

Your Inside Guide to...

Pregnancy, Birth and Motherhood in Prison



Information for pregnant women
and mums of babies under two years

Is this booklet for me?

This booklet is for anyone who:

- Is pregnant and in prison or facing a prison sentence
 - Is currently residing on an MBU with their baby
 - Is in prison and has given birth in the last 18 months and been separated from their baby
 - Is working with women described in the points above.
- We hope this will include anyone working with women prior to and during sentencing

It has information about:

- Making decisions about your pregnancy
- What support is available to you
- What to expect
- Mother and Baby Units in prison
- Separation from your baby

We have used the word 'woman' throughout the booklet, but we recognise that not everyone who is pregnant identifies as a woman. This booklet is for anyone who is pregnant, regardless of your gender identity or how you choose to express your gender.

If you are supporting women who you think might find this booklet useful but who cannot access it in English, we fully support sections being copied and translated. However please contact us if you are considering reproducing the entire booklet in another language.



Contents

2	Pregnancy in prison
6	Emotions
8	Making decisions about your pregnancy
12	Miscarriage
16	Understanding mother and baby units
22	Preparing for release while pregnant
26	Preparing for birth
30	Giving birth
34	After birth
38	Preparing to feed your baby
42	Expressing your breast milk in prison
46	Being separated from your baby
52	Parenting on a mother and baby unit
56	Parenting a child in the community from prison
60	Preparing for release from the MBU
62	Who you can speak to

Pregnancy in prison

Pregnancy in prison
can be emotional
and overwhelming.
It is good to find out
about what help
and information is
available and to get
as much support as
you can.



What to expect

Maternity care

A midwife from the local hospital will see you for all your regular appointments and checks in the prison. You may also go out to hospital for some appointments and scans. The prison may also have a system to enable you to contact a midwife by phone if you are concerned about anything pregnancy related.

You should be given folic acid supplements for the first 12 weeks of pregnancy and vitamin D throughout. Ask the midwife about these. Some prisons also provide pregnant women with extra food (which might be called a pregnancy pack), an additional mattress and extra pillows.

It can help to understand the different physical and emotional changes that can happen during pregnancy and to develop a clear understanding of what to expect during labour and birth. Some prisons provide antenatal classes run by Birth Companions, other organisations or the midwives. If there are no classes available in your prison, you can get antenatal information from the midwife or the prison library.

Healthcare

You are entitled to the same access to health care and medical treatment in prison as you would have in the community. This includes help from doctors, dentists, opticians and any other healthcare professionals. NHS dental treatment is free during pregnancy and for twelve months after having had a baby.

GPs and dentists usually come in to the prison to run clinics. Some might be based in the prison and there is usually an appointment system for you to use to arrange to see them. Some prisons have a healthcare wing, like a hospital. You might stay there if you are very unwell. Ask an officer or peer supporter how this works.

If you have an existing physical or mental health condition, you should flag this up as early as possible with your personal officer, the midwife or nurse, or a peer supporter, to make sure that you continue to get your medication and any necessary support or treatment. Staff will arrange for your medical records to be transferred from your GP or hospital to the prison healthcare team. This helps to make sure that you get the right care in prison.

Pregnancy in prison continued

Some physical or mental health conditions can develop during pregnancy so you should always speak to a midwife or another medical professional if you are feeling unwell.

Nurses are based in the prison and may visit you on your residential wing or you may see them in Healthcare to get your medication or if you have a concern. Ask an officer or peer supporter how this works.

Choices

It is your right to decide what happens with your pregnancy.

Lots of women are unsure about what they want to do when they find out they are pregnant so it's a good idea to get some advice and information as soon as possible to help you decide.

You can choose to continue your pregnancy, to have a termination or for your baby to be adopted after the birth.

To find out more about your choices, go to pages 8-11.

Telling family and friends

It is up to you to decide who you want to tell about your pregnancy and how.

Some women find it helpful to tell their friends and family so they can provide support. Others may choose not to share this information for lots of different reasons. You can decide what is best for you.

It may be helpful to know that most women start to develop a pregnancy bump at 12-16 weeks so people who see you in person might guess that you are pregnant around this time if you haven't already told them.

Speaking to someone you trust

Whether or not you decide to tell your family or friends, it can be helpful to speak to someone you trust about your pregnancy.

This may be a friend, a member of staff or a listener. If you do not want others to know about your pregnancy yet, make sure you ask the person you are speaking to not to tell others.

Who to speak to

GP
Midwife
Peer supporter
Prison officer
Substance misuse worker
Chaplaincy
Listeners
Improving Access to
Psychological Therapies (IAPT)
Mental health in-reach worker

"I was six months pregnant when I went in. I just couldn't believe I was there..."

Emotions

*"Just a little kindness
and support really
changed the way I felt
about the world."*



What to expect

Physical and emotional changes

During pregnancy and early motherhood your body is going through a lot of changes and producing different hormones, which can affect your mood. You might experience mood swings or changes to your general emotional state, such as feeling happier or sadder than usual. You might find it strange or difficult to feel and see your body change during pregnancy. Attending antenatal classes and reading books about pregnancy can help you prepare for these changes.

Stress and anxiety

You might feel stressed about being far away from friends and family, about the difficulties of prison life, or if there is uncertainty about what will happen after your baby is born. Some people also experience anxiety about their health and the health of their baby.

Prison is a challenging environment so feelings of stress and anxiety are normal and understandable.

It's normal to worry that you're not doing everything right during pregnancy but there's no such thing as a perfect mum. Just do your best to follow NHS guidelines and advice and ask for support where you can.

If you're feeling stressed, anxious or depressed, consider talking to someone else about your emotions.

Sharing your thoughts and feelings isn't always easy but there are people you can talk to if you are worried.

Who to speak to

Chaplaincy
GP
Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)
Mental health in-reach worker
Midwife
Nurse
Peer supporter
Prison officer
Listeners

Making decisions about your pregnancy

Making a decision about your pregnancy can be difficult. This is your decision and no one should make you feel uncomfortable or pressured into choosing an option that you don't want.



What to expect

Opportunities to consider your options and talk to professionals

You should be able to speak to healthcare staff, a counsellor or staff at a specialist organisation about your options.

You should be given information about what a termination involves and how to request one.

If you are considering adoption, you should be able to request a meeting with a social worker to discuss this and ask questions.

Access to termination services

Every pregnant woman in the UK is legally entitled to have a termination for any reason up until the 24th week of their pregnancy. After 24 weeks there are some situations where a termination is still allowed.

You should be able to access services to have a termination, if this is what you choose. Speak to your midwife or a nurse from the healthcare department and they will be able to make the arrangements. It is important to request access as soon as possible because terminations are easier to carry out earlier on in the pregnancy. You will need to have had a scan to know how many weeks pregnant you are before a termination can be arranged.

