

**Some comments made by women we have supported in the community:**

*Thank you and your colleagues for all your wonderful support to me. Being there with words of encouragement and all your efforts to get me sorted out.*

*Birth Companions are really, really kind. They came to see me at the hospital and at home as well. I am so happy for everything.*

*Birth Companions gave me non-judgmental advice and support which helped me not to feel lonely. They were people who really cared about me and my baby.*



To refer a woman to our service, please contact us on:

Tel. 07896112460

E-mail: [info@birthcompanions.org.uk](mailto:info@birthcompanions.org.uk)

Community Link Service  
Birth Companions  
P.O. Box 56431,  
London SE3 7UZ

Website: [www.birthcompanions.org](http://www.birthcompanions.org).

**Birth Companions**



*Supporting pregnant women  
and new mothers  
in the community*

## The Community Link Service

Birth Companions' Community Link Service provides support for pregnant women and new mothers after release from detention. The service aims to prevent isolation and destitution amongst this group of vulnerable women and to enable them to access appropriate support services. The project is run by our Community Link Worker who co-ordinates the support provided by the Birth Companions' team.

### How we work

Our Community Link Worker visits Holloway prison regularly and speaks to women who are due to be released to discuss what support they will need in the community. The women are given a telephone number to enable them to contact us after their release.

After release, the Community Link Worker maintains contact with each woman by telephone or visit. Visits often are arranged in a public place.

We recognise that women leaving detention may face additional difficulties to those faced while in detention and that some women released into the community find themselves even more vulnerable and isolated. We aim to empower women as far as possible and not create dependency.

## The support we provide

- Telephone contact or visits to women to provide emotional support, reassurance and help with the transition from prison to community.
- Antenatal, birth, postnatal and breastfeeding support and information through Birth Companions or by linking a woman in to another doula or service in her area.
- Small grants for food, nappies, travel or phone in cases of hardship.
- Providing donated baby clothes and equipment and maternity clothes.
- Helping women to access local health, parenting and other support services and information eg GP, hospital, children's centre, church or education.
- Assisting women to contact other agencies where there are urgent issues which affect her wellbeing and ability to parent eg, housing, immigration or social services.
- Liaising with the prison eg, organising the release of documents, money, possessions.
- Providing, when possible, language support to women who do not speak much English.

## Who we support

We offer this service to pregnant women and new mothers who are isolated and without support in the community post-release. We usually make contact with a woman while she is still in custody in Holloway prison but we can also support a woman who has been released from another prison or detention centre.

A woman can refer herself or be referred by another agency. In most cases, we begin supporting a woman shortly after her release and her baby will be under two years old.

Most women who have been supported by our Community Link service have been women with immigration and asylum issues. These women often do not have family or other support post-release and may face additional issues such as homelessness and no entitlement to benefits which can make them particularly vulnerable.

Although we work mainly with women in the London area, we can offer initial telephone support to a woman who is resettled out of London and can also send her information so that she can link in with services in her area.