

BIRTH COMPANIONS

ANNUAL REPORT

2008 - 2009



Vision and aims

Vision

Our vision is that all pregnant women and new mothers in detention in the UK have the support they need.

Aims

Our overall aim is to improve the experience of pregnancy, birth and motherhood for women in prison so that they are better able to care for their baby after the birth.

We seek to achieve this by:

- Enabling women to cope better with pregnancy and birth in prison.
- Improving women's ability to care for their babies whilst in prison.
- Reducing the hardship and isolation faced by pregnant women and new mothers in prison and post-release.
- Seeking to influence change in policy and law to improve conditions for pregnant women and mothers and babies in detention.

Birth Companions

Birth Companions is a unique organisation, set up in 1996 to provide a much-needed service to pregnant women and new mothers in HMP Holloway.

Being pregnant, giving birth and becoming a mother is a hugely important and potentially life-changing time in a woman's life. Research has shown that if a woman feels well-supported around the time of giving birth, she is more able to look after baby and become a good mother.

We believe that support is particularly important for pregnant women and new mothers in prison who are one of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of women in Britain. If women are supported in bonding with their babies and to feel positive about their role as a mother at this very early stage, we believe this will provide them with a strong basis for parenting in the future and that they will be less likely to re-offend.

How we work

Our dedicated team of volunteers and staff enable Birth Companions to provide a much needed service to a group of vulnerable women.

Our team of prison visitors go into Holloway prison on a weekly basis to make contact with pregnant women and new mothers. They provide one-to-one support to women and discuss their concerns.

The women we support can choose any or all of our services depending on her needs. These include:

- Antenatal support - this involves drawing up a birth plan, attending a class or one-to-one support with a birth companion to discuss their pregnancy or the birth of their baby.
- Birth support - this includes helping a woman through her labour, massaging her, offering emotional support and companionship and being her advocate if needed.
- Postnatal support - this includes providing individual breastfeeding advice, baby photos and support with the new baby. We run a weekly breastfeeding and early parenting group on the Mother and Baby Unit. We also support mothers who are separating from their baby at the hospital and can accompany women to prison meetings where it is decided whether they get a place on the mother and baby unit of the prison with their baby.
- Post-release support - this service targets the most vulnerable women who have nowhere to go upon release from prison or no-one else to turn to. We provide emotional and practical support to these pregnant women and new mothers and help them to access their local health, parenting and other services.

Working for change

Our day-to-day support work makes us very aware of the areas where improvements are needed in the treatment of pregnant women and new mothers in detention.

Our service also provides an important model for similar services in the UK and abroad. We therefore seek to raise awareness of the needs of the women we work with as well as to support groups to support pregnant women in detention in other areas.

Report from the Chair of Trustees

Once again, I find myself reporting that the year has been busier than ever in terms of the number of women we have supported. It has also been an important year for Birth Companions in developing our work and addressing the issues faced by pregnant women and new mothers in prison.

Our key achievements in 2008 - 2009 were:

- Signing a three-year Service Level Agreement with Holloway prison in February 2009 for our birth and breastfeeding services within Holloway.
- Contributing to the Fawcett Society's research into women in the criminal justice system which led to Birth Companions being cited as an example of good practice in their report 'Engendering Justice - from Policy to Practice'.
- Taking part in a working group within Holloway prison to develop guidelines for women going out to hospital and contributing to the prison's new breastfeeding policy. We also contributed to a national breastfeeding policy which has been issued to Mother & Baby Units across England.

In addition, our Community Support Project enabled us to identify particularly vulnerable women prior to their release and provide intensive support to them after they had been released. This prevented destitution for many of the women we supported and enabled them to start rebuilding their lives.

We also completed our research into the needs of pregnant women and new mothers in Immigration Removal Centres which found that pregnant women and mothers in these centres are subject to a high level of deprivation and that, in many cases, their needs become even greater after release. We hope to take forwards this work in the future.

However, it has also been a particularly challenging year for Birth Companions. Budget cuts have meant that Holloway prison has no longer been able to fund the antenatal and postnatal classes which had been a focus for our contact with pregnant women and new mothers in the prison. In addition, new restrictions have meant that we are no longer allowed to provide women with food, baby items or essentials for themselves while in hospital.