Making decisions about your pregnancy continued

Recovery after a termination

Pregnancy symptoms can last for up to 10 days after a termination and your breasts may feel firm and tender and leak milk after your procedure. You may feel more comfortable if you wear a supportive bra and apply a cold flannel/ small towel or ice packs to your breasts. How much pain you experience after a termination can vary and you can take paracetamol, as needed. Bleeding usually stops after 1-2 weeks but if it is continuous or especially heavy (soaking 2 or more maxi-size pads in an hour for 2 hours in a row) inform your wing staff and ask them to contact healthcare immediately. If you have any abdominal tenderness, lasting pain or fever it is important to speak to a healthcare professional.

Support from specialist organisations

After a termination most women feel relieved, but some also feel sad or guilty. This is normal and talking through these feelings with an experienced listener can help.

In some prisons, you can access support from organisations that specialise in supporting women with decisions about their pregnancy, such as the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) and Choice for Change. BPAS also provides post-termination phone counselling if you need to talk to someone about how you are feeling. You can ask a member of staff, a midwife, nurse, doctor or peer supporter about accessing these services at your prison.

Who to speak to

British Pregnancy Advisory
Service (BPAS)

GP

Midwife

Nurse

Peer supporter

Prison officer

Choice for Change

Social Worker

Prisoners' Advice Service

Family support/engagement
worker

"the information
I received helped
me to prepare
and understand
more"

Miscarriage

Every pregnancy loss is different and there is no right or wrong way to feel about a miscarriage. Try to accept your emotions as valid and unique to you, and seek support from people you trust.



What to expect

Early signs of miscarriage

Miscarriage is the most common kind of pregnancy loss, particularly in the first trimester of pregnancy (0-14 weeks). It is much less common to miscarry after 14 weeks of pregnancy. It is important for all pregnant women to be aware of the signs of miscarriage and to seek help as soon as possible if you experience any of them.

Every miscarriage is different. Most miscarriages happen because of an issue with the early development of the baby. It is extremely unlikely to be caused by anything you did or didn't do.

The main symptoms of miscarriage are vaginal bleeding or spotting, with or without abdominal pain or cramping. If you have had pregnancy symptoms such as morning sickness or tender breasts and these have now gone, this can be a sign of miscarriage. However some people do not experience many pregnancy symptoms and many people feel differently in different pregnancies. Sometimes there are no obvious signs of miscarriage at all.

Miscarriage is usually confirmed by an ultrasound scan. Sometimes you need more than one scan to confirm that a miscarriage has occurred, usually with a gap of at least one week. This might feel very frustrating, especially if you are already feeling anxious.

Medical attention

If you are experiencing signs of miscarriage you should alert a member of staff as soon as possible so you can be taken to the hospital for further tests and possible treatment.

If you have sharp pain in your stomach or shoulders, and/or pain when using the toilet you should alert someone immediately as these can be symptoms of a life-threatening condition.

Miscarriage continued

Recovery time

After a miscarriage, you will need time to recover physically as well as emotionally. You may find that you are particularly tired or feel generally run down. You may feel very sad or you may feel relieved, especially if there was a long period where it wasn't clear if you were miscarrying or not. You may feel a mixture of different emotions.

All sorts of things can have an impact on your recovery, including how much bleeding you have experienced and how long the process has taken. Most people need at least a few days to physically recover after experiencing a miscarriage and will need to be signed off work on sick leave by the GP.

Emotional support

The loss of a baby in pregnancy can be an unhappy, frightening and lonely experience. It's not a major event for everyone, but feelings of shock, grief and loss are common. How you feel will depend on your circumstances, your experience and what the pregnancy meant to you. Whatever your feelings, you may need some support. This may be very soon after your miscarriage or much later on.

Who to speak to

Midwife

GP

Nurse

Mental health in-reach

Chaplain

Prison officer

Improving Access to
Psychological Therapies

Listener

Peer supporter

"sometimes you
get emotional
or upset"

Understanding Mother and Baby Units

"The not knowing [about whether or not I had a place on the MBU] was making me ill, was making me anxious, was just making me so frustrated"



What to expect

What are Mother and Baby Units (MBUs)

MBUs are very different from the rest of the prison and have been specially designed to be a positive environment for babies to be in while in prison with their mothers. MBUs feel quieter and calmer. There is outside space, a nursery and toys and equipment for mothers and babies. Parents on MBUs have full responsibility for the care of their baby and are never locked behind their doors because the baby is not a prisoner. Nevertheless, it can feel difficult being in prison with your baby and having to follow the prison regime and rules.

Where the MBUs are

Not every prison has an MBU. There are currently six prisons with MBUs:

- Bronzefield
- Eastwood Park
- Styal
- New Hall
- Peterborough
- Askham Grange (only for mothers who qualify for open conditions)



Understanding Mother and Baby Units continued

How to apply

You can apply for a place on an MBU with your baby if:

- Coming to prison has separated you from a baby under 18 months old.
OR
- You are pregnant and think you may still be in prison when you give birth.

Applications to MBUs are considered on a case by case basis, and decisions are based on what is in the best interests of your baby, drawing on what is written in the application form, and the input of relevant professionals.

You might find out about MBUs before you come into prison, for example when you are at court, and you can ask probation staff at the court for information about these units so they can help you apply as early as possible.

You are eligible for a place regardless of whether you are on remand or have been convicted and sentenced. You do not have to be a British citizen to apply for a place.

You can still apply to an MBU if your baby is close to 18 months old when you enter custody, because there is an extension process available. Ask your solicitor, prison officer or midwife for the All About MBUs booklet, which has information about MBUs and includes the application form for a place. All prisons should have these booklets and must provide you with a copy, but if there is any delay in you receiving one, the prison library should have a copy that you can look at.

If you are in a prison without an MBU, you may be supported by an MBU prison liaison officer. You can ask them to contact the prison you are applying to and speak to staff on the MBU and ask questions so you have all the information.

You can apply to any MBU in England, but you might want to prioritise an MBU closest to your home or resettlement area, so that yours and your baby's community and support systems are as close as possible.

It is important that you have the opportunity to let the Admissions Board know why you are applying and why you think you should be offered a place, and you can ask for help with filling your application out from staff, your solicitor, or family and friends. The application is your opportunity to let the Board know why you feel a placement is in your baby's best interests and how you yourself can meet the behavioural expectations of the environment that is provided. Try to provide as much information as possible, and include how you will overcome challenges if there are any you think the Board might be concerned with.

After you apply for a place, the prison will contact social services, probation, your wing officers and others working with you to ask for reports. You can ask a member of staff to keep you informed about how your application is progressing.

Some social workers might not know much about prison MBUs. Some may think they are similar to MBUs in the community, which have a different purpose. It can help to show your social worker the MBU booklet, or you can ask staff to send them information on your behalf, and encourage them to contact the MBU you are applying to, to find out what these units are like. You may choose to speak to your social worker on the phone about your application.

Understanding Mother and Baby Units continued

You will be invited to an Admissions Board meeting (often called 'sitting the Board') at which your application and the reports that have been provided by staff like midwives and your local authority will be considered. In addition to these reports, the Board will consider any other information they think is relevant to your case and your baby.

You can ask for support at this meeting, for example from a friend, family member, support worker or your solicitor. If you cannot attend the MBU Board in person, then a video or telephone link should be set up. If the prison can't set up a video or telephone link, then you can make a written statement.

