

13<sup>th</sup> June 2025

Matthew O'Toole MLA  
Chairperson  
Committee for Finance  
Northern Ireland Assembly

Issued By Email

Our Ref:

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Dear Matthew O'Toole MLA

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

Derry City and Strabane District Council supports the Death, Still-birth and Baby Loss Bill and the proposed measures it contains.

### **Notification of Deaths and Still-Births**

***Explanatory and Financial Memorandum 8. Section 90(2)*** DCSDC agree and support the change to make permanent the temporary remote registration procedures that we currently operate under the Coronavirus Act 2020, so that these are confirmed and permanent procedures which no longer need to rely on 6 monthly extensions to their expiry date.

***Explanatory and Financial Memorandum (no.27)*** DCSDC welcome the steps taken to address the current differences in the registration processes for births and still-births between same-sex female couples and opposite-sex couples. Ensuring equality and fairness in how all families are recognised during such significant life events is welcome.

DCSDC also support the introduction of a certification scheme for baby loss occurring prior to 24 weeks of pregnancy. Families would benefit from the comfort and acknowledgement that such recognition would provide.

GRO have stated that "It is anticipated that such a Baby Loss Certificate Scheme will be run online and through GRO, rather than through the District Registration Offices (DRO)" therefore this will not have an impact on DCSDC DRO service delivery.

## Comments on Clauses

***Explanatory and Financial Memorandum (no 3&4)***: DCSDC recommends that the electronic delivery of documents is included. This should avoid unnecessary delays in receiving Medical Cause of Death Certificates (MCCDs) and Still-Birth Certificates from hospitals and health centres. The DRO encounters MCCDs not arriving with registrars promptly, particularly when a cremation is being organised, which causes additional administration and following up with hospitals, health centres and nursing homes and distress to the bereaved family.

DCSDC would like to see a review of the terminology "disposal of the body" as it appears in official documents and final death certificates. This term is encountered by individuals who are not relatives or the spouse of the deceased but are responsible for arranging funeral and burial matters. The language currently used may be regarded impersonal, and distressing at this difficult time. Service users have indicated that the phrase is upsetting and inappropriate, as it does not reflect the dignity or care with which such arrangements are made. A regional communication campaign to inform the public of any future legislative changes would be essential. DCSDC will also assist via existing social media channels.

Yours sincerely

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