



Dear friends,

We have a lot to update you on in our Spring newsletter, so grab a cuppa!

Thank you, as ever, for your support of Birth Companions.

We hope you're enjoying the sun whenever you can, and finding ways to stay grounded, motivated and active in the face of so much challenging and distressing news and politics.

With love,  
Birth Companions

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## News

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### **The Izzy Project**

On 1st May, Birth Companions launched a new support service for women with involvement from children's social care. The Izzy Project offers specialist, relationship-led support to women living or giving birth in the London Borough of Hackney who are at risk of, or experiencing separation from their baby shortly after birth. The service was co-designed by members of Birth Companions' Lived Experience Team, and with input from over 40 stakeholders from Hackney's maternity, perinatal mental health, and children's social care services. Co-production was an essential tool in building understanding of the needs of birth mothers in Hackney, and designing an innovative service to meet those needs successfully. This new service is named in loving memory of a child whose mum has been a huge part of Birth Companions for many years. [Read more about the Izzy Project here.](#)

### **Sentencing Council**

In March, the Sentencing Council announced that pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period would be included as a specific mitigating factor to be considered by magistrates and Crown Court judges in sentencing decisions. This represents a significant and welcome step forward from the Council, and a clear acknowledgement of the substantial risks the prison system poses to pregnant

women, new mothers, and their babies. This move follows [Birth Companions'](#) suggestion to consider such a mitigating factor, and our [recommendations during consultation](#) on its draft. [Read our full response here.](#)

## Reproductive justice and the climate emergency in the UK

On 17th April, Birth Companions and [Wen \(Women's Environmental Network\)](#) hosted a free lunchtime webinar to launch our [new joint policy paper](#) on the impacts of the climate emergency on reproductive justice in the UK. We were delighted to welcome exciting guest speakers, Lola Fayokun and Olamide Raheem, who also joined panel members from Birth Companions and Wen for an engaging Q&A session. [Watch a recording of the event here.](#)

## BBC Sounds podcast

In March, BBC Sounds launched a new podcast series, [Wrongly Accused: The Annette Hewins Story](#), exploring the case of a woman who wrongly accused of arson in 1996. In the series, Annette's daughter Nicole explores the ramifications of this miscarriage of justice for her mother and their wider family. Episode 4 focuses on Annette's pregnancy and birth while on remand in HMP Eastwood Park, and features Birth Companions Director, Naomi Delap. [Find out more about the podcast here.](#)

*Please note that many of the themes explored in this podcast series are upsetting. Please take care if you choose to listen.*

## General Election

On Thursday 4th July 2024 there will be a general election in the UK, to decide on the next government. Voter eligibility and registration can be confusing, so Birth Companions has produced a guide, explaining how to check whether you are able to vote in a UK election, to register to vote, or to get voter ID. [Download this resource here.](#)

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## Services

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Alongside our [new Izzy Project](#), our other [services in the community](#) continue to support a large number of women across London and the South East who are facing pregnancy and early motherhood in some of the most challenging circumstances. Our expert Service Coordinators work flexibly, offering women support through the whole perinatal journey in the ways that work best for them, and helping them navigate many other complexities related to housing, benefits, access to healthcare, and involvement from social care and criminal justice.

Through our [services in prisons](#), we continue to offer a mix of group and one-to-one support to women throughout their pregnancies, and to those separated from their

babies in the community. Our expert Service Coordinators work to respond to women's specific needs, experiences and interests, advocating where necessary with professionals across the criminal justice, health, and social care systems. Our pregnancy groups provide safe and supportive spaces within highly-restrictive prison settings, for women to gather, share concerns and experiences, and take part in relaxing and creative activities together.

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## Lived Experience Team

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We've been delighted to welcome several mums who have recently been supported by our Community Services into our **Lived Experience Team** over the past few months, where they have quickly gotten stuck in to some incredibly important research projects and advisory roles. Recent projects have included:

- A **King's College London** project examining how migrant women with No Recourse to Public Funds and irregular immigration status are supported during and after their pregnancy;
- An **Oxford University** project focused on improving the health information given to women after they have their babies;
- The **Lost Mothers** project, led by Dr Laura Abbott at the University of Hertfordshire, looking at how women and professionals involved with the criminal justice system experience the enforced separation of mothers and newborn babies.

*If you'd like to hear more about any of this Lived Experience Team work, or enquire about working with the team, please [get in touch](#).*

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## Coming up...

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### **Wen Green Baby Day event: Why aren't toxic chemicals on the public health agenda?**

Naomi Delap, Director of Birth Companions, will be joining several other exciting panelists on 12th June for this online webinar, exploring what race and gender have to do with toxic chemicals, how we can achieve a toxic free future, how to minimise the risk and what can be done to safeguard future health. This event will be hosted by Wen (Women's Environmental Network), as part of their **Green Baby** initiative. **[Find out more and register for this free online event here.](#)**

### **Infant Mental Health Awareness Week #IMHAW24**

Infant Mental Health Awareness Week will be taking place from 10th–16th June 2024. This year's theme is 'Speak up for babies', and we will be joining calls for candidates of all political parties to make sure babies are not forgotten about during the upcoming general election. They don't vote, of course, so it's easy for politicians not to consider what support they need from policymakers. **Find out more and get involved here.**

### **Delivering safer maternity and neonatal services: Call for evidence**

**Sands & Tommy's Joint Policy Unit** have launched a call for evidence, asking the question: "What do you think needs to change to deliver safer maternity and neonatal services?" The call for evidence is open to anyone who works in or with maternity and neonatal services, or who has experienced care within them, and will close on 1st July 2024. **Find out more and respond here.**

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*If you'd like more information on anything mentioned in this newsletter,  
please get in touch*

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