The decision about whether or not to give you a place will be based on your individual circumstances and what is considered to be in the best interests of your baby. You will be provided with a decision and a reason for the decision in writing following the Board. In some cases, instead of a straight 'yes' or 'no', the Board might admit you but with some expectations to meet before your place is finalised, or they may decide not to admit you straight away but ask for you to meet certain expectations before they review again and make a final decision.

Most women give birth between 37-42 weeks but your midwife can advise you whether you might give birth any earlier. If you give birth before your Board, the Governor may allow you to go onto an MBU temporarily. Your admission will then be reviewed after 28 days. If your due date is soon after your release date you might want to apply for a place on an MBU in case you give birth early, to avoid the possibility of being temporarily separated from your baby.

If you are on remand, awaiting trial or have been convicted but not yet sentenced and are found suitable, you will be granted temporary admission to an MBU. The Board will meet again once you have been sentenced to consider your place. Don't worry if your prison does not have an MBU. If your application is successful, you will be transferred to a prison with an MBU.

If your sentence extends beyond your baby reaching 18 months of age, you can ask for an extension to your MBU placement, via an extension application form. This can be provided by MBU staff. As with Admissions, the Child Resettlement Board will hold a meeting to hear from you and from a number of other people about why an extension is in the best interests of the child.

Who to speak to

Prison officer
(particularly an MBU officer)
Midwife
Family engagement/support
worker
Prisoners' Advice Service
Prison Reform Trust
Peer supporter
Offender supervisor/manager
Solicitor
Court staff

Preparing for release while pregnant

Getting ready for your release can be an unsettling time and it's normal to feel emotional. It can help to consider your options, make plans and prepare for your release day in advance.



What to expect

Mixed emotions

Getting ready for your release can be an unsettling time and it's normal to feel emotional. You may feel excited and happy about being released and seeing your loved ones, but you might also feel anxious or scared about what will happen when you leave prison.

Opportunities to plan for your release

Prisons will have different types of support available so it is important to ask what help is on offer at your prison. This could be called 'through the gate' or resettlement support. There should be advice and information to help you find accommodation, apply for benefits and open a bank account before you leave, and to link in with services that can support you in the area that you are going home to. You may need a coat if you came to prison in the summer and are being released in the winter.

At some prisons there are charities and organisations that can meet you at the prison gates on the day of your release. They can also support you with appointments and refer you to services in the community. You can ask prison staff or resettlement staff about which organisations work in your prison to help you plan and prepare for life on the outside. If prison staff don't know this, you can ask them to look online. The Hardman Directory should be available in the library. The guide has accurate information on funding and other forms of financial support that may be available to you.

Some things you may want to consider

- Do you want someone to meet you at the gate on the day you are released? You might want to ask a family member or friend to do this. Some organisations will provide a key worker to meet you at the gate and accompany you to your accommodation or any appointments you need to attend on your release day.

Preparing for release while pregnant continued

- You should be given a travel warrant to the nearest station to your destination (usually the office for your probation service) on your day of release. Think about how you will get to the next place you need to be. Do you have a family member, friend, or support worker who could take you in their car? If not, do you have a way to pay for public transport or a taxi? Prisons will give you a voucher called a discharge grant (this could change but is currently £46). You will not get this if you have been in custody for 14 days or less or are awaiting removal from the UK. Your offender manager will be able to help if you are unsure.
- Do you know where you will be staying on the first night of your release? Is this temporary or permanent?
- Do you have any appointments you need to get to on the day of your release? It's a good idea to try to plan your travel to these appointments in advance. If you think you won't have enough time to get to your appointments, speak to a member of staff about this.
- Are you able to financially support yourself during the first days and weeks of your release? It can take time to do things like apply for benefits and a bank account when you leave prison. In some prisons, there are organisations that can help you do this in advance. If you think you will be unable to pay for basic necessities when you leave prison, talk to your probation officer or member of staff from an organisation that provides resettlement support.

Preparing to reunite with other children or family members

Reuniting with your family after spending time in prison can be challenging, particularly if you have other children. Try to prepare yourself by getting some support and information about this before you are released. There may be information in the prison library or you could talk with the family support worker about this. Ask whether you could be eligible for a resettlement visit to family while you are still in prison.

Although all of you may be happy to be reunited, it can take time to re-adjust to being around each other and to settle into a routine. If you are returning home pregnant or with a new baby, it is natural for siblings to feel some jealousy. Try to give other children as much attention as possible and to see things from their point of view. There is a lot of information available about how to help children to welcome a new baby.

Your imprisonment and your return to the community are big changes for you and your family to go through. Try to be patient and kind to yourself and with your family members.

Who to speak to

Probation/resettlement
worker

Family engagement
or support worker

Prison officer

Women in Prison

Librarian (Hardman Directory)

Resettlement charity in your
prison e.g. Nacro

Midwife

Preparing for birth

Every woman is different. Our bodies are different, our babies are different and no two births are the same. Understanding your options can help you feel more confident in making decisions about how you want to give birth to your baby.



What to expect

An opportunity to make a birth plan

A birth plan is a chance to set out your choices for your birth. It can include who you would like to be with you, what kind of pain relief you would like, and how you would like to be spoken to or asked questions by the hospital staff, as well as lots of other things.

Birth plans are really helpful for thinking about how you would like to give birth and what kind of support you might want. They also help hospital and prison staff to understand how you would like to be treated during your labour and birth.

This can be particularly helpful if there are specific things you are worried about. For example, if you are worried about having internal examinations, you can state this in your birth plan and tell hospital staff that you would prefer not to have them. You can also include special wishes for after your baby is born.

Your midwife will help you to write your birth plan but if you don't get the opportunity to do this, you can write down anything that is important to you and show this to the midwife when you go out to hospital to have your baby.

Birth Companions works in some prisons to support pregnant women. If Birth Companions works in your prison, they can also help you with your birth plan.

Antenatal information

Antenatal means 'before birth'. You should be able to access information about what to expect during your pregnancy, how to look after yourself during pregnancy, and how to prepare for labour, birth and early parenthood.

This information should be available from the midwives, healthcare staff and other organisations that work in the prison. The library will also have some books you can borrow.

In some prisons, Birth Companions runs antenatal groups to give pregnant women antenatal information about pregnancy, labour and birth as well as a space for women to talk about how they are coping with pregnancy and preparing to give birth in prison.

These groups are open to anyone who is pregnant. You can still attend the group if you plan to have a termination, if you plan for your baby to be adopted, or if you are being separated from your baby after the birth.

Maternity leave from your prison job

You will be excused from work and education for at least six weeks after the birth of your child. In some prisons this period will be longer. If you have a job in prison, speak with your midwife, your manager or a MBU officer to find out about maternity leave and pay in your prison.

In some prisons you will be paid the same amount as your current sessional rate while you are on maternity leave. In other prisons this rate may be lower. If you have been asked to return to work or education and don't feel ready, you may be able to apply for an extension by speaking to the Senior Officer on the MBU. Some prisons will be more flexible if you are breastfeeding. It might also be helpful to speak with the health visitor or ask to see a GP if you are not feeling ready to return to work.

