Written submission from a member of the public (ANI0334)

Executive Summary:

- When I was twenty weeks pregnant, I discovered that my baby had a serious life limiting condition
- I was told my baby was ‘incompatible with life’ and it was recommended that I immediately make an abortion appointment
- I did not have the abortion, but chose life for my baby
- My little baby, [name], was cherished and protected by us. She deserved to live, and despite her short life, she brought so much joy, peace and love to us all
- If abortion is made legal in Northern Ireland, special babies like my [name] would not be given a chance at life

Introduction:

My name is [name]. When I was twenty weeks’ pregnant, I was referred to a [consultant] at the [hospital] in [location]. I was very shocked and totally distraught when her consultant told me that my baby “would die in the womb as she may have a heart defect”. An amniocentesis was carried out and the results returned clear. Despite no diagnosis of a specific condition or further information about my unborn baby’s ‘heart defect’, I was cruelly told that my precious unborn baby was ‘incompatible with life’. The consultant recommended that I make an appointment with the Marie Stopes referral centre in Belfast to abort the baby. I refused to do so, knowing that my baby deserved a chance at life.

When this was refused, I was told to return to the hospital only “when you don’t feel your baby move anymore” and labour would then be induced.

At the time, my baby was still in breech position and I was told that I would have to have a breech birth, without the option of a caesarean section. It was also falsely reported in my medical notes that I had “agreed not to have a caesarean section” and had “clearly understood” that there was no need for intervention at birth or after birth.

We had to fight hard to get the care we deserved. Myself and my new-born baby, who I named [name], were provided with perinatal care and support by sensitive and attentive staff at the [hospice]. In the comfort of my arms, [name] died on [date]. She was [0-10] days old.
Recommendations for the government

Every baby should be cherished and protected in their parents’ arms, no matter how brief that time may be. Parents like me, when faced with a devastating diagnosis do not want abortion for our babies because we know we are both worthy of more than that. We deserve better than cold and callous dismissal and abandonment. We deserve the real support and real compassion that is found in perinatal hospice care.

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