

Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Act (Northern Ireland) 2026

CHAPTER 2

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SCHEDULE:

Schedule — Other amendments relating to the registration of births and still-births

Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Act (Northern Ireland) 2026

2026 CHAPTER 2

An Act to amend the law relating to the manner of notification of deaths, still-births and births and the manner of giving particulars relating to them; and to make provision for the issue of certificates recognising the loss of a baby. [25th February 2026]

BE IT ENACTED by being passed by the Northern Ireland Assembly and assented to by His Majesty as follows:

Registration

Introductory

1. In this Act—

"the 1976 Order" means the Births and Deaths Registration (Northern Ireland) Order 1976;

"the 2012 Regulations" means the Civil Registration Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012.

Power to approve electronic means

2. After Article 2(3) of the 1976 Order insert—

"(4) The Registrar General may, for the purposes of this Order, approve any electronic means of—

(a) delivering or giving a document, or

(b) signing a document;

and in this Order "approved electronic means" means any means approved under this paragraph.".

Giving certificate of still-birth directly

3.—(1) Article 15 of the 1976 Order is amended as follows.

(2) For paragraph (3) substitute—

"(3) A certificate in the prescribed form must be delivered to the registrar, by approved electronic means and without delay, by—

(a) a registered medical practitioner who was present at the still-birth or has examined the body of the still-born child, or

(b) if there is no registered medical practitioner within sub-paragraph (a), a registered midwife who was present at the still-birth or has examined the body.

(3A) But paragraph (3) does not apply if—

(a) the still-birth has been referred to the coroner, or

(b) the medical practitioner or midwife (as the case may be) intends to refer the still-birth to the coroner.".

(3) In paragraph (4), before sub-paragraph (a) insert—

"(za) be signed in the prescribed manner (which may be by approved electronic means) by the person delivering the certificate;".

(4) For paragraph (5) substitute—

"(5) A medical practitioner or midwife who is required to deliver a certificate under paragraph (3) must give a copy of the certificate, free of charge, to any qualified informant who requests it.".

(5) In paragraph (6)—

(a) for ", if so required, give to the informant or to" substitute "give to—

(a) the informant, if the informant so requests, and";

(b) the words from "the person who has control" to "a still-born child," become sub-paragraph (b).

(6) In paragraph (7)—

(a) for "written notice of a still-birth accompanied by such a certificate as is mentioned in paragraph (3)" substitute "notice of a still-birth from an informant and a certificate delivered under paragraph (3)";

(b) for "the person sending the notice" substitute "—

(a) the person who gave that notice, if the person so requests, and

(b) the person who has control over, or who ordinarily effects the disposal of bodies at, any burial ground or other place at which it is intended to dispose of the body of a still-born child,".

(7) In the 2012 Regulations—

(a) in regulation 21(b), omit "a written" and for "accompanied by a certificate" substitute "and a certificate has been";

(b) in Schedule 1, in Form 10, in the opening lines, omit "a written" and for "accompanied by" substitute "and".

Giving certificate of cause of death directly

4.—(1) In Article 22 of the 1976 Order—

(a) for "sends to the registrar a written notice" substitute "notifies the registrar";

(b) for ", accompanied by such medical certificate of the cause of the death as is required by Article 25 to be given to the registrar," substitute "and the medical certificate of the cause of death has been given to the registrar as required by Article 25(2)".

(2) Article 25 of that Order is amended as follows.

(3) In paragraph (2), for "to a qualified informant" substitute "to the registrar".

(4) After paragraph (2) insert—

"(2A) The certificate under paragraph (2) must be given by approved electronic means and signed in the prescribed manner (which may be by approved electronic means).".

(5) In paragraph (3), for "an informant" substitute "the registrar".

(6) After paragraph (3) insert—

"(3A) A practitioner who is required to give a certificate under paragraph (2) must give a copy of the certificate, free of charge, to any qualified informant who requests it.".

(7) In paragraph (4), for the words from "An informant" to "and" substitute "Where a registered medical practitioner gives to the registrar a certificate under paragraph (2) together with such other particulars as are required to be given under that paragraph,".

Giving certificate of registration, or written notice of death, directly

5.—(1) Article 29 of the 1976 Order is amended as follows.

(2) In paragraph (1)—

(a) for "the person giving information concerning the death" substitute "—

(a) the person giving information concerning the death, if the person so requests, and

(b) the person who effects the disposal of, or performs any funeral service for, the body of the deceased person,";

(b) omit "under his hand".

(3) In paragraph (2)—

(a) omit "written";

(b) for "the person sending the notice, if required to do so," substitute "—

(a) the person who gave that notice, if the person so requests, and

(b) the person who effects the disposal of, or performs any funeral service for, the body of the deceased person,";

(c) omit "under his hand".

(4) In the 2012 Regulations—

(a) in regulation 28(ii), omit "a written";

(b) in Schedule 1, in Form 13, in the heading and in footnote (a), omit "written".

Registration of particulars of still-birth

6.—(1) Regulation 16 of the 2012 Regulations is amended as follows.

(2) In paragraph (2)—

(a) for ", 11 and 12(4)" substitute "and 11";

(b) omit the words from "but a qualified informant" to the end.

(3) After paragraph (2) insert—

"(2A) For the purposes of Article 10(4) of the 1976 Order, a person who is required to give information to the registrar concerning a still-birth must give that information in one of the following ways—

(a) by attending personally at any Register Office;

(b) by telephone;

(c) by any approved electronic means.".

(4) After paragraph (3) insert—

"(4) When the required particulars have been entered in Form 2, 2A or 2B—

(a) the registrar must call upon the qualified informant to verify that the particulars have been entered correctly, except that a qualified informant is not required to verify particulars of the cause of the still-birth, and

(b) if it appears that any error has been made, a fresh entry of the still-birth must be made containing the correct particulars.

