

NHSCT Consultation Response

The NHSCT welcomes the introduction of the Deaths, Stillbirths and Baby Loss Bill. We deeply value compassionate and inclusive care and express our support for this bill as a vital and compassionate step toward addressing long-standing gaps in the recognition and support of families affected by death, stillbirth and pregnancy loss before 24 weeks.

Support for the Baby Loss Certificate Scheme

We strongly support the introduction of a Baby Loss Certificate Scheme. For many parents who experience early pregnancy loss the absence of formal recognition contributes to feelings of isolation and invalidation. By introducing an official certificate, this bill would provide a symbolic and emotional acknowledgment of their grief. For grieving parents, it is deeply meaningful and demonstrates that their baby's existence, although brief, mattered. We hope the scheme will be free for everyone, without an expiry on when the loss happened, and available for all families.

Support for Permanent Electronic Registration

The proposal to make electronic registration of deaths and stillbirths a permanent option is both timely and necessary. This has proven to be effective during and since the COVID-19 pandemic. During times of grief, making processes easier can reduce additional stress. It is also practical and helpful for both staff and bereaved families.

Support for the amendment to the bill that enables same-sex female parents to be able to attend separately to register the birth of a child, for a second female parent to be able to register a still-birth without the birth mother present, and for the birth mother to be able to request re-registration if she disputes the second female parent's details.

We support this amendment, which will enable same-sex female parents to be recognised equally in the registration of stillbirths and deaths. This change will provide parental validation and recognition and is an essential step toward ensuring that parents are treated with dignity and equality, regardless of parental gender or sexual orientation.

This legislation marks an important milestone in Northern Ireland's care for bereaved families. We commend the Assembly and Ministers involved for progressing it with care and compassion and welcome its implementation.