

Press Release

Aching Arms Welcomes Landmark Bereavement Leave Legislation in Northern Ireland

The recent announcement that Northern Ireland will introduce paid bereavement leave for pre-24-week pregnancy loss marks a profound and long-awaited step forward for workplace rights and compassionate employment policy.

As the Founder of **Aching Arms**, and a proud co-signatory of the Miscarriage Association's *Leave for Every Loss* campaign, I welcome this legislation with deep gratitude. It recognises what so many families already know in their hearts: every pregnancy loss is a bereavement, and every bereavement deserves time, understanding, and support.

Importantly, this legislation acknowledges not only the person who was pregnant, but also the dads and partners who experience this loss alongside them. Their grief is often overlooked, yet it is no less real. Providing protected time for partners to process their loss together is an essential step toward truly inclusive and compassionate workplace practice.

For too long, families experiencing miscarriage before 24 weeks have faced emotional devastation while also navigating work without guaranteed leave or recognition. Northern Ireland's decision sends a powerful message that their grief matters, their wellbeing matters, and their healing should never be compromised by a lack of support.

The experiences of our Aching Arms community make this especially clear. One of our volunteers in Northern Ireland, Laura Kelly shared with us her story of **three losses**, each met with a completely different response from her employers:

"In 2017, I lost my son, Cormac, at 23 weeks. He lived for one precious week, and because of that, I was entitled to maternity leave. I had time to grieve, to process, and to begin to heal. My other losses came earlier in pregnancy, but no loss is ever 'easier'.

In 2020, during Covid, I miscarried shortly after starting a new job. I couldn't afford to take time off. So I went back into work, in a hospital of all places, carrying that loss silently. I told no one. I had no support. I just kept going, because I felt I had no other choice.

My most recent loss in 2024 was different. My workplace showed compassion. I was given the time I needed. It was recognised as pregnancy-related, and I received full sick pay. My partner was also supported by his manager and given a few days off, which meant everything as we faced those first painful days together.

Three losses in one family. Three completely different experiences of how employers responded—ranging from silence and survival, to compassion and care.

That is why this legislation matters so deeply. It begins to break the silence and stigma around pregnancy loss. It acknowledges the reality of what families go through and offers them not just understanding, but real, practical support when they need it most.

And for once, Northern Ireland is leading the way by setting a standard the rest of the UK should follow.”

Laura’s words reflect the lived reality of so many families, why this change is not only welcome, but necessary.

As we celebrate this milestone, we also recognise that there is more to do. Many self-employed people, who make up a significant part of our workforce, still have no formal protection or entitlement to bereavement leave following pregnancy loss. Their grief is no different, and their need for time and support is just as vital. We urge policymakers across the UK to ensure that future legislation includes self-employed parents, so that compassion and protection extend to every family, regardless of employment status.

Today’s progress in Northern Ireland reinforces the importance of that mission and strengthens our determination to see equitable support extended to all.

At Aching Arms, we remain committed to advocating for inclusive, compassionate policies that support every family experiencing pregnancy loss. This news is a powerful reminder that meaningful change is not only possible but happening.

Leanne Turner

Founder/CEO, **Aching Arms**

Co-signatory, Miscarriage Association *Leave for Every Loss* Campaign

Brief comment

“Northern Ireland’s decision to introduce paid bereavement leave for pre24week pregnancy loss is a landmark moment for families. At Aching Arms, we hear every day how differently employers respond to pregnancy loss—ranging from silence and survival to compassion and care. One of our volunteers in Northern Ireland has lived through three losses, each met with a completely different level of support. Her story shows exactly why this legislation matters. It breaks the silence, acknowledges the grief, and offers real, practical help when families need it most. We now urge the rest of the UK to follow Northern Ireland’s lead—and to ensure that self employed parents are included too. Every loss deserves recognition, and every family deserves time to grieve.”

Leanne Turner, Founder of Aching Arms and co-signatory of the Miscarriage Association’s *Leave for Every Loss* campaign

