



Returning to work after the death of your baby or child

Guidance for Employees

The guidance in this leaflet has been developed with help from bereaved parents who have experienced the death of their baby or child. It is one of a pair of leaflets- a separate guidance leaflet is provided for employers.

**Produced in memory of baby Amy Olivia Thomas
with funds kindly donated by Marks and Spencer plc**

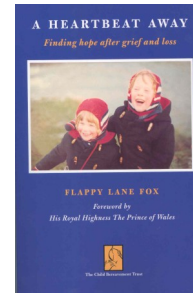
Useful Resources available from Child Bereavement UK

Returning to work after the death of your baby or child can be a daunting prospect. The amount of leave people are given, or take, after bereavement varies enormously. However much time you have had, you will still be grieving for your baby or child and the decision regarding your return to work can be difficult. It may be that for financial reasons, you have to return to work sooner than you would like. If you do have a choice, you may find yourself postponing your return, as you may be anxious about how you will manage both practically and emotionally. On the other hand, for some people returning to work is a positive step, providing some routine in their day and time in an environment not directly connected with their child. Work can also provide some stability in a world that can feel very 'out of control'.

Some forward planning can help ease the transition back into work. It is important to make sure that your employer knows what has happened. You only need to give as much information as you are comfortable with – the circumstances around the death of your baby or child may feel very personal and may not be something you want to be discussed in detail at work. Having one key person as the main point of contact can help you to retain control over what information is given, and can avoid you having to speak to too many individuals if this is not something you feel like doing. That person can then keep others updated as necessary on funeral arrangements, how you are etc.

Before your actual return to work, it may be helpful to arrange to go in just for a short time to meet colleagues – perhaps for coffee or lunch – as a way of overcoming the hurdle of seeing lots of people on your first day back after your baby or child's death. This might make your actual return to work a little easier.

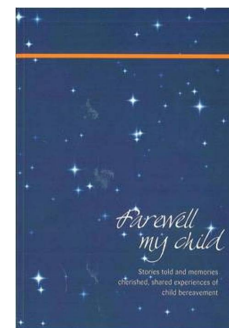
When you do return to work, it is important to find ways of supporting yourself. You may be anxious about how you will feel emotionally, whether you can trust yourself to 'hold it together', and whether you might 'break down' in front of colleagues. This can, of course, happen but you can ease the pressure on yourself by letting people know what has happened.



A Heartbeat Away

A Heartbeat Away, compiled by Flappy Lane Fox who lost her son Harry Sidebottom, charts the journey from the isolation of grief and loss through to the first renewal of hope. This life-affirming book comprises anthologies of writings on the themes of 'Grief, Bereavement and Loss' and 'Hope, Humour and Love'.

£5.00



Farewell My Child

Farewell My Child is a collection of families' stories, from those who have lost babies - to those who have experienced the death of adult children. The book also includes sections on coping with loss and where families may find sources of support.

£10.00

The thought of everyone expressing how sorry they are may feel daunting, as you can't be sure how you will feel and react. Perhaps even worse is the thought that no-one will acknowledge what has happened. Colleagues may be unsure how to act around you and may avoid you out of fear of saying something inappropriate and causing you more upset.

They may also worry that mentioning what has happened will remind you painfully of something you would rather forget – you need to let them know if you don't mind talking about your child or what has happened.

It may be that you decide you would rather not talk about things at work, but it may be equally important that people understand that just because you're not mentioning what's happened doesn't mean you're not hurting or that you're 'over it'. It is important to remember that you can have control over how much or how little you choose to say, and that you don't have to go into detail if you don't want to. Thanking someone for their concern but finding a way to say that you don't feel like talking just now will allow you to take things at your own pace. People will tend to take their lead from you.

Concentration and motivation are known to suffer during bereavement and you may feel concerned as to how your grief will affect your work. Particularly in the early days of grief, you may find yourself both mentally and physically exhausted. Don't expect that you'll immediately be able to perform at your usual capacity. Grief can make it hard to concentrate on the job at hand and it is not at all unusual to find your mind drifting to what has happened. Whether you left work suddenly, or you have been away from work for some time, either on maternity leave or looking after a sick child at home, you may well feel overwhelmed by how much you have missed or need to catch up on.

Try to take on manageable, short-term tasks: big projects can seem daunting. Work can be a useful distraction from grieving, but you are unlikely to be able to switch off completely. Give yourself short breaks in the day to go for walks and have moments of peace, or time for a few tears if you need to.

Being realistic about what you can manage and communicating with your line manager so you both have a clear picture of what is expected and manageable is important to support you in your return to work. This communication is vital in ensuring your employers are aware of your situation and can find ways to support you in the short-term. It may be possible to arrange to return to work gradually, perhaps working just mornings initially or a few days a week.

Some larger companies may have a Human Resources Department that will handle this type of situation, and some organisations make provision for counselling support for their employees. There are also a number of voluntary organisations that may be of help.

Find out what resources are available to support you. Talk to your line manager about your workload when your return, and if you find yourself falling behind, don't be afraid to ask for help. Let colleagues know what is most helpful to you when you are having a particularly bad day. The more they know what they can do for you, the more comfortable they are likely to be in approaching you and offering their support.

Above all, be patient with yourself. However tempting it may be to throw yourself back into work as a way of occupying your mind and avoiding the painful emotions associated with the death of your baby or child, it is important that you also pay attention to how you are feeling and don't ask too much of yourself. You will learn what works for you and what doesn't, and that may change over time. Maintaining good communication with your line manager and colleagues will ensure a smoother transition back into the workplace.

S.O.F.T. U.K.

Tel. 0121 351 3122 for contact telephone nos.