When working while pregnant, or recovering from birth, you should not be asked to do things that require physical exertion, such as heavy lifting.

Choosing your birth partner

You can choose a birth partner to have with you during labour and birth. This could be a partner, family member or friend. It could also be a staff member or volunteer from a charity such as Birth Companions. It cannot be another prisoner.

If you would like someone to be your birth partner, start by talking to them. Explain to them a little bit about what you would like them to do. For example, would you like them to hold your hand and help you breathe? To help you communicate with midwives and doctors; hold your baby after the birth? Talk to your birth partner in advance to find out if they are comfortable with doing these things.

Once you have chosen a birth partner, you will need to make sure that this has been agreed by the prison and that you have given prison staff and the midwife contact details for your birth partner so that they can be called when you go into labour.

The prison may do a security check on your potential birth partner. If they have prior convictions or are somehow involved in your case, the prison may deny them permission to be present at your birth on the grounds of security.

If you want other people, such as family and friends, to be informed when you go into labour, tell the prison officers and MBU staff. If this isn't considered to be a security risk, these people should be contacted when you go into labour.

Who to speak to

Midwife
Peer supporter
Prison officer
MBU staff

"having information really helped me to make decisions about what I wanted during my labour and I am sure it helped me to have a really positive experience"

Giving birth

Childbirth is a major life event so it's natural to be a bit anxious about giving birth.



What to expect

When you go to hospital to have your baby

If you feel like you are going into labour, you should tell a prison officer as soon as possible. If you are out of your room or houseblock, don't wait until you are locked in to your cell to do this. The officer or a nurse may ask you to describe what you are experiencing. For example, you may be having contractions, leaking fluid or experiencing some bleeding. Prison staff should then call the midwife.

If there is a midwife in the prison, she will come to see you. Otherwise, you can ask to speak with a midwife by phone. Some prisons allow you to call a midwife from your local hospital.

Only a midwife has the authority to decide whether or not you are in labour. Prison staff, nurses and other healthcare staff should not make this decision. If a midwife is not available, an ambulance should be called and arrangements should be made for you to go to hospital.

Depending on your medical history and how your pregnancy progresses, you may be offered an induction or a

caesarean. The midwife or obstetrician will have discussed this with you and you can ask questions and decide whether this is what you want. For security reasons, you will not be given very much notice before going out to hospital.

Your birth partner should be contacted when you go into labour or when you are going to hospital to have an induction or caesarean, but you might need to remind officers to do this and they may wait until you have arrived at the hospital before doing this. You can also ask a midwife to contact your birth partner for you.

What to take

When you go to hospital to have your baby, you will need to bring certain items for yourself and your baby. Most prisons provide labour bags (sometimes called grab bags) that are usually kept in Reception and will go out with you when you go to hospital. These bags contain things like nappies and clothes for your baby, and maternity pads, spare underwear, breast pads and perhaps a drink and a snack for you. There will also be a camera, in the bag or separately, so that you can have photos taken of you and your baby after the birth.

Giving birth continued

Find out what happens in your prison. If you get to the hospital and your labour bag has not been brought with you, ask the officers to make sure that it is brought from the prison as soon as possible.

Some hospitals keep emergency supplies of items that women and babies may need straight after birth so you can ask midwives or nurses about this at the hospital.

Travelling to the hospital

Two additional female officers will usually accompany you when you go to the hospital to give birth. Where this is not possible, at least one officer must be a woman. (See PSI 33/2015 on External Prisoner Movement. P19 section 6.23). Unless you are considered to be a high security risk, you should not be handcuffed during the journey.

You cannot usually choose which members of staff go with you to the hospital, as it depends who is on duty when you go into labour. In some prisons you can say which officers you would prefer and this information will be recorded in case these officers are on duty when you go into labour.

At the hospital

When you first arrive at the hospital you may go on to an antenatal ward for a while, and have officers sitting at your bedside. If you are having an examination or discussing any confidential information, you are entitled to privacy. There is a curtain which can be drawn around the bed and the officers will need to step back and wait behind this. If you are in a private room, you can ask the officers to wait outside. It can feel difficult to ask officers to give you privacy, so you can ask the midwife to do this for you if you prefer.

Once you are in established labour and have been moved to Labour Ward, you will be in your own room and the prison officers should sit outside. If there are security concerns and the officers say they need to remain in the room with you, they can be asked to sit behind a curtain or a screen inside the room to give you more privacy.

Officers should not normally go into the operating theatre with you if you are having a caesarean but they might come into the recovery room afterwards. Again, you can ask the midwife to protect your privacy by asking them to wait outside.

Rules about handcuffing and privacy can be found in the PSI 33/2015 on External Prisoner Movement. P19 section 6.25 and 6.26:

"If restraints are required during transport to the hospital they must be removed on arrival, once inside the hospital."

"Escort staff will not be present in the delivery room, or in a room where an intimate examination is taking place, unless the prisoner requests it."

Your birth partner can be in the room with you, as long as this has been agreed beforehand with the prison.

Eating and drinking

Unless you are having a planned caesarean, it is important to eat and drink in early labour so that you have energy to keep you going throughout labour. You may have missed a meal while coming out to hospital and you won't be allowed to bring any money with you. If you explain this to the midwife, she will get you something to eat. The officers may also help with this.

Staying calm

Remember that you're not going to be facing this alone. You'll have a midwife who will be there to support you and look after you. They have lots of experience of helping women through labour and birth and can also offer you pain relief, depending on how you feel.

Labour can be unpredictable and some things may not work out exactly as you had planned them. The most important thing is to look after yourself. Try to remain calm and focus on yourself and your baby.

Who to speak to

Prison officer

Midwife

Nurse

Birth partner

Peer supporter

"I was at a very low point and had depression throughout my pregnancy. However the birth was a good experience. I feel the birth has been a turning point."

After birth



What to expect

After you have given birth and delivered the placenta, you will probably want some time to be close with your baby and you may want to have skin to skin contact. You can ask your midwife to help you with this. If the officers come back into the room before you are ready, you can explain that you would like some private time with your baby and ask them to wait outside. You may be planning to breastfeed and want to do this without too many people around. The officers should understand this. If you feel unable to ask the officers to leave the room yourself, the midwife or your birth partner could request this on your behalf.

Two prison officers will remain with you while you are at the hospital. Throughout this time you can ask for privacy during examinations and confidential medical discussions, as well as when you are breastfeeding your baby.

Visitors

Before the birth, ask your personal officer if your partner, friends or family will be able to visit you if you stay in hospital after the birth. Any visitors will need to be security cleared in advance. If the birth has been straightforward and you and your baby are well, you may be discharged from hospital and go back to the prison the same day.

Photos

You should be allowed to have photos taken of you and your baby in the hospital but there will be security restrictions. Ask your personal officer or another prison officer about this before the birth. Some prisons will give you a disposable camera in your labour bag or your birth partner might be allowed to take photos on their own camera. You can also ask the midwife to take some photos for you. Photos are an important way to document the early hours and days of your baby's life and you and your baby should not miss out on having them because you are in prison.

After birth continued

There are some rules about what can be in the photos and what clothing the baby needs to be wearing. It is a good idea to find out about these beforehand to avoid any photos being deleted due to breaking the rules.

