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Ref: NBR/2026/003 - Outstanding statutory duty on coronial investigation of stillbirths

Alex Norris MP
Secretary of State for Justice
Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ

20th July 2026

Dear Secretary of State,

First, may we congratulate you on your appointment.

We are writing to brief you on the continuing failure to fulfil the statutory duty under Section 4 of the Civil Partnerships, Marriages and Deaths (Registration etc.) Act 2019 concerning coronial investigation of stillbirths.

Parliament imposed that duty in March 2019. The consultation closed in June 2019. More than seven years later, the substantive report and Government position have still not been published.

The issue is simple but fundamental. A baby who shows signs of life and dies shortly afterwards may receive coronial oversight. A baby who dies moments earlier, before taking a breath, does not. Families are instead left reliant on internal NHS reviews, often with no genuinely independent route to establish what happened.

We wrote to the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State responsible for coroners on 21 May 2026, enclosing a detailed briefing and supporting correspondence. We received no acknowledgement and no response.

The Ministry of Justice had previously stated that it would communicate its position after the Maternity and Neonatal Investigation chaired by Baroness Amos had reported.

That report has now been published and recommends that the Ministry of Justice report on coronial investigation of stillbirths without delay.

The reason previously given for further deferral has therefore ended.

It is also notable that the only clear ministerial confirmation we have received that policy work relating to the 2019 Act has taken place came from James Murray MP, then Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. The Ministry of Justice has still not explained what work has been completed, what remains outstanding or when the statutory duty will be fulfilled.

We therefore ask that you:

1. Confirm which minister will take direct responsibility for completing the Section 4 duty.
2. Set out what policy work has been undertaken and what remains outstanding.

3. Provide a firm timetable for publication of the report and Government response.
4. Confirm that consideration will extend to all stillbirths within the statutory definition, from 24 weeks, noting that we refer to this threshold only because it is the current legal definition of stillbirth and that we believe harm can occur at any gestation.

We would be grateful for an acknowledgement and a substantive response.

Yours sincerely,

Tom & Ewa Hender
Dad & Mamus of Aubrey
Founders, No Breath Required
On behalf of previous signatories and other families affected by stillbirth

Copied to:

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State responsible for coroners
Sir Gavin Williamson MP

Enclosure:

Letter to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State responsible for coroners, dated 21 May 2026, including its own enclosures.