

# **Response from the Miscarriage Association to Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Finance**

## **Topic: Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill**

### **1. About the Miscarriage Association**

The Miscarriage Association is a charity founded in 1982. We offer support and information to anyone affected by the loss of a baby in pregnancy, raise awareness, and to promote good practice in medical care.

### **2. Our views on the Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill**

We will focus our comments solely on Section 11: Certificates of Baby Loss from the Bill.

#### **2.1 Principle of baby loss certificates**

We welcome the Bill's intention to provide baby loss certificates. Indeed, the Miscarriage Association campaigned for comparable certificates to be introduced in England in coalition with other charities before these were launched by the Westminster Government in February 2024.<sup>1</sup> As the Committee will be aware, comparable certificates are available in Scotland (a Memorial Book<sup>2</sup>) but not Wales at this time.<sup>3</sup>

Baby loss at any stage is a deeply personal experience. This experience varies greatly between families depending on circumstances. Not all women and their partners wish to have official recognition of their loss, but many do. Indeed, following their launch in England in February 2024, more than 100,000 baby loss certificates had been issued by April 2025.<sup>4</sup> This shows the value these certificates have for many people who have experienced early baby loss.

A baby loss certificate can be:

- a helpful item of remembrance for people. This can be particularly important when the loss occurs in the first trimester, where often there will be few if any physical memories of the pregnancy (e.g. photos of a scan)
- an important validation of this tiny life – that it existed and it mattered to their parents and family

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-68353310>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/registration/the-memorial-book/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2025-04-04/woman-who-had-three-miscarriages-calls-for-baby-loss-certificates-in-wales>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/blog/milestone-moment-as-more-than-100000-baby-loss-certificates-are-issued-in-england/>

Our Chief Executive Vicki Robinson has described the value of the certificates available in England:

*“However early a pregnancy is lost, it can be felt as a bereavement like any other as people try to come to terms with the end of a very special set of hopes, dreams, and plans for the future.*

*“These certificates provide official recognition that their baby existed, mattered, and will never be forgotten. The positive difference that makes to so many at an extremely distressing time cannot be overstated.”<sup>5</sup>*

Many people have also contacted us to express how much they value these certificates after their introduction in England and Scotland. A selection of quotes is below:

*“Such good news. I did mine today. I had a miscarriage in 2020, I went to our scan alone while my other half and my two boys sat in the car and ended up waiting for me for six hours. I wish I had asked for a scan pic, but I was so upset, all I could think about was getting out to my boys. This will help in a way, if you know what I mean.” – Mum*

*“This is a blessing” – Dad*

*“This is fabulous news. I have 9 angel babies, but have only been able to get a certificate for our last loss, which always made me feel like the others were seen as ‘just a number’. It may only seem like a piece of paper to those who haven’t been on this journey, but it is such an incredible moment to us.” - Mum*

*“Thank you so much for this - just the acknowledgement means so much, especially when there are still close family and friends who are yet to acknowledge the losses we experienced.” – Mum*

While an important step, we wish to emphasise that a certificate does not replace the need to improve wider acknowledgement and understanding in society around baby loss. This would include expansion of bereavement leave. We appreciate that the right for employees to take bereavement leave following miscarriage has been enshrined in law in Northern Ireland, with plans to implement these rights this year.<sup>6</sup>

We would also highlight that the issuing of baby loss certificates is also not a substitute for improving data collection around the number of miscarriages. Currently, it is not possible to gain an accurate picture of the prevalence and impact of pregnancy loss within Northern Ireland, or indeed Wales, Scotland and England. We would continue to wish to work with the Government and Assembly on identifying the best means to capture this information, and so to better provide support for families.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/blog/milestone-moment-as-more-than-100000-baby-loss-certificates-are-issued-in-england/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.lewissilkin.com/insights/2025/03/04/family-friendly-rights-whats-the-position-in-northern-ireland>

## 2.2 Content of regulations

In keeping with primary legislation, we appreciate this Bill if passed would enable further regulations to be laid by the Department of Finance.

Based on our experience, and that of families with whom we have spoken, we would recommend these key points to be applied within the future regulations:

- **Baby loss certificates should be voluntary.** Not everyone who experiences baby loss will want a certificate of this loss, so these should not be mandatory.
- **There should be no charge for the certificate.** There is no charge in England and Scotland for the certificates, in part because due to the recognition that grieving people should not have to pay for a memory of their loss. We would strongly recommend that the Government emulate this approach when introducing similar certificates in Northern Ireland.
- **The certificate should be available regardless of the gestation of loss and however long ago the loss occurred.** Grief over loss does not align with the amount of time a woman is pregnant, for her or for her partner. Likewise, grief is deeply personal and – as with other forms of loss – often will remain for years.

*“My miscarriages were 3 decades ago but this acknowledgement is deeply appreciated” - Mum*

Anecdotally, we have heard in conversation with the Department of Health and Social Care in England that they have received applications for baby loss certificates to mark losses that took place in the 1960s. This underscores the lifelong resonance a baby loss can have for a person.

Moreover, this demonstrates the value many people will ascribe to an official record of this loss – even many years on. For people who have experienced baby loss, it can be incredibly meaningful to have an official recognition of this loss. For some, this may be the only physical remembrance of the little person that they never had the chance to meet, and still miss today.

## 2.3 Further engagement and support

We have helped the DHSC and Scottish Government with consultation around the certificate scheme and would be delighted to do so again. We can also provide further detail with anonymised results of our previous surveys of people who have experienced baby loss, collected when we were engaging with the Government in England on their comparable plans.

## 2.4 Contact details

We would be very happy to contribute further to the Committee’s consideration of this aspect of the Bill. In turn, as a representative charity for families affected by miscarriage, we believe we have further valuable insights and experience to share when it comes to developing regulations for baby loss certificates.

We would welcome future opportunities to feed into this process as they arise. We look forward to working with the Assembly and Government to ensure baby loss certificates are provided in Northern Ireland.

If you would like more information, please contact:

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