



Dear friends,

We hope you are keeping warm and well on this snowy day!

This has been an incredibly busy year at Birth Companions, and we can't quite believe how close we are to the end of it now. Read on for a round up of some of our activities over the past few months.

A quick reminder that Birth Companions is no longer on X/Twitter, but you still can find us on [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#), where we post regular updates about our activities, events, recruitment and publications.

Thank you for your continued interest and support. It means the world to us.

With love,  
Birth Companions

---

## Our impact

---

Last month we published our Impact Report for the 2023-24 financial year, during which we supported:

**130** women and birthing people in prisons in England

**131** women and birthing people in the community in London & the South East

Each year we ask the women and birthing people we support to provide us with feedback. Of those who gave us feedback in 2023/24:

**100%** said our support had helped improve their mental wellbeing

**98%** said our support helped them to feel more valued and respected

**94%** said we had helped them to feel less isolated

**93%** said our services helped them feel more confident in making decisions for themselves and their babies

**100%** said our support had helped them to give their babies a better start in life

[Read our full Impact Report](#)

---



Earlier this month, we [launched our new Taking a Strand campaign](#), working with leading barristers at family law chambers [4PB](#) and solicitors at [MSB](#) to call for an end to the overreliance on hair strand testing in the family courts. There is a compelling body of evidence that shows the processes used to interpret hair strand drug test results are vastly oversimplified and misleading, and that they hold a significant risk of racial bias.

*"Without urgent and comprehensive review of the way this evidence is presented and interpreted in court proceedings, there is significant risk that many more children will be wrongly removed from their families: a most devastating form of injustice."*

**Naomi Delap, Director of Birth Companions**

As part of this campaign, we sent an open letter to the Family Division and the Family Justice Board, calling on them to undertake an urgent review of the use of these tests. Sent with over 90 co-signatories, from more than 20 different organisations, our letter received coverage on the [Bureau of Investigative Journalism](#) and in the [Observer](#); and prompted a direct response from President of the Family Division, Sir Andrew McFarlane. There's still time to add your support for this campaign.

[Find out more & add your signature to our open letter](#)

---

## MBRRACE maternal deaths reports 2024: Reflections events

---

Following the publication of the latest MBRRACE report on maternal deaths last month, Birth Companions held two online reflections events, to allow us to collectively reflect on some of the key inequities highlighted in this year's report; the care of pregnant and postnatal women who have social services' involvement, and the experiences of pregnant and postnatal women who have recently migrated. Both sessions are now available to watch online:

**Session 1 - The 2024 MBRRACE report and children's social care involvement**  
*We were joined for this event by Kaat De Backer, NIHR Research Fellow in Maternal and Perinatal Mental Health at King's College London.*

Watch a recording of Session 1

**Session 2 - Migrant women's experiences of maternity care in the 2024 MBRRACE report**

*We were joined for this event by Dr Hannah Rayment-Jones and Zenab Barry from the NoRePF in Pregnancy Project at King's College London; and by Nicola Vousden, Clinical Research Fellow in Maternal and Child Population Health at NPEU.*

Watch a recording of Session 2

Our Head of Policy, Kirsty Kitchen, has also written an opinion piece on this year's MBRRACE findings for the BMJ Online: *Inequities are not inevitable*.

---

## Funding news

---

We're delighted to have received a significant funding grant from [City Bridge Foundation](#) in recent weeks, as part of their Suicide Prevention fund. This generous grant will help fund our community services in London and is a brilliant recognition of the potential our support has for reducing maternal suicide, which remains the leading direct cause of death between six weeks and a year after birth ([MBRRACE-UK, 2024](#)).

We also recently received a grant from the [Evan Cornish Foundation](#), which will fund the first phase of our new, collaborative programme of policy and influencing work focussing on improving the health and care experiences of migrant perinatal women. We'll be sharing more news on that soon!

---

## Giving HOPE Project – Hackney launch event

---



The [Giving HOPE project](#), a collaboration between Lancaster University and Birth Companions, aims to reduce the trauma experienced by mothers and babies who are separated soon after birth. At the centre of the project are the HOPE Boxes, co-

produced with a group of women with lived experience of maternal separation (the HOPE Mothers), and underpinned by findings from the *Born into Care* project.

HOPE Boxes have now been rolled out in over 30 areas of the country, and last week Birth Companions staff and HOPE Mothers attended the official launch at Homerton University Hospital in East London. The event was attended by midwives, health professionals and social workers, with speeches from senior leaders in local maternity and children's social care services. Kate Chivers, Birth Companions' Head of Engagement, led a Q&A with two of the HOPE mothers, who spoke movingly about the items in the boxes, and how and why they were chosen.

---

## Scenes from Lost Mothers

---



Birth Companions is delighted to announce that bookings are now open for a new *Clean Break* play, *Scenes from Lost Mothers*, which brings to life the findings of the groundbreaking *Lost Mothers* research project, led by Dr Laura Abbott at the *University of Hertfordshire*. Birth Companions staff and members of our Lived Experience Team have played a central role in shaping the *Lost Mothers* project from the very outset, exploring the multiple challenges faced by women who are compulsorily separated from their babies within the prison system.

[Find out more & enquire about booking a performance](#)

---

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

---

This message is from Birth Companions  
[Manage communication preferences](#)

---

Powered by White Fuse