

**Help and advice for the workplace
– when a employee or colleague
has suffered the death of a baby**



Little Things & Co.
The baby bereavement charity

If you have sought out this leaflet or it has been given to you, it is likely that someone you work with has had a baby that has died.

We appreciate that this can be a very difficult time for you as an employer or colleague to understand just what to say and do.

Within this leaflet we will guide you in what to do and say when someone in the workplace has suffered the loss of a baby. We appreciate it is difficult and can be a very delicate time for all those concerned.

The booklet is designed to help employers manage the return to work and for colleagues to know how to care for the grieving colleague in the working environment.

Employers

Once you receive the news:

Ask the parent if they would like you to tell their colleagues about what has happened. Do not divulge unless they have given permission.

If they have given permission for the information to be shared announce this as a whole in either an email or group meeting. Do not tell one person at a time.

If they have not given permission, consider how you will manage the employee without other colleagues knowing.

Start preparing for their return to work. Consider a phased return.

Arrange a condolence card either from yourself or the whole workplace. Acknowledgement is one of the best gifts you can give a bereaved parent.





When the employee returns to work

Be honest that you have not experienced this situation before. Tell them that you want to work with them and that you will do your best to help. Ask them to guide you with what they require from you. Be aware they may not know themselves, but be open to changes and amendments to what you have discussed.

Be sensitive to the working environment. Approach the bereaved parent if another colleague in the workplace is pregnant. For example, if a baby shower is arranged give the bereaved parent advanced warning and allow them to excuse themselves if they do not wish to be present when it is taking place.

Be aware of triggers. Grief can have ways of sneaking up on you. It could be that your employee has had a good day and then a song, person or even a smell can cause a reaction. Allow them to take themselves off for a five-minute break if they need it.

Be prepared that although they may say they are happy to return full time and initially this seems to be working, that it may change. Grief comes in waves and circumstances can unexpectedly change.

Be prepared for the person to behave differently. They have suffered a devastating loss, and this can change their character completely.

Know that it could be their role needs to change. For example, if their role involves working with children. Discuss the matter with the employee and agree a mutually beneficial working environment. Explain that you are happy to support the new working environment, but that long term it may mean that a career change is necessary. Ensure they know this is a supportive

step, but also a logical response to the new circumstances.

They may wish to display photographs of their child. Before this happens sit and have a chat with them about this. They should be allowed to display their pictures as they wish, however explain it may provoke unwanted discussion. Be prepared to have a frank chat with the other employees. You need to find a middle ground for everyone.

Be prepared for them to have extreme fatigue or boundless energy. And to go between the two. It maybe that they are not able to do what they did before or attempt to do even more. These extremes are a natural part of grief and you should not question it (unless their safety is at risk).

Remember certain dates that are relevant to the employee. i.e. the baby's due date, the date of death etc. It will mean a lot that you have remembered. It can also be a help for you as an employer as their mood can be affected around these dates.

They may need additional time off for certain appointments, such as post mortem results. This should be honoured.

If they do become pregnant again bear in mind this does not instantly fix the grief for the baby who has died. They may still need additional support.

Colleagues

When you receive the news

Send your colleague a message. Do not call or turn up at their house but let them know you know and that you are thinking of them. Send a card if you wish.

When the colleague returns to work

Do not fuss over them. Approach them and say, "It's good to see you." Only acknowledge the loss quietly and one to one. Do not say anything in a room full of people. Let them know you are around when they need you. Admit you do not know what to say but that you are listening.

Be sensitive to the workplace environment. i.e. forewarn them if a baby shower is being held etc.

Be aware they may not wish to participate in workplace events as they did previously. Their whole world has changed, and they may not feel up to doing what they did before. Their personality may even change somewhat.

Do not judge them if they return to work full time and then need to take time off again. Grief is very unpredictable and their circumstances and how they feel can change day to day.

Do not be afraid to ask to see pictures of their child or ask them questions. Choose your moment sensibly. When a baby dies parents are scared their child will be forgotten and not acknowledged. By showing an interest, you show you care.

If you would like to discuss anything you have read in this booklet or for more advice do not hesitate to get in touch.

This booklet has been prepared and sponsored by Little Things & Co. – The baby bereavement charity.

Little Things & Co. is a registered charity (1165463) who provide emotional and practical support to anyone suffering the loss of a baby.

Little Things & Co. believes the bereavement care after losing a child should be seamless, thoughtful and helpful.

If you would like to discuss anything you have read within this booklet please do not hesitate to get in touch.

To find out more about the work they do visit **www.ltandco.org** or email **info@ltandco.org**

