:

- encourage a supportive work environment where people feel able to discuss and disclose pregnancy and/or loss without fear of being disadvantaged or discriminated against
- understand and implement the rules around pregnancy-related leave, ensuring staff feel able to take the time off they need
- show empathy and understanding towards people and their partners experiencing pregnancy loss
- implement a pregnancy loss policy or guidance, or ensure it is included in sickness, bereavement, or other workplace policies – being mindful of the needs of partners, too
- encourage line managers to access in-house or external guidance on how to support someone experiencing pregnancy loss
- support people back to work by being responsive to their needs and showing flexibility wherever possible

Overall impact

Recognising baby loss awareness week

During the week:

- 3000 flower bulbs were planted in memory of a baby loss
- over 60 candles were also lit in the chapel
- the force received over 33,000 post impressions across their social media channels

The number of employees who engaged in the memorial activities during the week, enforces the importance of recognising the week as it was something that resonated with so many people within West Mercia Police.

Feedback was received from individuals with lived experience of baby loss, who expressed how this recognition had made them feel:

"I just wanted to say thank you for everything you arranged last week and for raising awareness of this very emotional and difficult subject. As soon as I saw it on the Intranet, I knew I had to be part of it."

"It's such a massive step forward. Thank you so much for all your hard work on this, I honestly cannot tell you how much it means to me".

Educational workshop

The workshop has demonstrated positive feedback from those who attended, and managers displayed a desire to share their learning and put in practice things they had learned.

Qualitative feedback from those who attended the workshop indicated the value of the session:

"It allowed me a greater understanding of the challenges faced by the individual suffering baby loss and improved my understanding as to how I should respond. I think it would be beneficial for as many supervisors and managers as possible to receive this input."

Updating policies

Qualitative feedback from line managers indicates that they feel more supported in responding to their team members who have experienced baby loss. The policy and additional guidelines have created a standardised approach to supporting staff going through baby loss, this has been beneficial in ensuring line managers are equipped to respond appropriately.

The miscarriage awareness association

West Mercia Police's good practice around supporting their staff experiencing baby loss was recognised by the Miscarriage Association and has been highlighted on their website as a case study of best practice. This recognition shows the positive impact of improving the support for staff experiencing baby loss.

Learning

- It is important to have buy-in from the force's HR department as this creates more opportunity to present your ideas to decision makers directly linked to pregnancy loss policy and support.
- External societal opinions can have an impact on the attitude towards pregnancy loss support within the workplace. In the past, societal attitudes that permeated the force acted as barrier to create meaningful change around pregnancy loss support in the workplace. However, in recent years pregnancy loss (particularly post 24 weeks) has received more attention in the media and from MPs, meaning more people had an appetite to create change and improve the support around it.
- The force also highlight that lived experience is pivotal to ensure the changes to policy and practice are appropriate and effectively support the workforce's needs. This can be done through surveys or networks within your workforce.
- Addressing the stigma associated with pregnancy loss is fundamental to this initiative. The policy ensures consistency in pregnancy loss support. However, the educational workshop is equally as important in breaking stereotypes and encouraging an attitudinal shift towards pregnancy loss.
- The subject of baby loss is now being talked about more and as such there is a much greater awareness of this and other similar issues. This has provided the Families network with many other opportunities to offer shared experiences, advice and the chance to help shape policies that support family life in West Mercia Police.

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