(5) When the qualified informant has verified that the particulars entered are correct—

(a) if the qualified informant has attended personally, the informant must sign the register at the appropriate place, and

(b) the registrar must enter the name and official description of the registrar at the appropriate place.".

(5) In consequence of the amendments made by subsections (2) and (4), in regulation 30(2)(b) of the 2012 Regulations, for "regulation 12(4) as applied by regulation 16(2)" substitute "regulation 16(4)".

(6) In Schedule 1 to the 2012 Regulations—

(a) in Form 2, for entry 15 substitute "Signature or Name of person professing to be informant";

(b) in Form 2A, for entry 15 substitute "Síniú nó ainm an duine a dhearbhaíonn gurb é féin an faisnéiseoir";

(c) in Form 2B, for entry 15 substitute—

"Signature or Name of person professing to be informant

Síniú nó ainm an duine a dhearbhaíonn gurb é féin an faisnéiseoir".

Manner in which particulars of death are required to be given

7.—(1) Regulation 25 of the 2012 Regulations is amended as follows.

(2) In paragraph (1), for "by attending personally at any Register Office and giving that information to the registrar" substitute "to the registrar in one of the following ways—

(a) by attending personally at any Register Office;

(b) by telephone;

(c) by any approved electronic means.".

(3) In paragraph (3)(a), for "the qualified informant shall" substitute "if the qualified informant has attended personally, the informant must".

(4) In Schedule 1 to the 2012 Regulations—

(a) in Form 3, for entry 16 substitute "Signature or Name of person professing to be informant";

(b) in Form 3A, for entry 16 substitute "Síniú nó ainm an duine a dhearbhaíonn gurb é féin an faisnéiseoir";

(c) in Form 3B, for entry 16 substitute—

"Signature or Name of person professing to be informant

Síniú nó ainm an duine a dhearbhaíonn gurb é féin an faisnéiseoir".

Minor amendments relating to births and still-births

8. The Schedule to this Act contains minor amendments.

No restriction on power to amend Regulations

9. The amendments made by this Act to the 2012 Regulations do not restrict any power conferred by any statutory provision to amend, modify or revoke those Regulations.

Repeal of temporary provisions

10. Section 18(3) of, and Part 3 of Schedule 13 to, the Coronavirus Act 2020 (registration of deaths and still-births: Northern Ireland) are repealed.

Certificates recognising the loss of a baby during pregnancy

Certificates of baby loss

11.—(1) The Department of Finance shall by regulations make provision for the issue, by the Registrar General of Births and Deaths, of certificates which recognise the loss of a baby during pregnancy.

(2) The regulations may provide for the recognition of any loss which is not a still-birth within the meaning of the 1976 Order.

(3) The regulations may include, in particular, provision about the following matters—

(a) the conditions for the issue of a certificate;

(b) the information that a certificate is to contain;

(c) who may apply for a certificate;

(d) the form of an application, and what information may be required to accompany the application;

(e) the charging of fees for—

(i) any copies of a certificate other than the original and the first copy of it (but not for an amended certificate or any copies of it);

(ii) the issue of any certificate (or copy) by an expedited service.

(4) Regulations under this section—

(a) may make such consequential, supplementary or incidental provision as the Department considers appropriate, and

(b) may amend any statutory provision (within the meaning given by section 1(f) of the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1954).

(5) Regulations may not be made under this section unless a draft of the regulations has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, the Assembly.

General

Commencement

12.—(1) Sections 2 to 7 and 10 come into operation on such day or days as the Department of Finance may by order appoint.

(2) The other provisions of this Act come into operation on the day after the day on which this Act receives Royal Assent.

Short title

13. This Act may be cited as the Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Act (Northern Ireland) 2026.

SCHEDULE

Section 8.

OTHER AMENDMENTS RELATING TO THE REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS AND STILL-BIRTHS

The 1976 Order

1. The 1976 Order is amended as follows.

2.—(1) Article 14ZA is amended as follows.

(2) In the heading, after "not civil partners" insert "or married".

(3) In paragraph (3)(a), for "and in that event the mother and that person shall sign the register in the presence of each other" substitute "in the prescribed manner".

(4) In paragraph (4)(b), for "and the signing of the register by her in the presence of the registrar" substitute "in the prescribed manner".

3.—(1) Article 18(1) is amended as follows.

(2) In sub-paragraph (ba)—

(a) in paragraph (ii), after "of that Act" insert "(a "second female parent")";

(b) after that paragraph insert—

"(iii) particulars relating to a second female parent of the child have been entered in the register in the case of a still-birth and the mother disputes them; or".

The 2012 Regulations

4. The 2012 Regulations are amended as follows.

5.—(1) Regulation 12 is amended as follows.

(2) In paragraph (2), for paragraph (a) and the words "(b) both parents" substitute "the mother and father of a child".

(3) In paragraph (3)—

(a) for paragraph (a) and the words "(b) both parents" substitute "the mother and second female parent of a child";

(b) at the end insert "or separately, and where both parents intend to make such a request separately, the provisions of regulation 13 apply".

6.—(1) Regulation 13 is amended as follows.

(2) In paragraph (1)—

(a) for "both parents" substitute "both the mother of a child and the father or second female parent of that child";

(b) at the end insert "; and in this regulation references to the "other parent" of a child are to the child's father or second female parent".

(3) In paragraphs (2), (3) and (4), for "father" substitute "other parent".

(4) In paragraphs (3)(c) and (4)(c), after "he" insert "or she".

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