**From Director of Family and Children's Policy**

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Email: [redacted]

**By Email**

Collette Wright

Speak For Them

[redacted]

Our Ref: [redacted]

Date: 5 November 2026

Dear Collette

Thank you for your email of 8 October in relation to 'One Record' and 'The Unshaken Standard' which has been passed to me for reply. Please accept my apologies for the time taken to respond.

With regard to your proposal for One Record, it is important to recognise that Northern Ireland already has a well-established statutory, policy and procedural framework to support multi-agency safeguarding, information sharing and decision-making where there are concerns about a child's welfare or safety.

Northern Ireland's safeguarding arrangements operate within a statutory framework, including the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, and are supported by the policy guidance set out in *Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland*. The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) Procedures Manual sets out the processes to be followed by relevant agencies when concerns arise regarding a child's welfare or safety and support a coordinated multi-agency approach to safeguarding children and young people.

These arrangements include the *Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland (UNOCINI)* framework, which provides a shared assessment model across agencies, as well as established multi-agency processes such as Child Protection Case Conferences. Through these mechanisms, professionals from health, social

care, education, policing and other relevant services are brought together to share information, assess risk and agree coordinated plans to safeguard children and young people.

In terms of sharing information across jurisdictions, the SBNI's Procedures Manual provide a framework for how Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTs) should respond when a child or young person whose name is on the Child Protection Register moves outside of the HSCT, including when the move is within Northern Ireland or outside of the jurisdiction. The manual emphasises how important immediate action is in such circumstances to ensure the safety of the child or young person, alongside how and what information should be provided.

In addition, the Department is developing regional guidance to strengthen and standardise the transfer of safeguarding information between HSCTs and local authorities across the UK, to include situations where safeguarding concerns are present but a child's name is not on the Child Protection Register. The guidance aims to ensure that where a child with an active assessment, Child in Need plan, or Child Protection concern moves to another jurisdiction, the receiving authority is notified promptly, a formal transfer process is initiated, and all relevant records and risk information are shared in a timely and comprehensive manner.

There is also an established cross-border framework between Northern Ireland and Ireland. The *Protocol Between Northern Ireland and Ireland for Handling Inter-Jurisdictional Child Cases* provides a framework for cooperation between the relevant authorities in both jurisdictions and supports the management of cases involving vulnerable children and families who have moved, or may move, across the border, or where a child is to be placed in the other jurisdiction. Its purpose is to assist the relevant authorities in implementing procedures in the best interests of children and families and to support effective information sharing and cooperation in cases with a cross-border element.

Taken together, these arrangements provide established mechanisms for multi-agency information sharing and cooperation both within Northern Ireland and where children move across jurisdictions. Accordingly, the principles underpinning your One Record proposals are already reflected within Northern Ireland's existing safeguarding framework and associated procedures. The above comments address those recommendations that fall within the responsibility of the Department of Health; I note that proposals 3 and 4 engage matters that fall within the remit of the Department of Justice.

Turning to your comments regarding the Unshaken Standard, thank you for highlighting the importance of supporting parents and carers to understand and respond safely to persistent infant crying. We recognise the serious risks associated with abusive head trauma and the importance of ensuring those caring for babies have access to appropriate information and support.

Midwives and health visitors routinely discuss infant crying with all new parents, including foster and adoptive parents, using resources such as the Pregnancy Book Pregnancy Book 2026.pdf, and Birth to Five Birth to five 2026.pdf. Information and

support are also available through the PURPLE Crying programme http://www.purplecrying.info/ and Cry-sis Homepage Who We Are | The Cry-sis Helpline.

The Healthy Child, Healthy Future programme, Northern Ireland's universal child health promotion programme, provides a framework of core contacts and key messages, including managing crying babies.

In preparation for the placement of a baby, foster carers and prospective adoptive parents receive ongoing support and information from health visitors and social work staff. The fostering and adoption assessment process explores each carer's experience, knowledge, skills, support networks and approaches to managing stress, recognising that children in care may have additional needs that require skilled, sensitive and attuned caregiving. Prospective carers are encouraged to reflect on how they would respond to a range of challenging scenarios and are supported through training, supervision and periodic review. Support is tailored to the carer's individual circumstances and developmental needs, while also recognising that every child and placement is unique and may require a different approach.

The Department will consider your recommendations with health and social care partners, including opportunities to strengthen existing preparation, training, and support arrangements. We will continue to promote consistent messages on managing infant crying and safeguarding babies, while taking account of operational, legislative and resource considerations.

Yours sincerely

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Eilís McDaniel
Director of Family and Children's Policy