**You’re making people in the office feel very uncomfortable**: Experiences of miscarriage in the pro-natal workplace

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The limited extant research reveals organisations commonly ignore miscarriage & so women seldom receive adequate support, can face discrimination & some consider leaving [7; 8; 9].

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### Miscarriage: The loss of a pregnancy during the first 23 weeks [1]

Over 500 everyday in the UK alone [2]

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### Early Late

*<14 weeks* *<14 weeks*  
*14-24 weeks* *(24-24 weeks stillbirth)* [1; 2]

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### 1 in 4

1 in 4 pregnancies result in miscarriage [1; 2]

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### Despite prevalence, impact & severity, miscarriage often minimised & ignored by society [4; 5; 6]

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### Stigma & taboo leaks into realm of work [7; 8]

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### Research Questions

1) How does the physical & psychological experience of miscarriage impact upon women’s working lives, & careers?  
2) What are women’s experiences of workplace behaviours following early miscarriage?  
3) What are the barriers for women returning-to-work following early miscarriage?

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### Preliminary findings

- Inconsistent practice due to lack of formal policy  
- Discriminatory practice, incl. formal warnings for taking sick leave  
- Inappropriate leave (e.g., sick, compassionate & annual leave when miscarriage is protected by pregnancy-related sickness)  
- Unrealistic workloads/expectations upon returning-to-work  
- Pro-natal cultures traumatic for affected employees (from baby showers at work to more flexibility permitted for parents)

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### Conclusions: What do workplaces need to do?

1. Train HR & managers, equipping them with the knowledge & confidence to support affected employees.  
2. Implement a pregnancy loss policy outlining entitlements to pay & leave support.  
3. Inform employees about their rights to protected paid leave.  
4. Tackle pro-natal cultures through training.  
5. Provide accessible information on pregnancy loss.  
6. Set up/encourage support groups.

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### Prolonged grief (Unacknowledged) [6; 16]

- *Severe pain [19]*  
- *Contractions [19]*  
- *Heavy bleeding [4]*  
- *Anxiety (1 in 4) [4, 6, 7]*  
- *Depression (1 in 10) [4, 6, 7]*  
- *Suicidal thoughts*  
- *PTSD (3 in 6) [4]*

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### Gaps:

- Future research should collate experiences from managers & HR professionals to investigate the barriers they face when supporting affected employees.  
- Experiences from affected partners is also needed.

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### References

8. Rowe, S., Wynn, S., and Williams, C. (2016) "The permission to work following early miscarriage: a report from two midwives and two women." Available at: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5060334/  