Raising funds to sustain and develop our work has also been difficult. However, as we move into the new year, we are looking forward to recruiting a Director who will be responsible for exploring new sources of funding as well as helping us to work towards our strategic plan.

Once again, I would like to thank all those involved with Birth Companions - our staff and volunteers, my fellow Trustees, our funders and those we work alongside in the prison, hospital and local community. We could not achieve what we do without working together in this way.



Diana Parkinson, Chair of Trustees

The women supported by Birth Companions

In 2008 - 2009, we supported a total of 94 pregnant women and new mothers in Holloway prison. This involved:

- 627 visits/contacts to provide one-to-one support to individual women.
- 76 prison visits by staff and volunteers to make contact with pregnant women in all areas of the prison.
- 44 breastfeeding drop-in sessions for mothers on the Mother & Baby Unit.

Women were provided with support during their pregnancy, the birth of their baby and in the first months of their baby's life. This involved:

- information, advice and support for 53 women during their pregnancy. We helped them to cope with being pregnant in prison and to prepare for the birth of their baby. .
- being 'on call' for 36 women in case they needed us when they went into labour and supporting 15 women during birth. Other women did not require us as they were either released before the birth of their baby or had family members in attendance.
- supporting 67 mothers and their babies whilst they were in hospital and on the Mother & Baby Unit of the prison.
- providing support for 26 particularly vulnerable women as they prepared for and coped with their release from prison.
- providing breastfeeding support to 48 women by running weekly drop-in sessions and providing individual support for women both in hospital and in prison. Some of the women we supported had just been sent to prison and had been separated from babies they had been breastfeeding.

We also provided the following services:

- advocacy support for 14 women
- took birth photos for 22 women
- bought necessities such as baby clothing and other items for 13 women
- supplied 11 women with items such as breastfeeding pumps and bras.

55 of the women we supported during the year completed our ethnic monitoring forms. Of these women:

- almost two-thirds were from ethnic minorities
- a third were foreign nationals from Benin, Ghana, Holland, the Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Lithuania, Nigeria, Portugal, South Africa and Vietnam.
- a third were under 25
- 7 women were refugees/asylum seekers and for 14 women, English was not their first language.

Overview of the year

This year we worked with 94 women in Holloway prison, a significant increase on the 68 women we worked with last year.

Support for pregnant women and new mothers

During pregnancy, birth and in the postnatal period a total of 627 contacts took place between Birth Companions and mothers and babies in the prison, hospital and community. We visited the prison weekly to make contact with women, provide support and represent the group. Volunteers maintained the 24 hour birth line so that women could always request a birth companion to be with them for the birth and postnatal visits in hospital.

Breastfeeding support

Our breastfeeding supporters strived to help women to breastfeed and create a better environment for breastfeeding in the prison. They held a weekly postnatal group on the Mother and Baby Unit which prison staff described as the best attended group on the unit. 48 women received group and /or one-to-one breastfeeding support, including mothers separated from their babies who were breastfeeding before coming to prison.

In 2007, some mothers felt that they could not breastfeed in the public areas on the Mother and Baby Unit (MBU) and that being required to leave their baby in a crèche from six weeks made them give up breastfeeding earlier than they would have wished. Birth Companions raised these issues and a sign was agreed that welcomed breastfeeding in the MBU living room area. The maternity leave period has also been extended from six to eight weeks as a result of our representations. The need for a breastfeeding policy in Holloway was raised by Birth Companions and a suggested policy presented to the prison. Although this has not been adopted by Holloway, it did result in breastfeeding guidelines being issued for staff in all prison MBUs in England and Wales. There was previously no guidance on breastfeeding. We recognise that improvements have been made but are aware that there is still much to be done to facilitate breastfeeding and improve the health outcomes for babies in prison.

Post-release

This year we continued to develop our service for women who would be vulnerable after their release. The Community Link Worker visited pregnant women and mothers with babies in Holloway prior to release to inform them of this service and provide them with a direct contact number.

