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UK to Extend Bereavement Leave to Parents Affected by Miscarriage Before 24 Weeks

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The UK government has announced plans to extend bereavement leave to parents who experience a miscarriage before 24 weeks of pregnancy, a move welcomed by campaigners and families who have long called for greater recognition of early pregnancy loss.

Under current legislation, statutory bereavement leave is only granted to parents who lose a child after 24 weeks' gestation, legally classified as a stillbirth. The proposed changes would give employees the right to time off following a miscarriage at any stage of pregnancy, offering vital support during a time of emotional and physical distress.

The change follows sustained campaigning by bereaved families and advocacy groups, who argue that the impact of miscarriage is often underestimated and overlooked in workplace policies. Many parents have shared experiences of returning to work immediately after a loss, without time to grieve or recover.

Minister for Women Maria Caulfield said the move recognises the profound impact of pregnancy loss, regardless of gestational age. "Miscarriage is a deeply painful experience. Extending bereavement leave is a compassionate and necessary step," she stated.

The policy will apply to all workers, regardless of length of service, and is expected to cover both parents. It aims to provide a more inclusive framework for grieving families and to challenge the silence and stigma that often surrounds miscarriage.

Supporters of the policy highlight that around one in four pregnancies ends in miscarriage, most before 12 weeks. Despite its frequency, many affected parents feel isolated and unsupported, particularly in the workplace. Campaigners hope that formal recognition of their loss through paid leave will validate their grief and encourage more open conversations.

Charities such as Tommy's and the Miscarriage Association have welcomed the announcement. They emphasised that while leave cannot undo the loss, it offers space for emotional healing and sets a precedent for empathetic workplace practice.

The timeline for the new legislation has yet to be confirmed, but the government has pledged to consult with health experts, employers, and affected families to shape the final policy.

If implemented, the UK would join a growing list of countries acknowledging early pregnancy loss in employment law. Advocates say it marks a significant step forward in reproductive rights and compassionate labour policy.