Journey Of

INFERTILITY SUPPORT

You're not alone.

Workplace Fertility Support Guide

Supporting employees through fertility challenges, treatment, preservation and family-building journeys

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR EMPLOYEES, MANAGERS AND WORKPLACE LEADERS



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Find your pathway

Use the colour-coded pathways throughout this guide to find the most relevant support.

EMPLOYEE GUIDANCE

Prepare for conversations, request support and protect personal wellbeing.

MANAGER GUIDANCE

Respond sensitively, agree practical arrangements and review support.

WORKPLACE GUIDANCE

Develop clear policies, fair processes and an inclusive workplace culture.

> You're not alone.

This guide is general workplace guidance. Organisational policies and individual circumstances will vary.

01 FOR EVERYONE

ALL PATHWAYS

Welcome and purpose

Fertility-related experiences can affect physical health, emotional wellbeing, relationships, finances and working life. Many people navigate these experiences privately and may be unsure what support to request at work.

This guide is designed to help employees understand possible workplace support and to help managers respond with compassion, consistency and respect. It is suitable for use across different sectors and workplace settings.



Who this guide is for

- Employees experiencing fertility challenges, treatment or preservation
- Partners and others providing practical or emotional support
- Managers, HR professionals and workplace wellbeing leads
- People navigating pregnancy loss, donor conception, surrogacy or other family-building routes
- People adjusting to involuntary childlessness or a change in family-building plans

> No two journeys are the same. Support should be individual, respectful and led by the person seeking help.

02 BACKGROUND

ALL PATHWAYS

Understanding fertility-related experiences

Fertility-related experiences are diverse and may include investigations, assisted conception, medication, procedures, fertility preservation, donor conception, surrogacy, pregnancy loss, secondary infertility and living without children after infertility.

Possible workplace effects

Time and scheduling

Appointments that are frequent, time-sensitive or arranged at short notice.

Physical effects

Fatigue, discomfort or medication side effects.

Uncertainty

Periods of waiting for test results or treatment outcomes.

Focus and confidence

Difficulty concentrating, changes in confidence or increased emotional pressure.

Financial and practical pressure

The demands of travel and treatment schedules, and the cost involved.

Privacy and flexibility

A need for privacy while also requiring flexibility or time away from work.

Inclusive support

> Avoid assumptions about identity, relationships, treatment choices or desired outcomes. Ask what support would help, use the language the employee uses, and recognise that a partner or support person may also be affected.

03 PRINCIPLES

WORKPLACE GUIDANCE

What a supportive workplace looks like

Five principles that help people feel safe to ask for support.

Listen without judgement	Give the employee space to explain what is relevant without asking for unnecessary medical detail.
Protect confidentiality	Agree what may be shared, with whom and how absences will be communicated.
Offer practical flexibility	Explore appointments, working hours, location, workload, travel and temporary changes.
Review support	Needs may change across investigations, treatment cycles, recovery and outcomes.
Create an inclusive culture	Challenge stigma, avoid intrusive questions and ensure wellbeing messages include fertility-related experiences.

Talking to your manager

There is no single right way to start the conversation. You can choose how much to share and may ask for the discussion to remain confidential, subject to any essential organisational requirements.

Before the conversation

- Decide what you want your manager to understand
- Identify the practical support that would make the greatest difference
- Consider whether you want HR, a representative or a trusted colleague present
- Think about how appointments or short-notice absences could be communicated
- Write down questions and agree when support will be reviewed

Possible conversation starters

> *I would like to share something personal that may affect me at work over the coming weeks or months. I am experiencing fertility-related challenges and may need some flexibility or support.*

> *I am undergoing fertility treatment. The schedule may change at short notice, so I would like to discuss how we can manage appointments and workload while protecting my privacy.*

05 A SIMPLE STRUCTURE

EMPLOYEE GUIDANCE

Manager conversation template

1 Open the discussion

> *"Thank you for meeting with me. I would like this conversation to be treated sensitively and, as far as possible, confidentially.*

2 Explain only what feels comfortable

- "I may need to attend time-sensitive appointments."
- "There may be periods when treatment affects my energy or concentration."
- "I do not want to share detailed medical information, but I would like to discuss practical support."

3 Ask for support

- Flexible start and finish times
- Temporary home or hybrid working
- Time away for appointments or recovery
- Short-term workload or deadline adjustments
- Reduced travel or access to a private space
- A clear contact and agreed method for short-notice updates

4 Confirm confidentiality and review

> *"Please can we agree what will be recorded, who needs to know, what will be said to colleagues, and when we will review the arrangements?*

Suggested manager response

> *"Thank you for trusting me with this. You do not need to share more than you are comfortable with. Let us look at the support available, agree how we will protect your privacy and set a review date."*

06 RESPONDING WELL

MANAGER GUIDANCE

Guidance for managers

How you respond in the first conversation can shape how supported someone feels for the whole journey.