Web: www.soft.org.uk

S.O.F.T. UK provides support, including following bereavement, for families affected by Patau's Syndrome (Trisomy 13), Edward's Syndrome (Trisomy 18) and related complications.

SOBS Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide

Tel: 0844 561 6855 (9am to 9pm every day)

Web: www.uk-sobs.org.uk

They exist to meet the needs and reduce the isolation of those bereaved by the suicide of a close relative or friend. They offer emotional and practical support in a number of ways: telephone contacts, bereavement packs, group meetings (in a number of locations), one-day conferences and residential events. They can also provide information relating to practical issues and problems. Their aim is to provide a safe, confidential environment, in which bereaved people can share their experiences and feelings, so giving and gaining support from each other.

Tamba Bereavement Support Group

Tel: 0800 138 0509

Web: www.tamba-bsg.org.uk

The Tamba BSG is a parent to parent support group and is run by bereaved parents. All BSG supporters are volunteers and are parents who have lost a child or children during a multiple pregnancy or at any stage after birth. None of the supporters are 'professionals'; they offer a befriending rather than a counselling service, although BSG does have access to professional support if required.

FSID

Tel: 080 8802 6868

Web: www.sids.org.uk/fsid

Offers support to bereaved families through its helpline, local befrienders and groups. Promotes and sponsors research into the causes and prevention of sudden and unexpected deaths (cot deaths and sudden infant death syndrome).

HeartLine Association

Tel: 033 00 22 44 66

Web: www.heartline.org.uk

Heartline is a voluntary organisation set up to offer help and support to children with heart disorders and their families regardless of how slight or severe the condition may be. They also offer support to families bereaved of a child due to a heart disorder.

The Miscarriage Association

Tel: 01924 200799 (9am to 4pm Mon – Fri)

Web: www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk

The Miscarriage Association's helpline responds to around 15,000 calls, emails and letters per year from those affected by the loss of a baby in pregnancy. They have a UK-wide network of over 150 volunteer telephone contacts who have been through pregnancy loss themselves and can offer support, understanding and a listening ear. The Miscarriage Association also has 50 support groups across the UK, where people can meet and share their experiences and feelings in a safe and supportive environment. Contact them for details of your nearest support group.

SANDS The Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Charity

Tel: 020 7436 5881

Web: www.uk-sands.org

SANDS provides support for bereaved parents and their families when their baby dies at or soon after birth. Support services include a national helpline, an internet forum, a network of over 90 local groups around the UK, and various publications.

Organisations that can help

Child Bereavement UK

Tel: 01494 568900

Web: www.childbereavementuk.org

Child Bereavement UK provides resources and support for families when a baby or child dies, and when children are bereaved of someone important in their life. The Charity operates a confidential Support and Information Line for families (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday) which offers support through listening and signposting to helpful resources and relevant organisations.

The Charity's website at www.childbereavementuk.org includes a range of helpful information and a discussion forum for families to share their experiences and support each other.

Child Bereavement UK offers a comprehensive training and consultancy programme on all aspects of grief and bereavement. The charity is increasingly aware of the needs of those in the business and corporate sectors who may be involved with issues of bereavement in the workplace. If you think your employer might be interested in learning more, please ask them to contact us on the above number or email training@childbereavementuk.org for more information on how we might help.

Bereavement counselling and one to one support

Cruse Bereavement Care

Tel: 0844 477 9400

Web: www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

This national organisation offers support to anyone who is bereaved. They have local support groups (call number above for local contact details) and produce helpful resources.

B.A.C.P. British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

Tel: 0870 443 5252

Web: www.bacp.co.uk

The BACP can provide details of registered counsellors in your area, including fees.

Bereaved parents self help organisations, and specialised support

ARC (Antenatal Results and Choices)

Tel: 0207 631 0285

Web: www.arc-uk.org

ARC is the only national charity which provides non-directive support and information to parents throughout the antenatal testing process. Their role is to help parents arrive at the most appropriate decision for them in the context of their family life.

ARC offers information and support to parents who:

- Are making decisions during the antenatal testing process
- Have been told that their unborn baby has an abnormality
- Are having to make difficult decisions about continuing the pregnancy
- Are having to make difficult decisions about ending the pregnancy.

Babyloss

Web: www.babyloss.com

Email: support@babyloss.com

The pages on this website have been collated to provide information and support online for bereaved parents whose baby has died during pregnancy, at birth or shortly afterwards.

Born too Soon

Helpline: 020 8974 9157

Web: www.bornতোsoon.org.uk

Paula Craven, who has suffered five miscarriages, launched this site to offer support and information to anyone whose baby has died either during pregnancy or within a short time after birth.

The Child Death Helpline

Tel: 0800 282 986

Web: www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk

This helpline is run from Great Ormond Street Hospital, and is open to all. The helpline is a listening service that offers emotional support to all those affected by the death of a child, whether family, friends or professionals. It is staffed by bereaved parents who are supervised by trained counsellors. The helpline is open 365 days a year.

Every evening 7.00 p.m. to 10.00 p.m.

Monday to Friday mornings 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.

and Wednesday afternoons 1.00 - 4.00 p.m.

The Compassionate Friends

Tel: 08451 232304

Web: www.tcf.org.uk

Compassionate Friends offer support for bereaved parents, including local groups (call number above for local contact details) and befriending. They also offer specialised support groups for grandparents, siblings and parents who have lost their only child. Their website contains many useful leaflets regarding bereavement. They also offer support where a child has taken his or her own life – **Shadow of Suicide (SoS)**

The Ectopic Pregnancy Trust

Helpline: 020 7733 2653

Website: www.ectopic.org.uk

The Ectopic Pregnancy Trust provides support and information to couples who have suffered an ectopic pregnancy.