All photos will be checked by prison staff before being printed and given to you.

Phone calls

If you have not been able to have a family member or partner with you, you may want to make calls to give them news of the birth. You will need to get this agreed with prison officers and it is a good idea to do this in advance. The officers may allow you to use their phone or you may be allowed to use a hospital phone.

Preparing to return to prison

Your body will take time to get used to not being pregnant anymore. Ask your midwife any question. No matter what the issue, they've heard it all before and are there to help you.

If the birth has been straightforward, you and your baby may be discharged and return to the prison a few hours after the birth. If you have had a caesarean or you or your baby need to stay in hospital for longer, you will be moved onto a postnatal ward. Some wards also have separate rooms, so you may be in one of these.

If your baby is unwell, they may go onto the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) or Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU), where you will be able to visit them and be involved in their care.

Your midwife will address any concerns or questions you have about you or your baby's health. It is important to stay in hospital if you are recommended to do so and avoid going back to the prison too quickly.

If you have any issues or worries, such as difficulties with feeding your baby or if you are feeling any pain, tell a midwife or doctor as soon as possible.

Separating from your baby

If you will not be returning to the prison with your baby, see pages 46–49.

Who to speak to

Midwife

Prison officer

Specialist support agencies

Preparing to feed your baby

Feeding can be a lovely time to bond with your baby. It's important that you are happy with how you are feeding your baby, so don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it.



What to expect

Making decisions

It is never too early to start thinking about your feeding options. Access to evidence-based information and NHS guidelines may help to inform your decision. You may also have previous experience of feeding a baby, or have family and friends who share their experiences and opinions with you. The important thing to remember is that however you decide to feed your baby, you should have choices, information and access to ongoing support.

It is important to get support with feeding your baby early on as this can help to boost your confidence. Infant feeding support specialists can help you to position and attach your baby comfortably and correctly at the breast (if you are breastfeeding) and they can address any problems or issues you may experience in the early days of feeding your baby.

Breastfeeding

The NHS, World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNICEF all recommend exclusive breastfeeding (giving your baby breast milk and nothing else) for the first six months of your baby's life. After that, giving your baby breast milk alongside other food for the first two years will help them continue to grow and develop healthily. If you decide to breastfeed, you should be given the opportunity to breastfeed your baby immediately after birth, even if you are separating from your baby or don't know if you have a place on an MBU yet. You can ask the midwife or your birth partner to help make you comfortable. You can also request privacy and time to have skin to skin contact with your baby before and after breastfeeding.

Formula feeding

If you decide not to breastfeed, you will need to give your baby infant formula milk instead. Most infant formula is made from cows' milk that has been treated to make it suitable for babies. You should not feed your baby with any other type of milk, or formulas and follow-on milks for older babies unless your midwife, health visitor or GP recommends this. Although breastfeeding has lots of benefits, formula-fed babies can also be perfectly healthy.

Access to the right equipment

In preparation for formula feeding, you will need bottles with teats and bottle covers, a bottle and teat brush and sterilising equipment such as a cold-water steriliser, microwave or steam steriliser.

When making up bottles to give to your baby, always check the manufacturer's instructions to find out how much water and powdered infant formula you will need to use for each feed. To reduce the risk of infection, you should avoid making up bottles in advance and instead prepare each feed as and when your baby needs it. Using boiled water at a temperature of 70 degrees centigrade or above will kill any harmful bacteria that may be present but remember to always allow the formula milk to cool before giving it to your baby.

Specialist support and information

If you think a particular brand of infant formula disagrees with your baby, you should ask a health professional for advice. There is more information on the NHS website at www.nhs.uk/bottlefeeding. You might want to ask friends, family or a member of staff to print this information out for you.

"...although I have two other children who I didn't breastfeed, I got the right amount of advice and support which encouraged me to try (breastfeeding), which I loved."

Breastfeeding and Methadone

In most situations you would be advised that breastfeeding while on methadone is a safe option and that this could lessen any withdrawal symptoms for your baby. However, you should always first get advice from your midwife, breastfeeding specialist or healthcare professional.

If you are on other medication or using drugs

If you are using recreational or prescription medication and plan to breastfeed, you will first need to know whether or not it is safe for you and your baby to do so.

Some drugs and medications can affect your body's ability to make breast milk. Others pass directly into your breastmilk and may harm your baby if consumed regularly or in large quantities. Certain types of drugs like anti-psychotic medications are not compatible with breastfeeding at all. You may also be discouraged from breastfeeding if you are HIV positive.

If you are taking medication or using drugs of any kind, it is important for you to talk to a health professional or breastfeeding specialist or supporter about your infant feeding options before you start to breastfeed. In many cases, prescription medications can be used alongside breastfeeding. Other times, you may be able to mix feed your baby (offering both breastmilk and formula milk) to enable you to breastfeed in some capacity. Whatever you chose to do, it will help to talk through your options beforehand and understand the impact, risks and benefits of breastfeeding alongside the use of any medications or drugs.

Who to speak to

Family engagement
or support worker
Midwife
GP
Breastfeeding specialist/
supporter
MBU staff
Peer supporter
Prison officer

Expressing your breastmilk in prison

There's a first time for everyone when it comes to expressing and it is a skill to practise, so don't feel upset or put off if only a few drops come out at first. Experiment — every mother is different.



What to expect

A choice

Whether or not you have a place on a Mother and Baby Unit, all new mothers in prison should be given the opportunity, equipment and privacy needed to express their breast milk. This can be particularly helpful if you have been prescribed methadone during your pregnancy. Expressing your milk will allow you to either feed your expressed milk directly to your baby yourself, or to send it out to your baby in the community.

Access to the right equipment

You should have ongoing access to a supply of breast pads, a good quality breast pump and breastmilk storage facilities. You should also be given privacy and support to enable you to express your milk whenever you need to do so. If you have just given birth and separated from your baby, you may need to express frequently throughout the day and night to prevent your breasts becoming sore and engorged. Expressing your milk regularly will also help to encourage your milk production and maintain your milk supply.

Help with arranging transport

If you are transporting your breastmilk into the community for your baby, you should be given access to safe and secure breast milk storage facilities in prison. This should include being given a good quality breast pump that has been sterilised (or that you can sterilise yourself) and a good supply of breast milk storage bags. Prison staff should regularly collect and store your expressed breastmilk in a special fridge or freezer and help to arrange for your milk to be delivered to your baby in the community as often as possible. If your baby is in foster care, the local authority (the council) should make every effort to transport your breastmilk safely. However, this may not be possible, particularly if you are in prison some distance from your local authority area.

If staff need more information about safe storage and transport of expressed breastmilk, this can be found on the Breastfeeding Network website: www.breastfeedingnetwork.org.uk/breastfeeding-help/expressing-storing

Who to speak to

Family engagement
or support workers
Peer supporter
Prison officer
Health visitor
Breastfeeding specialist/
supporter
Substance misuse worker

"I didn't have my son
in prison with me
unfortunately but
expressing so my
son could still
benefit is the best
thing I ever did."

