

RCM supports charity's new Birth Charter

Hollie Ewers

27 May, 2016

[Birth Charter UNICEF prison pregnant prisoners](#)

RCM supports charity's new Birth Charter



Birth Companions, a charity specialising in the support of pregnant women and new mothers in prison has launched its new *Birth Charter for women in prisons in England and Wales*.

The new publication, which is supported by the RCM and has been produced with guidance from Unicef UK's Baby Friendly Initiative, has been developed to help inform the government's ongoing review of the treatment of vulnerable women and their babies.

The charter provides comprehensive recommendations for government and the prison service on improving care for the 600 pregnant women and 100 new mothers held in prisons in England and Wales each year.

It aims to improve current practice across the prison service, on aspects ranging from antenatal care and birthing partners to breastfeeding, family visits and counselling.

Birth Companions director Naomi Delap said: 'Many pregnant women and new mothers in prison are incredibly vulnerable, and yet despite several pieces of national and international legislation protecting their health and wellbeing, many do not get the care and support to which they are entitled.

'That must change, so we've developed the birth charter, with input from a wide range of professionals and service users. We have focused attention on the elements that have the biggest practical impact to ensure these women get the support they need, and are able to give

their children the best possible start in life.’

Alongside the birth charter, Birth Companions is calling on the government to create a much-needed Prison Service Order to help the prison service provide consistent, humane care for these women.

RCM chief executive Cathy Warwick said: 'It doesn't matter where mothers and babies are - they must all be given the highest standards of care to promote their health and wellbeing.

'The RCM is proud to support the birth charter, which outlines the rights and unique needs of pregnant women, mothers and babies who are in prison.

'The RCM fully supports the recommendations for government and the prison service, which if implemented in full, will make a massive difference to the quality of care women receive and help create a culture whereby all babies are given the best start in life.'

Access the *Birth Charter for women in prisons in England and Wales* [here](#).