

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Staff Governance Committee
DATE	21 November 2022
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Pregnancy Loss Support
REPORT NUMBER	CUS/22/264
DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald, Director of Customer
CHIEF OFFICER	Isla Newcombe, Chief Officer – People and Organisational Development
REPORT AUTHOR	Darren Buck, Acting People Development Manager
TERMS OF REFERENCE	2.6, 3

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on work currently being undertaken for employees around pregnancy loss and seek approval from Committee to sign up to a pledge which will support this area of work.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 agree that the Convener and Vice Convener of Staff Governance Committee sign the Pregnancy Loss Pledge run by the Miscarriage Association;
- 2.2 note current and future planned work by People and Organisational Development on pregnancy loss; and
- 2.3 instruct the Chief Officer - People and Organisational Development to report back to Committee following the accreditation on this pledge if any further work is required to ensure we are meeting the best practice required including any new policies or updates to policies.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 Workforce Statistics

- 3.1.1 As of June 2022, Aberdeen City Council has 5,965 female employees. This equates to 70% of our workforce.
- 3.1.2 Having a majority female workforce means that we need to pay particular focus on health issues that can have an impact on our female employees and ensure that appropriate support mechanisms are in place for them. One area of current focus is pregnancy loss. Pregnancy loss also has an impact on the partner of the person who suffers pregnancy loss and this should also be recognised.

3.2 Strategic Context

- 3.2.1 Supporting issues that directly impact our female workforce supports our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Outcomes](#) (approved at Operational Delivery Committee in March 2021 and our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan](#) (ED&I Action Plan) (approved at Staff Governance Committee in April 2021). Our Equality Outcomes are a requirement of the Council as part of the Public Sector Equality Duty set out in the Equality Act 2010. In our Equality Outcomes, we state that we will improve the diversity of our workforce, address areas of underrepresentation, ensure there are equal opportunities for protected groups and ensure that employees who have protected characteristics feel fully valued, safe and included at work. One of the protected categories that we have prioritised for these outcomes is 'Sex'.
- 3.2.2 In the [Target Operating Model 1.2](#) which was approved at full Council in August 2022, to achieve the cultural ambitions of the workforce, we commit to supporting "employees to be their whole selves at work". By supporting our diverse workforce with their diverse needs, we will be achieving this. Further detail about how we will seek to do this will be contained within our Workforce Strategy and continue to be included within our ED&I action plan which is our delivery mechanism for these overarching aims.
- 3.2.3 The Council has already committed to the advancement of gender equality in our workforce as part of the [Equally Safe at Work Accreditation](#). One of the aims of this Accreditation is to improve gender equality through improvements to policy and practice.

3.3 Pregnancy Loss Summary

- 3.3.1 According to Tommy's, a UK charity specialising in research around pregnancy loss, 1 in 4 pregnancies end in miscarriage.
- 3.3.2 According to Fertility Network UK, 38% of those men and women they surveyed stated they had quit their job or were seriously considering quitting due to fertility issues.
- 3.3.3 The Miscarriage Association states that thoughtful support and management make a real difference to how people cope and that returning to work after pregnancy loss is helped by flexibility and adjustments to work.

3.4 Current Support for Pregnancy Loss

- 3.4.1 As an employer, we offer paid parental bereavement leave to employees (both parents) of up to two weeks. In addition, we have special leave provisions, namely compassionate leave which can be offered as paid leave. Taking this leave relies on employees being confident to speak with their line manager about pregnancy and pregnancy loss. This is the case not only for the person who was pregnant but also a partner of a person who has lost a pregnancy.

3.4.2 An intranet post was created about pregnancy and baby loss to raise awareness of the topic and to signpost employees to relevant external guidance and support through organisations such as the Miscarriage Association and Child Bereavement UK. This included guidance on how to support someone through pregnancy loss and also a voluntarily shared story by one of our employees.