Twelve women received support in the community through telephone contact or visits. Women were given emotional support, help with advocacy and practical help such as baby clothes and equipment, and small grants for food, telephone calls and travel to essential appointments. We supported women with immigration issues who were sometime in dire situations. One woman had no money for food or nappies while awaiting deportation with her six-week old baby; another woman had food vouchers but no money to telephone her social worker, solicitor or children who were due to be reunited with her. Two women received support post-release while in hospital giving birth. Three women who had been supported during their births in Holloway were given postnatal visits upon release at the Maya Rehabilitation project in London. Links were established with the project so that we could support women at the Maya who had been released from other prisons in the future.

Prison liaison

We were very pleased to have signed a three-year Service Level Agreement with the prison in February 2009, to provide our birth and breastfeeding services within Holloway.

However, the prison is no longer allowing us to provide women with food, baby items or essentials for themselves while in hospital, and this is reflected in the agreement. We have had to abide by this decision but have had some success in suggesting that women be allowed to take a labour bag of essentials from the prison to the hospital, which has not happened in the past. Birth Companions are still allowed to take baby photos and provide women with a phone card so that they can contact family from the hospital.

Birth Companions were invited to join a working group with the midwifery team leader and head of the MBU to develop guidelines for officers accompanying pregnant women and mothers and babies in hospital. We had a series of very productive meetings which resulted in a set of guidelines being produced in July. These guidelines are still being looked at by the prison service. However the discussions appear to have had a positive effect on practice in Holloway and at the hospital.

In April 2008, a new group of prison officers began work on the units where the pregnant women and mothers and babies were housed and the prison moved away from a system of having three or four staff who only worked on the MBU and had previously been very familiar with our work. Prison visitors and the breastfeeding supporters working on the MBU needed to re-establish our good relations with the new staff and explain the value of our work.

In July, budget cuts in the prison meant that the long established antenatal class for pregnant women ended. This class had been an informal setting where the women were introduced to Birth Companions and in which a relationship of trust could be built up. Prison visitors now speak to women for the first time at their cell doors to introduce our service, which is more much difficult. Word of mouth recommendation from other women who have received our support is very helpful to us and we have worked hard to reach women in these more difficult circumstances. In September, Birth Companions put in a proposal to provide the prison with an antenatal class and a baby massage group (also cut) but the prison has said that no funds are available for this.

External work

We aim to influence policy to benefit pregnant women and mothers and babies in detention, so we were pleased to be able to contribute our expertise in this area to the Fawcett Society report into Women in the Criminal Justice System. This led to our work being cited as an example of good practice in their report 'Engendering Justice - from Policy to Practice'. We are also very interested in the work being done to implement the recommendations of the Corston report and have participated in a number of meetings about this.

This year, a representative of Birth Companions has joined the Maternity Services Liaison Committee (MSLC) for Camden and Islington. Members of the MSLC have expressed a great deal of interest in our work and met with us to discuss working together in order to achieve a better breastfeeding environment for women in Holloway.

This year, we also improved our links with other organisations with similar aims through meetings or discussions with Women in Prison, the Anna Freud Centre, The Griffins Society and Action for Prisoners' Families.

Denise Marshall
Group Co-ordinator

As ever, we would like to thank all those who have helped us during the year...

