



Britain urged to enshrine paid leave post-miscarriage

by Sharon Kimathi | [@sharon_kits](#) | Thomson Reuters Foundation

Thursday, 13 May 2021 15:30 GMT



As companies develop new policies for employees dealing with miscarriages, the government faces calls for more inclusive legislation

By Sharon Kimathi

LONDON, May 13 (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - Britain should change the law so all working parents who miscarry get paid leave, pressure groups said on Thursday, after a clutch of companies began offering their staff time off after a lost pregnancy.

An estimated one in eight pregnancies ends in miscarriage - most in the first trimester - but women in Britain are currently only entitled to compassionate leave if their baby is stillborn after 24 weeks.

Action groups said that policy was inhumane and urged a change in the law forcing companies to recognise the toll - emotional and physical - an earlier miscarriage can carry.

"We urgently need clear guidance for employers on their obligations to women who have had a miscarriage," said Rosalind Bragg, director at Maternity Action, a charity that promotes rights for pregnant women.

Only India and New Zealand currently **offer protection** to employees who have suffered a miscarriage, according to Bragg, with leave of three days to six weeks on offer.

Most Britons who miscarry do so in the first weeks and Bragg urged government "to better support these women" and follow the lead of companies who have taken their policy beyond the law.

Buy-now, pay-later firm Zip, challenger bank Monzo, **TV network Channel 4, Barking & Dagenham council** and Wonderhood Studios, an ad agency, all offer employees some form of compassionate leave after a miscarriage.

Their employee contracts - be it for a pregnant woman or her partner - entitle bereaved staff to between 10 days and two weeks of paid leave after a pregnancy that ends before 24 weeks.

Ruth Bender-Atik, national director at the Miscarriage Association, a pregnancy loss charity, said affected staff need time to recover without worrying about either work or money.

"It would be helpful for people to know that they will be able to have time off and it will be paid, from a practical perspective," Bender-Atik said.

"It would also be validating many peoples' experience from an emotional perspective, since this is a loss and a bereavement like any other," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Zip made its change on April 1 after their head of human resources read that New Zealand had amended its laws in March to help women suffering a miscarriage.

"This gave us pause for thought," Kerry Parkin, a global communications director at Zip, said in an emailed statement.

"[The team] had a personal experience of miscarriage, and it seemed like a sensible policy to implement and an important cause for business to champion."

A spokeswoman at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy said the government provides protection to would-be parents who lose a baby after 24 weeks of pregnancy or a child under 18.

"The entitlement to this pay is a floor not a ceiling, and we urge employers to show compassion and flexibility towards women who have suffered a miscarriage, and to respond sensitively to each individual's specific needs," she said.

Hatti Suvari, a consumer advocate and owner of Red Bar Law, a specialist family legal services firm, said a new requirement that protects putative parents at a time of loss would provide some comfort.

"As a pregnant woman who has had a miscarriage, I think you will feel more supported as your employer would have to have these rules and regulations in your employment contract," said Suvari by phone. "It can help provide a little bit more security to women as a result of these unfortunate circumstances."

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