Helpful responses

- Thank the employee for sharing and acknowledge that the conversation may be difficult
- Ask open questions such as “What would help most right now?”
- Focus on work impacts and support rather than detailed medical information
- Be honest about what can be agreed and seek HR advice where needed
- Document agreed actions accurately and store information appropriately
- Check in without repeatedly asking for treatment updates

Avoid

- Making promises before checking policy or operational requirements
- Offering unsolicited medical advice or comparing experiences
- Using phrases that minimise the situation or suggest guaranteed outcomes
- Sharing information with colleagues without prior agreement unless essential
- Assuming the employee wants the same support throughout the journey

MANAGER TIP

Consistency does not mean treating everyone identically. It means applying fair principles while responding to individual needs.

07 AGREE AND RECORD

MANAGER GUIDANCE EMPLOYEE GUIDANCE

Workplace adjustment planner

Complete this together. Keep it confidential and review it as needs change.

Area	Support or adjustment	Review / notes
Appointments and notice		
Working hours		
Work location		
Workload and deadlines		
Travel and duties		
Medication / private space		
Communication with colleagues		
Wellbeing support		
Leave options		
Review date		

Agreement summary

Employee name

Manager name

Date discussed

Next review date

Time off, treatment and difficult outcomes

Workplace policies differ. Employees and managers should check the organisation's current policies on appointments, flexible working, sickness absence, annual leave, compassionate leave and any dedicated fertility or pregnancy-loss provision.

During treatment or investigations

- Agree a practical process for appointments that may change at short notice
- Consider temporary changes to workload, deadlines, travel or work location
- Discuss privacy, medication storage or administration and recovery time where relevant
- Use review points rather than assuming one arrangement will suit every stage

After an unsuccessful cycle or pregnancy loss

> The employee may need time away, reduced demands, a phased return or emotional support. Avoid assumptions about how quickly someone should recover. Ask what would be helpful and signpost available support.

IMPORTANT

This guide does not replace employment, medical or legal advice. Use current organisational policies and obtain specialist advice where appropriate.

EMPLOYEE GUIDANCE

Emotional wellbeing toolkit



Find connection

- A trusted person
- Peer or community support
- A specialist counsellor

Protect your wellbeing

- Set boundaries around difficult conversations
- Limit distressing online content
- Create space for rest and recovery

Ask for practical help

- Prepare for appointments
- Share tasks where possible
- Use workplace support services

Be kind to yourself

- Adjust expectations
- Recognise that capacity may vary
- Seek professional help if you are struggling

You do not have to carry this alone.

10 WHERE TO TURN

ALL PATHWAYS

Resources and signposting

Fertility Network UK

Information and support for people affected by fertility challenges.

fertilitynetworkuk.org

British Infertility Counselling Association

Directory of specialist fertility counsellors.

bica.net

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority

UK information about fertility treatment, clinics and preservation.

hfea.gov.uk

Miscarriage Association

Information and support relating to miscarriage and pregnancy loss.

miscarriageassociation.org.uk

Donor Conception Network

Support and information relating to donor conception.

dcnetwork.org

SurrogacyUK

Information and community support relating to surrogacy.

surrogacyuk.org

ACAS

General workplace information and employment guidance.

acas.org.uk

> Employers may also provide an Employee Assistance Programme, occupational health, counselling, wellbeing champions, staff networks, HR support or representation through a recognised union or employee representative.

11 WHO WE ARE

ALL PATHWAYS

About Journey Of

Journey Of Infertility Support exists to provide compassionate information, community, advocacy and practical resources for people navigating fertility-related experiences and family-building journeys.

Our values

HOPE | SUPPORT | COMMUNITY | INFORMATION

Journey Of encourages workplaces to make fertility support visible, inclusive and practical, while respecting privacy and individual choice.

Organisation details

Website	journeyof.co.uk
Email	[insert email]
Instagram	@journeyofinfertility

12 YOUR SPACE

EMPLOYEE GUIDANCE

Personal notes and action plan

What I would like my manager to understand

The support that would help most

Questions I want to ask

People or services I can contact

My next steps

Journey Of

INFERTILITY SUPPORT

You're not alone.

Supporting every fertility journey,
one step at a time.

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