Being separated from your baby

Get as much support as you can. Even if you can't change the situation, support can help with how you are feeling.



What to expect

You may have come in to prison separated from a baby you were caring for on the outside and might want to apply for a MBU place (see pages 16-19). If you were breastfeeding a baby, you may need equipment and support to manage your milk supply and express your milk while you are apart from your child (see pages 42-45). Talk to an officer, health professional or member of staff about your needs so that you can get support as soon as possible.

Some women who are pregnant in prison will eventually separate from their babies. This might be your choice or because you have been refused a place on a MBU. Some women who get a place on a MBU with their baby are later separated because of the length of their sentence.

Emotions

Whatever your situation, separating from your baby can be very distressing and challenging. It is normal to feel a range of strong emotions and to experience mental health issues before, during and after the separation.

If you are already separated from a baby or think you may have to separate from your baby after you give birth, you should try to get as much support for yourself as possible from family or friends, and from an organisation or individual who you trust inside the prison. This could be your midwife, a prison officer, peer supporters, a chaplain or someone from Birth Companions, if we are working in your prison.

If you feel like your mental health is being affected, you should ask to see a GP or be referred to the Mental Health In-Reach Team.

Being separated from your baby continued

Advice and legal support

If you have come in to prison without your baby, you may be able to apply for an emergency, temporary place on a MBU. Ask for the All About MBUs booklet and to speak with the MBU Liaison or Administration Officer. If there are delays, you could write to the Prison Governor to request that your application is fast tracked. Sometimes this is called a Governors' 'app'.

If you are pregnant or have come in to prison already separated from a baby and you think Social Services will not support your application, you can get advice from Prisoners' Advice Service (PAS) and/or from a family solicitor, who could also represent you. If Social Services think you cannot look after your baby and have started court proceedings, you will not have to pay the solicitor. The prison has details of solicitors but you can also get this from PAS.

If you have been refused a MBU place, you have the right to appeal via the complaints procedure. Your complaint will be forwarded to the Head of the Women's Team at HMPPS. You can contact Prisoners' Advice Service for advice or you may want to seek legal advice. The library should have a copy of the relevant Prison Service Instruction, which has information about the rules (Prisoner Complaints system PSI 02/2012). If you are refused a place, it is best to lodge an appeal as soon as possible. Ask when the deadline is for doing this.

During and after the birth

If you think you may be separating from your baby, it can help to think about what you would like to happen immediately after the birth.

You may want to spend time with your baby or you may find this too painful and prefer to hand your baby to a relative or foster carers as soon as possible. You should do whatever feels right to you.

Try to find out from Social Services and the midwife how much time you will have with your baby after the birth. You can ask to have this confirmed in writing and share this with everyone involved in your care after birth. Even though this is written down, you might still need to remind officers and healthcare staff about your wishes.

Things to think about:

- **Do you want to see your baby after it is born?**
In most cases, you should have the option to have skin to skin contact with your baby and give your baby its first feed. In some cases this won't be possible due to safeguarding processes.

- **Would you like to breastfeed your baby after the birth?**

Even a very small amount of colostrum (the name for the first type of breast milk you will produce after birth), can help boost your baby's immune system.

- **Would you like to choose your baby's first outfit?**

You should have the option to choose the clothes your baby wears after they are born.

- **Would you like to send anything to go with your baby?**

You might want to send a letter, something you have made, clothes or photos with your baby for them to keep. Sometimes this is called a memory box. You can speak with your midwife about this.

- **Would you like to have photos of your baby taken for you to keep?**

You might want a variety of photos taken e.g. some photos with you and some of just the baby. Unless there are security restrictions around this, there should be a camera brought from the prison or by your birth partner.

All of your preferences should be included on your birth plan. It can also help for you to talk to your birth partner, midwife and any prison staff who may be with you during labour and birth about your wishes.

Returning to the prison

You should not be discharged from hospital until you are well enough to return to the prison. If you have any concerns or do not feel well enough to leave the hospital, talk to the midwives and doctors who are caring for you.

Think about who can support you back at the prison and whether you want to go back to the unit where you were housed before. The prison should recognise your need for extra support and respect your wishes around this.

You might want to ask to speak to a Listener or peer supporter or have additional phone calls to family. You could ask for counsellors, chaplains, family engagement workers or someone from an organisation like Birth Companions to visit you. When you return to prison, a midwife will visit you there to see how you are healing after the birth. This is also an opportunity for you to speak with her about how you are feeling.

The prison may decide to open an ACCT (Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork) document for you. This means you will have extra checks and supervision to make sure that you are adjusting to and coping with your situation.

They can help write a letterbox letter, arrange contact visits, and contact social workers on your behalf. Listeners, chaplaincy and peer mentors can all provide emotional support if you need a safe place to talk about how you are feeling. The Prisoners' Advice Service will be able to tell you if you can get a solicitor for free through legal aid and can also provide free legal advice and support.

Who to speak to

Mental Health In-Reach Team

Family engagement

or support worker

Prison officer

GP

Midwife

Prisoners' Advice Service

Prison Reform Trust

Improving Access to

Psychological Therapies

Listeners

Peer supporters

Chaplaincy

PAC-UK

*"it's not easy but I know
that I can get through
it with support."*

Parenting on a Mother and Baby Unit

*Some things will be
difficult but you
can still be a great
mum to your baby*



What to expect

The MBU routine

For the first 6-8 weeks, you will be given time, space and support while you recover from birth and care for your new baby. After this time, you may be expected to start returning to work and complying with your sentence plan. You will still have full responsibility for your baby's care but while you are at work or on a course your baby will be cared for by trained nursery staff in the MBU nursery. Settling your baby into the nursery can usually start once they have received their first immunisations. Prisons can be flexible around your wishes and baby's needs, for example, if you are breastfeeding.

Although the regime is more relaxed on the MBU and your door is never locked while your baby is with you, the discipline on MBUs is stricter to ensure that it is a safe place for babies. You will also be asked to sign a compact agreement. This is a set of rules that has to be followed by everyone living on the MBU.

Health appointments

During your time on the MBU, you will have regular appointments with the health visitor to check on your baby's health and development and to answer any questions you may have as a new mother.

Life on the MBU

While living on the MBU, you can register your baby's birth and get a birth certificate. This will not mention the prison.

The other MBU residents can provide friendship and support as you settle into MBU life. They will be able to help answer your questions about MBU routines and regimes too.

You will have opportunities for regular family visits and contact days. MBU staff will take photographs of your baby and help you to document their development at various stages.

Life on an MBU in prison can be challenging but most mothers also find it to be a safe, supportive and comfortable environment in which to bond with their babies and adjust to becoming a new mum.

If you are on a MBU and face separating from your baby because of the length of your sentence, speak to the MBU manager about applying to extend the time you can spend with your baby on the MBU.

Who to speak to

Midwife
Health visitor
MBU Staff
Peer supporter
Other MBU residents
Family engagement
or support worker
Prison officer

"I think prison made me a better mum. It helped me concentrate fully on my daughter. I am extremely close with her and will be eternally grateful that she supported me through the most difficult time in my life."