<p style="text-align: center;">Our Honorary President</p> <p>Sheila Kitzingar</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Our Patrons</p> <p>Baroness Helena Kennedy Professor Lesley Page</p>																																
<p style="text-align: center;">Our Trustees</p> <p>Beth McCann - Company Secretary & Book keeper Diana Parkinson - Chair Olabisi Olugbodi - Treasurer Christine Asbury Charlotte Hackett Michele Stokes Avan Wadia</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Our Staff</p> <p>Caterina Coates - Group Administrator Denise Marshall - Group Co-ordinator Lea Ouai - Community Link Worker Alison Shaloe - Breastfeeding Supporter & Trainees' Support Officer</p>																																
<p style="text-align: center;">Our Prison visitors</p> <p>Lisa Millett Lea Ouai Eleanor Stapleton Maggie Vaughan</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Our Phone-holders</p> <p>Maisie Hill Chamutal Isaacs Pam Lacey (holiday cover) Jeannie Lorenz Eleanor Stapleton</p>																																
<p style="text-align: center;">Our Volunteer Birth Companions</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Lola Alcaraz</td> <td>Lea Ouai</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bridget Baker</td> <td>Alison Silvester</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Marjorie Dill</td> <td>Eleanor Stapleton</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Maisie Hill</td> <td>Michele Stokes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jeannie Lorenz</td> <td>Maggie Vaughan</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lisa Millett</td> <td>Anna Wise</td> </tr> </table>	Lola Alcaraz	Lea Ouai	Bridget Baker	Alison Silvester	Marjorie Dill	Eleanor Stapleton	Maisie Hill	Michele Stokes	Jeannie Lorenz	Maggie Vaughan	Lisa Millett	Anna Wise	<p style="text-align: center;">Our Trainees</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Jenny Dawson</td> <td>Caroline Holding</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Amanda Garber</td> <td>Sally Vincent</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Nicky Gunter</td> <td>Debra Virchis</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mirelle Harris</td> <td>Lesley Worrall</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Natalie Stokell</td> <td>Carly Poyser</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Saradadevii Hull-Jurkovic</td> <td>Sarah Kenrick</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Laura Lucca</td> <td>Joanna Wright</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lara Mackenzie</td> <td>Rachel Turner</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Vicky Marcus-Page</td> <td>Alison Rahilly</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sesheeni Joud-Selvaratnam</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Jenny Dawson	Caroline Holding	Amanda Garber	Sally Vincent	Nicky Gunter	Debra Virchis	Mirelle Harris	Lesley Worrall	Natalie Stokell	Carly Poyser	Saradadevii Hull-Jurkovic	Sarah Kenrick	Laura Lucca	Joanna Wright	Lara Mackenzie	Rachel Turner	Vicky Marcus-Page	Alison Rahilly	Sesheeni Joud-Selvaratnam	
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<p style="text-align: center;">Our Funders</p> <p>The AB Charitable Trust The Albert Hunt Charitable Trust The Coutts Charitable Trust The Goldsmiths' Company The Mercers' Company The Pilgrim Trust The Rowan Charitable Trust The Staples Trust The Swan Mountain Charitable Trust The Yapp Charitable Trust</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Individual donors</p> <p>Liz Anderson Christine Butterfield Luiza Campos Scarlet Granville Charlotte Hackett Karina Karmenian Sam Nimmo Anna Wise and her yoga students</p>																																
<p style="text-align: center;">Supporters and advisors</p> <p>Pam Lacey Delia Muhammed Chamutal Isaacs Isabelle Wise</p>																																	

Financial Summary

In 2008 - 2009, we carried forward £40,886 from grants received in the previous year and raised a further £37,665. Our total expenditure was £52,245. We therefore carried forward £26,306 into 2008 - 2009.

The charity was grateful to receive funding from:

- The AB Charitable Trust
- The Pilgrim Trust
- The Albert Hunt Trust
- The Rowan Charitable Trust
- The Coutts Charitable Trust
- The Staples Trust
- The Goldsmiths' Company
- The Swan Mountain Trust
- The Mercers' Company
- The Yapp Charitable Trust

Our summary accounts are as follows:

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2009	Total Funds 2008
INCOMING RESOURCES				
Donations	1214	500	1714	5,352
Grants	28,500	6000	34500	60,500
In Kind	180		180	41
Bank interest receivable	1,271		1271	2,401
Total incoming resources	31,165	6,500	37,665	68,294
RESOURCES EXPENDED				
Charitable activities	(39,803)	(11,683)	(51,486)	(59,867)
Governance costs	(759)		(759)	(1,385)
Total resources expended	(40,562)	(11,683)	(52,245)	(61,252)
Net incoming / (outgoing) resources for the year	(9397)	(5,183)	(14580)	7,042
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward	31,120	9,766	40,886	33,844
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	21,723	4,583	26,306	40,886

Our accounts have been independently examined and a full set is available on request.

Birth Companions

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Website: www.birthcompanions.org.uk**

Registered Charity Number: 1120934

Birth Companions is also a company limited by guarantee (company number: 6269047), registered in England and Wales with a registered office address at: Dalton House, 60 Windsor Avenue, South Wimbledon, London SW19 2RR