



May 2022

Dear friends,

We hope you are all well. Here at Birth Companions, we are excited to be welcoming lots of new members to our staff, volunteer and Lived Experience teams. It is wonderful to be growing as an organisation, and we hope you'll join us in warmly welcoming all our new colleagues.

If you would like any further information on our work, or would like to discuss ways to get involved, please [get in touch](#).

Thanks as always for your support.

News

Impact 100 London Grant

We are delighted to announce that we have been selected as one of the finalists in the [Impact 100 London grant awards for 2022](#), alongside two other brilliant charities working to positively impact the lives of women and girls in London. We're busy putting together a short film about Birth Companions' work as part of our application, and we can't wait for the awards ceremony next month.

Chair of Trustees

Diana Parkinson, Birth Companions' Chair of Trustees since 2001, will formally hand over the role to Sam Matthews at our AGM next month, and Jenny McLeish will take over from Sam as our Deputy Chair. Our immense thanks to Diana, Sam, Jenny and all our other wonderful Trustees for the vital work they do for Birth Companions.

Our impact

Ahead of the publication of our 2021/22 Impact Report, we wanted to share three really positive statistics reflecting the impact our support has had for the women we've worked with:

96% of the women we supported felt that our support had helped reduce their isolation

87% felt that our support had helped improve their mental health and wellbeing

88% felt that our support had helped them to give their babies the best possible start in life

Keep an eye out for our full impact report in the coming weeks...

Current services

Our services in the three prisons we currently work in are continuing to expand and develop as pandemic-related restrictions are lifted. Across the three prisons we have been running diverse services, which include antenatal classes and pregnancy wellbeing groups; one-to-one support to women through pregnancies, births, Mother and Baby Unit applications, social services involvement, and separation from infants in the community; and direct support and advocacy from our trained, prison-based Peer Supporters. We have recently welcomed two new Service Coordinators to the Prison Services team, and we can't wait to see how all the services develop as they settle in to their new roles.

Our antenatal classes in Hackney are continuing to go from strength to strength, as more women begin to attend in person. It has been brilliant to see the pregnant women coming together, sharing their pregnancy experiences, and creating bonds. At the mother and baby group, it has been heart-warming to hear some of our women reflect on the support they have received and the important friendships they have created, as they finish their time at the group.

We've been able to support several women around the time of their births over the past few months with taxis, phone support, advocacy and practical items, as well as providing in-person birth companions. Thank you, as always, to the brilliant and dedicated volunteers who operate our Birthline and provide our birth support.

Our new community probation support service, offered in collaboration with **Advance**, has continued to grow and is now operating at full capacity. It is brilliant to have the opportunity to offer our expert support to pregnant women and new mothers across London and the South East, as they navigate probation. Across our Community Services, we have maintained elements of our remote support offer developed during the pandemic; this is enabling us to better cater to some women's preferences for support, and is allowing us to sustain high levels of engagement across a large caseload.

Lived Experience, engagement and policy

Our Lived Experience Team (LET) has had a busy few months, as lots of exciting engagement, policy and influencing opportunities have been coming our way. Some recent highlights include:

- Consulting with NHS Health and Justice commissioners, and co-designing health-focused service models for delivery in prison and probation services;
- Attending a focus group with North Central London Local Maternity and Neonatal System (NCL LMNS), to shape the development of their Equity and Equality plan and support efforts to improve maternal health outcomes for women across Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey and Islington;
- Supporting Kate Chivers, Birth Companions' Engagement Manager, to deliver training sessions on trauma-informed working and engaging women experiencing multiple disadvantage, to Maternity Voice Partnership (MVP) chairs and academic researchers;
- Participating in our upcoming eight-month consultancy project with The Women's Centre Cornwall, to support the development of their service user involvement.

We're delighted to have welcomed more members to the Lived Experience Team over the past few months, bringing our total membership to nearly 50 women. We are incredibly grateful that so many wonderful women continue to bring their insight, dedication and expertise to this team. Thank you, as always, to our LET members; your impact is huge.

In case you missed it...

Read... *Systemic Racism, Not Broken Bodies*, the final report of a year-long inquiry into racial injustice and human rights in UK maternity care, published by our colleagues at [Birthrights](#) this week.

Listen... *28ish Days Later*, a podcast examining the menstrual cycle day-by-day, from BBC Radio 4.

Watch... *Favour*, the latest stage show from our friends at [Clean Break](#), which will be running from 24th June to 6th August at Bush Theatre, Shepherd's Bush, London. Tickets are on sale now.

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