Parenting a child in the community from prison



What to expect

Being a parent

Your baby may be going to live in the community with other carers or you may have an older child or children who are not with you in prison. Whatever your situation, you can still be a parent to your baby or children from prison and play an important role in their lives.

This might involve arranging visits, writing letters and cards, or providing support and advice to your baby's carers in the community.

Support from specialist organisations

There are a number of organisations working inside and outside of prison to help parents in prison stay involved in their children's lives. They can help you communicate with your children's carers and help to arrange visits and creative ways to stay in contact. They can also support whoever is caring for your children.

Opportunities for contact

If your contact agreement allows it, you should be able to stay in contact with your children and perhaps also have visits. Get advice from the family support worker.

Access to parenting resources and support

You should be able to access information about parenting. There will be books in the library and there may be support groups and/or parenting courses in your particular prison. You can ask about these in the Education Department or speak with an officer or family engagement worker.

Finding ways to communicate

It can be difficult to feel connected to your baby or older children in the community when your main contact is by phone or letters. Young children don't always want to talk on the phone and can find it hard to understand that they are talking to their parent.

If Prison Voicemail is available at your prison, you can use this service to leave voice messages or songs for your baby. These messages can be saved and played again, allowing babies and young children to hear your voice when they want to. Recording a story through Storybook Mums may also be an option in your prison.

Some prisons allow you to make cards or draw pictures to send to your baby or children in the community. Some have classes or workshops where you can do things like this to help your children feel your presence in their life.

Find out about the family and children's visiting arrangements in your prison. Your family may be able to claim for help with travel costs for visits through the Assisted Prison Visits Scheme.

Who to speak to

Family engagement
or support worker

Storybook Mums

Peer supporter

Prison Voicemail

Staff in the Education
Department

"You are a
mum no
matter what"

Preparing for release from the MBU

*"I have managed to
fit back into life
as I have support."*



What to expect

Planning for your release day

You should be given opportunities to plan your release in advance with support and advice from MBU and Resettlement staff. The information on pages 22-25 will all be relevant to you but you will also have your baby to care for and will have more possessions to take with you on release.

Preparing to reunite with other children or family members

Reuniting with your family after spending time in prison can be challenging, particularly if you have other children. Try to prepare yourself by getting some support and information about this before you are released. There may be information in the prison library or you could talk with the family support worker about this. Ask whether you could be eligible for a resettlement visit to family while you are still in prison.

Although all of you may be happy to be reunited, it can take time to re-adjust to being around each other and to settle into a routine. If you are returning home pregnant or with a new baby, it is natural for siblings to feel some jealousy. Try to give other children as much attention as possible and to see things from their point of view. There is a lot of information about how to help children to welcome a new baby.

Your imprisonment and your return to the community are big changes for you and your family to go through. Try to be patient and kind to yourself and with your family members

Who to speak to

MBU staff
Family engagement
or support workers
Probation/resettlement
worker
Peer supporter

Who you can speak to

Below is a description of the people you could speak to about the issues discussed in this booklet. The booklet will suggest who to speak to about each issue and you can refer back to this section for more information about them.

Birth Companions

Birth Companions is an independent charity which works to improve conditions for pregnant women and new mothers in prison. We have written this guide and run groups and offer 1:1 support in Foston Hall, Peterborough and Bronzefield prisons. We can also provide information, practical items and emotional support for women being released to London and some other areas.

Breastfeeding support specialists

It is normal to need support with breastfeeding or expressing your breast milk, especially if you are doing it for the first time. While in hospital you can ask to speak to a specialist midwife or breastfeeding support worker. Your midwife or health visitor in the prison is also there to help you get off to a good

start with breastfeeding. Some prisons have breastfeeding specialists too.

If you need to speak to someone between your midwife or health visitor appointments you could ask for the National Breastfeeding Helpline to be added to your PIN: **0300 100 0212**. You can speak to a trained volunteer who will give you non-judgmental information and support with infant feeding. This is a confidential and independent phone helpline, open from 9.30am to 9.30pm every day and costs the same as a call to a landline.

British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS)

The British Pregnancy Advisory Service provides advice to women who are making decisions about their pregnancy. BPAS can give you more information about your options, such as continuing the pregnancy, having a termination or considering adoption. In some prisons you can speak to a counsellor from BPAS too. You can ask a prison officer or another member of staff about getting in touch with BPAS.

Choice for Change

Choice for Change provides counselling support for pregnancy and child loss including child separation support and an unplanned-pregnancy advisory service. Choice for Change is currently available in two women's prisons, HMP Bronzefield and HMP Downview: **020 7700 4475**; celiaw Wyatt@nhs.net.

Counselling services

In some prisons, you can access support from counselling organisations. Some of these organisations specialise in supporting women after the loss of a pregnancy. You can ask a member of staff, your midwife, nurse, GP or a peer supporter about accessing these services at your prison.

Family support/ engagement workers

Each prison has a worker or team who can help with family issues such as visits, keeping in contact with family and friends, and applying for a place on a Mother and Baby Unit (MBU). They might be called a family engagement worker, a family liaison worker or a family support worker. You can ask prison staff how to arrange to see one.

Family support workers can help to arrange for you to be able to breastfeed your baby during contact visits in the prison. Alternatively, you may choose to feed your baby your expressed breastmilk during a visit using a bottle. Family support workers can also help to arrange delivering your expressed breast milk to your baby in the community and may be able to arrange for a visitor to collect your expressed breastmilk to deliver directly to your baby themselves.

They can also provide support around adoption; including help with letterbox contact (or other forms of indirect contact), final contact visits and support around life story work.

Family Rights Group

Family Rights Group is a registered charity that provides confidential advice for parents and family members who have involvement with social services. Information and support is available on the Family Rights Group website. They also have a free confidential helpline service: **0808 801 0366** (Monday to Friday 9.30am - 3pm excluding Bank Holidays).

Who you can speak to continued

GP

You are entitled to the same access to healthcare in prison as people in the community, and you can ask to see a GP at any time. This is usually the first step to getting help for any new health problems or pre-existing conditions and issues.

You should also speak to the GP if you are feeling depressed or struggling with your mental health. Ask a member of staff or another prisoner how to arrange an appointment to do this. The GP may be able to suggest some short-term coping strategies and might refer you to mental health services to access some talking therapy. This is usually called a referral.

Health visitor

After your baby is born, the Health Visitor is your key contact for any worries or concerns you may have about your baby. The Health Visitor will visit you on the Mother and Baby Unit and will update your red book (the record of your baby's early healthcare and development), with important information about your baby's weight gain, immunisations and general health. Health Visitors

have a wide range of knowledge about babies and children and can arrange referrals and make appointments with GPs, hospitals and specialist clinics if needed.

Hibiscus Initiatives

Hibiscus Initiatives is a charity that works with foreign national, black, minority ethnic and refugee women in prison, in the community, and in detention. Monday-Friday
020 7697 4120.

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)

In some prisons there is an IAPT service. This service helps people with anxiety or depression but people with other mental health conditions can find it helpful too. Ask a member of staff if there is an IAPT or similar service in your prison.

