



Department for Business and Trade

Open consultation

Make Work Pay: leave for bereavement including pregnancy loss

January 2026

Muslim Women's Network UK (MWN UK) is the only national Muslim women's charity in Britain (www.mwnuk.co.uk) that has been advancing equality, social justice and promoting women's empowerment since 2003. We want Muslim women and girls to be able to exercise their rights, choices and voices and lead safe and authentic lives. We achieve our aims through the support we provide via our national helpline (www.mwnhelpline.co.uk), education, research, and advocacy. Key issues that we focus on include VAWG, anti-Muslim hatred / discrimination, women's health (including mental health) and women's economic and civic empowerment. We also have a national membership that includes women of other faiths or of no faith and men who support our work.

Q1 Which relationships between the employee and the person who has passed away should qualify for the bereavement leave entitlement? Please select all that apply.

As an organisation, we already provide compassionate leave from day one, which we consider good practice. Bereavement leave entitlement should primarily apply to **immediate family members**, such as parents, siblings, children, spouses, or partners. However, we believe there should be **some flexibility** to recognise other significant relationships, for example a close friend or another individual who played an important role in the employee's life. This could include individuals **living with the employee**, such as carers or household members, but would exclude lodgers, renters, or unrelated individuals without a close personal connection.

Legislation should allow room for employers to exercise discretion in these circumstances, acknowledging that grief is not limited to family ties alone. That said, we do **not** believe bereavement leave should routinely extend to wider or extended family members unless there are exceptional circumstances. Extending a policy or law to wider families would be difficult to assess and apply given the very different family dynamics and relationships that will exist. In our experience as a charity, overly broad definitions can lead to the system being taken advantage of, which creates additional costs and operational challenges for employers, which can be very burdensome for small businesses and charities

Practical considerations should also be factored in. For example, if the deceased parent is based abroad, additional time may be required due to travel and logistical arrangements.

Overall, we recommend a **reasonable bereavement policy** that focuses on immediate family members while allowing flexibility on a case-by-case basis, balancing compassion for employees with fairness and sustainability for the organisation.

Q2 Should bereavement leave for pregnancy loss be restricted to the person who has physically experienced the pregnancy loss?

Yes, bereavement leave for pregnancy loss should primarily be restricted to the person who has physically experienced the pregnancy loss. This recognises the significant physical and emotional impact on the individual and ensures appropriate support where it is most needed.

However, we also acknowledge that partners or other close individuals may need time to provide support. However, how would the employer assess who would be the best person to provide support. For example, the pregnancy loss could be the result on an abusive partner. To balance the needs of employees and employers, this support can be managed through existing provisions such as **annual leave or unpaid leave**, rather than extending bereavement leave entitlement.

This approach maintains fairness, supports the affected individual, and helps employers manage operational and cost considerations effectively.

Q3 Do you agree that all the types of pregnancy loss listed above by the Government should be eligible for bereavement leave?

Yes

Q4 How long should unpaid bereavement leave be?

For unpaid bereavement leave, we recommend a standard duration of **one week**. Employees also have the option to use **annual leave** if additional time off is needed. Employers could provide further discretionary unpaid leave. This approach ensures that employees are supported during a difficult time while allowing the organisation to manage operational requirements fairly and consistently.

Q5 Do you think employees should be offered the same amount of leave for all types of scenarios, and all relationships to the deceased, that you have selected above?

While employees should be entitled to bereavement leave, the amount of leave should **not be the same for all scenarios or relationships to the deceased**. Different circumstances have varying emotional and practical impacts—for example, the loss of a spouse or child may require more time than the loss of a more distant relative or friend. Therefore, we recommend that while it should be for closely connected people, a **case-by-case approach** is taken, allowing flexibility for managers to consider the nature of the relationship and the individual circumstances. This ensures fairness to employees while maintaining consistency and practicality for the organisation.

Q6 For bereavement leave, which of the following options for the leave entitlement to begin would be most appropriate?

For bereavement leave, the most appropriate approach is for the entitlement to **begin immediately following the death**. However, we also acknowledge that some people may not process their emotions immediately and this could take longer after a funeral or completing probate issues. We therefore feel the bereavement leave could be split up and some taken at a later date.

Q7 Which of the following options for taking bereavement leave would be most appropriate?

For bereavement leave, the most appropriate approach is for the entitlement to **begin immediately following the death**. However, we also acknowledge that some people may not process their emotions immediately and this could take longer after a funeral or completing probate issues. We therefore feel the bereavement leave could be split up and some taken at a later date.

Q8 Which of the following windows for taking bereavement leave would be most appropriate?

Ideally it should be taken within 6 months **Q9 Do you think employees should be required to provide notice they intend to take bereavement leave to their employer?**

Notice would not be possible after experiencing death of a loved one. However, if some bereavement leave is to be taken at a later date, then it should require a notice to be provided. Providing notice helps employers **plan and manage workloads** effectively.

Without notice, organisations may face **disruption or misunderstandings**, which can impact both operational efficiency and fairness to other staff.

Q10 How much notice should employees be required to give to their employer that they intend to take bereavement leave straight away? Employees should be able to take bereavement leave **immediately**, and any **written communication**—such as an email or message—is sufficient to notify the employer. However, notice to take bereavement at a later period should be provided in written communication such as email rather than WhatsApp / texts as these could end up being sent on personal mobiles. Any emails should be sent to work emails of the organisation. Notification can also be provided **by someone on the employee's behalf** if the employee is unable to do so themselves. This ensures the process is flexible while keeping the employer informed.

Q11 What is a reasonable notice period employees should give for leave taken at a later period?

For bereavement leave taken at a later date, employees should provide notice **as soon as reasonably possible**. This allows employers to plan and manage workloads effectively while remaining sensitive to the employee's circumstances.

If you think that notice should be given for bereavement leave, in what form should it be given?

Any form of communication, including text, email, or verbal notification.

Q12 For bereavement leave do you think that employees should be required to provide evidence of a bereavement to their employer?

No, employees should **not be required to provide evidence** of a bereavement. However, they should be asked to **sign a declaration** confirming that they are eligible for bereavement leave and that the leave is being taken due to a bereavement or pregnancy loss. This ensures accountability while respecting employee privacy.

Q13 Do you have a view on timescales in which an employee should be required to provide evidence?

. We do not believe that evidence is necessary to be provided for pregnancy loss as this may not always be available through medical records. Instead, a declaration could be signed. Clear communication between the employee and their manager is essential to establish mutually agreed timelines for signing any declarations that are both practical for the organisation and supportive of the employee's needs.

This approach balances the organisation's operational requirements with a compassionate and sensitive response to bereavement, fostering a fair and supportive workplace culture while maintaining accountability and compliance.

Q14. Do you have views on other steps the Department could take to help employers implementing the new statutory bereavement leave and support their employees?

The Employment Rights Bill should encourage organisations to provide bereavement leave as a **standalone policy**, rather than grouping it under 'compassionate' or other types of leave. This ensures that employees can **access bereavement leave clearly and directly** when needed, without confusion or ambiguity.

On behalf of Muslim Women's Network UK,

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