

Tuesday 7 May 2024

Amanda Pritchard  
CEO  
NHS England  
*Sent by email*

### **Miscarriage leave for NHS general dental practitioners**

Dear Ms Pritchard,

We are writing with regard to the newly introduced national pregnancy and baby loss policy framework, which includes but is not limited to, up to 10 days paid leave for the mother (or parent who was pregnant), and up to 5 days paid leave for the partner, in the cases of miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, molar pregnancy, and termination of pregnancy.

This policy is the right call. The support it provides to NHS staff during this difficult time in their life is to be strongly welcomed. However, at present, this policy would not apply to NHS general dental practitioners (GDPs), as they are not directly employed by the NHS. It is vital that NHS dentists are given the same support as other NHS staff through such deeply challenging personal circumstances.

Without needed change, this testimony from a former Associate Dentist, Sarah Bailey, a constituent of the Heath Secretary, underlines the reality that will continue to face NHS dentists:

*“My miscarriage happened when I was around 12 weeks pregnant. I knew I had to go back to work straight away. It was really tough; I remember crying in the toilets at work. Patients knew I was pregnant and were asking me how I was doing. When you have a public-facing job, you have to put your emotions aside and switch on the bubbly persona. But physically, you aren’t in a good place and mentally, your hormones are all over the place, so you think, ‘I can’t afford to be ill’. There is just no time to start to deal with your grief.*

*“You are treated like a machine, you have to keep turning over, and hit your targets. You feel an obligation to the practice, to your patients, and to yourself. The pressure of it is immense, but I just couldn’t afford not to be at work. It pushed me into thinking, hang on a minute, this is not a family-friendly environment. It underlined to me that high street NHS dentistry is not a place where I could build a career.”*

Both mothers and fathers-to-be across this service deserve better, when facing the heartbreak of losing a child.

NHS England have a chance to ensure that all dedicated NHS clinicians have the support they need. We therefore call for updating the Statement of Financial Entitlement to reflect the aforementioned policy framework. We would also welcome NHS provision for this leave to be extended to the rest of the dental team.

We look forward to hearing back from you regarding this matter and would be happy to discuss it further should the need arise.


Yours sincerely,



**Shawn Charlwood**  
Chair, General Dental  
Practice Committee



**Lauren HARRY**  
Co-Chair, BDA  
Equality, Diversity  
and Inclusion  
Committee



**Ellie Heidari**  
Co-Chair, BDA  
Equality, Diversity  
and Inclusion  
Committee

cc: Rt Hon Victoria Atkins MP, DHSC, Rt Hon Dame Andrea Leadsom MP, DHSC, Amanda Doyle, NHS England