Mental health in-reach worker

The Mental Health In-Reach team can support you with your mental health. This is a team of health professionals including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and specialist nurses, who work together to support you. It is similar to a Community Mental Health Team (CMHT).

Midwife

A midwife should visit you at the prison regularly and you should have the same number of antenatal appointments and check-ups that would be offered to you in the community, based on your specific needs.

The midwife can answer any questions you have about your pregnancy and how you can look after yourself while you are pregnant in prison. Midwives can also answer questions about labour and birth and how to prepare.

Midwives will also be able to offer breastfeeding support and formula feeding advice in the first few days after you give birth and return to prison. Speak to the midwife about any questions or concerns you may have, and ask her to observe you feeding your baby if you need extra help and support. You can also ask the midwife for support if you have questions or concerns about how to express your breast milk and store it safely in prison.

If you're feeling down or struggling with your mental health, you can also speak to the midwife. Ask a member of staff or another prisoner how to do this.

NACRO

Is a national charity that helps people in custody to reintegrate into society, helping with housing, mental health and substance misuse issues. They run a dedicated free phone helpline to ring for advice and support in relation to any resettlement needs you may have prior to your release. The line is open from Monday - Thursday 9am - 5pm, Friday 1pm - 5pm, on **0300 123 1999**.

Nurse

If you're feeling depressed or struggling with your mental health, you can speak to a nurse. You can also speak to a nurse for any physical health issues you might have, especially if there is a long wait to see a GP. Ask a member of staff or another prisoner how to do this.

Offender supervisor

If your sentence is 12 months or more you may have an Offender Supervisor based in the prison who will help to arrange some parts of your sentence plan. They are responsible for helping you to achieve your sentence plan whilst you are in prison. They can also help you as you plan for release. Your Offender Supervisor will probably work in an Offender Management Unit (OMU).

Who you can speak to continued

PAC-UK

PAC-UK is a charity that provides specialist therapy, advice, support and counselling for anyone affected by adoption. PAC-UK is independent from Social Services and runs an advice line: **020 7284 5879** (Monday, Tuesday and Friday 10am - 4pm, Wednesday and Thursday 2pm - 7.30pm).

PACT

Prisoner Advice and Care Trust (PACT) is a national charity that provides support to prisoners, people with convictions, and their families. For information and support your family or friends can ring the families' helpline: **0808 808 2003** (Weekdays 9am - 8pm, Weekends 10am - 3pm).

Peer supporters

Many prisons have peer supporters who provide emotional and practical support to women in the prison. Peer supporters are prisoners themselves who have been trained to support others. In some prisons, Birth Companions has trained peer supporters to work with women in pregnancy. You can ask prison staff or other prisoners if there are peer supporters at your prison.

Some peer supporters have been through the MBU application process themselves before and can help you do this. They might also be able to help you contact other organisations like Birth Companions or individuals who can give you information and advice about MBUs and how to apply.

Most prisons have Listeners who you can also talk to if you need support. Listeners are prisoners who are trained by The Samaritans to support you if you are feeling in crisis or suicidal.

Perinatal mental health worker

Each area of the country has a specialist mental health service for people who are pregnant and for new mums. While you are in prison you are also entitled to access this service. If you are struggling with your mental health, you can ask a midwife, GP or nurse to refer you.

Prisoners' Advice Service (PAS)

PAS is an independent organisation that gives free legal advice to people in prison. You can phone them on: **0207 253 3323** (Monday, Wednesday and Friday 10am - 12.30pm and 2pm - 4.30pm, Tuesday 4.30pm - 7pm). PAS also has self-help guidance packs, called toolkits, about

Mother and Baby Units and about adoption. You can phone them to request copies of these toolkits, or ask a friend, family member or prison officer to print one from the PAS website (www.prisonersadvice.org.uk/).

If you think your MBU application will not be supported by Social Services, you can also ask the prison or PAS to help you to contact a family solicitor to get legal advice and representation. If Social Services raises concerns about your parenting, you should be entitled to legal aid.

Prison officer

Sometimes it can also be helpful to talk to specific prison officers who you get on well with and trust. It can also be a good idea to talk to your personal officer or the Senior Officer on your residential wing about any issues you are experiencing. Some prisons have special officers who are trained to better understand the needs and concerns of pregnant women and new mothers. They might be called Pregnancy or MBU officers.

You can also speak to a prison officer about accessing items you need during your pregnancy such as additional food, breast pads, maternity mattresses or extra pillows. You should also speak to an officer if you are worried about you or your baby's safety.

All prisons have MBU Liaison or Administrator Officers who have information about MBUs and can help you with the application process.

Prison Reform Trust (PRT) prisoner helpline

The Prison Reform Trust supports people who are facing issues inside prison. They can give you advice and information and can sometimes link you with legal support. You can phone them for free on **0808 802 0060**. The helpline is open on Monday 3.30pm - 5.30pm, Wednesday 10.30am - 12.30pm and Thursday 3.30pm - 5.30pm.

Who you can speak to continued

Prison Voicemail

Prison Voicemail is a service that lets you leave voicemail messages for your family and friends. This means that you can still communicate when phone calls are too expensive or if the prison phone call times are inconvenient for you. Phone calls can sometimes be difficult or confusing for babies and young children, so leaving a voicemail instead can be a nice way for them to hear your voice whenever they want to.

Probation/resettlement worker

Your probation/resettlement worker will support you and your family as you prepare for life after prison. They can help you find a job, apply for benefits and arrange housing.

Samaritans

The Samaritans is a charity that provides emotional support for people experiencing distress and self-harm or suicidal thoughts. You can phone their helpline from prison for free, 24 hours a day, to talk on **116 123**.

Storybook Mums

Storybook Mums is a charity that helps you to record stories that your baby or child can listen to outside

the prison. This service is available in most prisons but not all. The project runs from the library so you can ask there about taking part or submit a general application to the library requesting to record a story.

Substance misuse worker

Most prisons have workers to support you with issues related to addiction and substance misuse. These might be called substance misuse workers, drug workers, recovery workers or CARAT workers. If you have concerns about your pregnancy and addiction or substance misuse, including any medication you are taking for this, you can speak to one of these workers.

Women in Prison (WIP)

Women in Prison is an organisation that delivers independent, non-judgmental and friendly support to women across the women's prison estate. They don't have workers in all prisons but they do have a national freephone line (**0800 953 0125**) and freepost address (FREEPOST WOMEN IN PRISON). If WIP is not able to help directly, they will try to signpost you to another service that can.

Acknowledgements

This booklet was developed by the Birth Companions staff team: Denise Marshall, Abbi Ayers, Sarah Stephen-Smith, Oonagh Ryder, Kate Chivers, Anna Wise and Katherine Miller Brunton.

The initial focus groups for this guide were led by Kate Evans in HMP Peterborough, HMP Bronzefield, and with women in the community in London.

Special thanks to our Lived Experience Team members Laura Jones and Michelle Wright, and to all the women who took part in our focus groups, providing us with their expert feedback on this booklet's content and illustrations, and without whom its production would not have been possible.

Illustrations by Rae Goddard
Design by Type Two Studios





info@birthcompanions.org.uk
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, London SW19 2RR
© Birth Companions