3.4.3 The Council's Supporting Attendance and Wellbeing Policy and Guidance references absence related to pregnancy and is compliant with legislation.

3.5 **Pregnancy Loss Pledge**

3.5.1 The Pregnancy Loss Pledge is run by [the Miscarriage Association](#). The Pledge has been signed by many public and private sector organisations including the British Army, East Renfrewshire Council, Glasgow City Council, Fife Council, West Dunbartonshire Council, Inverclyde Council, Midlothian Council and North Ayrshire Council.

3.5.2 The main purpose of the Pledge is to urge employers to commit to supporting their staff through the distress of miscarriage, by meeting a pregnancy loss standard that ensures that employees are supported and get the time off they need during what can be a difficult or traumatic time.

3.5.3 The Pledge asks organisations to:

- Encourage a supportive work environment where people feel able to discuss and disclose pregnancy and / or loss without fear of being disadvantaged or discriminated against.
- Understand and implement the rules around pregnancy-related leave, ensuring staff feel able to take the time off they need.
- Show empathy and understanding towards people and their partners experiencing pregnancy loss.
- Implement a pregnancy loss policy or guidance, or ensure it is included in sickness, bereavement or other workplace policies – being mindful of the needs of partners too.
- Encourage line managers to access in-house or external guidance on how to support someone experiencing pregnancy loss
- Support people back to work by being responsive to their needs and showing flexibility wherever possible.

3.5.4 Aberdeen City Council arguably already meets all of the Pledge commitments. Signing the Pledge will signal to our existing staff, that we are supportive of employees who experience pregnancy loss and will raise awareness of the support that is available. It will also push the organisation to improve our approaches through a structured framework and guidance. This will, ultimately, have a positive impact on the diversity of our workforce.

3.6 Future Work on Pregnancy Loss

3.6.1 Ongoing work will continue, in line with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan to raise awareness and understanding of pregnancy loss and to continue to improve our practice. We plan to discuss this further with our relevant Equality, Diversity and Inclusion working group and network to ensure support and provisions are appropriate and that any improvements are made where required.

3.7 Next Steps

3.7.1 Should approval be granted to sign the above pledge, this will be done by the Convener and Vice Convener of Staff Governance Committee and communications issued both internally and externally.

3.7.2 Following this, a review will be undertaken against relevant policies and procedures in line with the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion plan and with engagement and inclusion of our relevant working groups, to determine if any changes or amendments should be made.

3.7.3 If any further work is required to ensure we are meeting the best practice required, including any new policies or updates to policies, this will be reported back to committee accordingly.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk		No significant risks identified		
Compliance		No significant risks identified		

Operational	No significant risks identified
Financial	No significant risks identified
Reputational	No significant risks identified
Environment / Climate	No significant risks identified

8. OUTCOMES

<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	<p>The proposals within this report support the below outcomes:</p> <p>2.2 Increasing the number of people in Aberdeen in sustained, fair work.</p>
Regional and City Strategies	<p>The proposals within this report support the below statement from the TOM 1.2: “to support employees to be their whole selves at work” It also works towards our two Equality Outcomes as an employer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the diversity of our workforce and address any areas of underrepresentation, ensuring that there are equal opportunities for all protected groups (with consideration for both internal employees and external applicants), with a particular and prioritised focus on Age, Disability, Race and Sex. • Ensure that all of our employees who have protected characteristics feel fully valued, safe and included at work, with a particular and prioritised focus on Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Race, Sex and Sexual orientation.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Integrated Impact Assessment - Menopause and Pregnancy Loss.docx
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not Required
Other	Not Applicable

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 [Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report](#), Operational Delivery Committee, March 2021, CUS/21/051
- 10.2 [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan](#), Staff Governance Committee, April 2021, RES/21/077
- 10.3 [Equally Safe at Work Employer Accreditation Programme](#), Staff Governance Committee, April 2021, RES/21/092

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 There are no appendices to this report.

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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