

Title: NIROS Registration Bulletin 15 2025 - Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill - NI Assembly Committee for Finance

Author: Aoife Rooney – GRO

Audience: District Registration Staff

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We have received some calls to GRO in relation to the letter received by Council Chief Executives from the Finance Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly. The letter sets out the detail of the Department of Finance's Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill and seeks views from the Chief Executives on that Bill. Internally, how that is arranged is a matter for each Council and GRO is not involved in this evidence-gathering. This is a request from the Finance Committee to seek views on the Bill and you are of course free to provide your views, and we would encourage you to do so, as you see fit.

If it is helpful we have set out below in very general terms, the purpose of the Bill (the detail is in the links attached in the Letter to the Chief Executives):

- 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.
- To make a power that will allow the Department of Finance to make regulations to create a Baby Loss Certificate Scheme for early pregnancy losses. So, the Bill will create a power to allow the Department to make regulations. The regulations setting up the scheme will come after the Bill has been enacted. It is anticipated that such a Baby Loss Certificate Scheme will be run online and through GRO, rather than through the DROs - as this will not be a formal registration service as the certificates will be commemorative. They will not be legal documents.
- Thirdly, the Bill will seek to widen the access to registration procedures to close some gaps that have been identified. The changes will only be in relation to attending offices jointly or separately. There will be no impact on who can go on a birth or stillbirth certificate. The changes are purely in relation to who can attend and when. Specifically:

Birth Registrations

1. Where a couple - who are neither married to each other nor in a civil partnership with each other – wish to register a birth, a same sex female couple cannot attend a registration office separately to effect a joint registration (but an opposite sex couple can). The Bill will make changes so that both same sex female couples and opposite sex couples will be able to attend separately to effect a joint registration.

Still-birth Registrations

2. Where a couple - who are neither married to each other nor in a civil partnership with each other – wish to register a still-birth, for same sex female couples the second female parent cannot register a still-birth on their own and include the mother's details, but a father in an opposite sex couple would be able to do this. The Bill will make changes so that a second female parent in this scenario will be able to register a still-birth on their own and include the mother's details, in the way that a father in an opposite sex couple can do.
3. Following on from this, the Bill will also provide that where a mother in a same sex couple - who are neither married to each other nor in a civil partnership with each other – wishes to re-register a still-birth where the original registration has been carried out by the second female parent, this can be done (as is currently the case for a mother in an opposite sex couple whom are not married to each other or in a civil partnership with each other).

The Bill is not finalised legislation and could be subject to amendment.