
**A window of opportunity:
the intersections between
criminal justice and social services in
pregnancy and early motherhood**

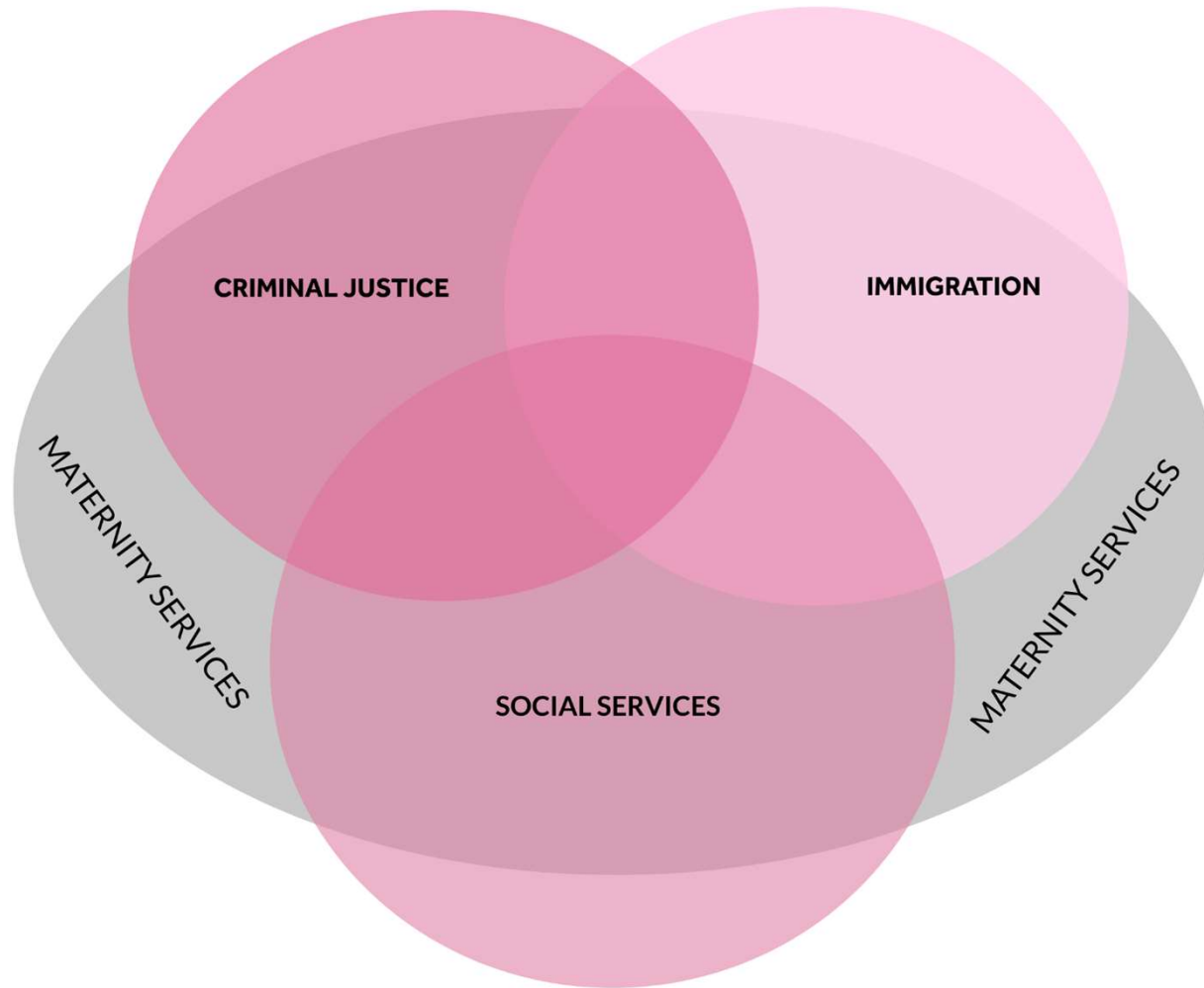


Our work



- The UK's leading voice on inequalities and disadvantage in pregnancy and early motherhood, in prisons and the community
 - Support service development in several prisons in England
 - Campaign to improve the care of women in contact with the CJS, social services, maternity and immigration systems during this crucial chapter in their lives
 - Our Birth Charter and Toolkit have influenced policy and practice
 - A Lived Experience Team of over 40 women
-

A systems-led approach



Understanding the intersections



- Many women in the CJS have been in care themselves
 - Fears of having a child removed dominate for many women
 - Little or no support to navigate the system
 - 1001 critical days - stress & anxiety can have a major impact
 - Mothers separated from an infant while in prison are invisible
 - We don't know how many women we're talking about
 - Women known to social services make up 20% of those who die in pregnancy or the year after birth
-

The opportunities we see



- High levels of engagement on the basis of pregnancy and early motherhood
 - Access to services *can* be better
 - Improved multi-disciplinary working in prisons
 - Growing interest in holistic models of care and whole system approaches
 - Peer support – both formal and informal
-

Barriers to relational and TI practice



- Trust and disclosure in a punitive system
- Consistency and communication
- Legal advice
- Delayed referrals/ late starts to assessment
- Keeping pace with changing plans
- Professional churn

“She was being induced for medical reasons and she gave birth and still didn’t know if she was going to be separated from [her baby]”

Recent case examples



Beyond prison walls

- Planning for release
- Work with probation services
- The need for specialist pre-birth and newborn teams equipped to work with women in the CJS



A Window of Opportunity: Women's voices



“I was viewed as ‘that criminal’, not as becoming a mother again.”

A Window of Opportunity: Recommendations



- All statutory agencies working across the criminal justice system, social services, maternity and wider healthcare should ensure their current and future provision supports a trauma-informed, holistic and culturally appropriate approach to working with pregnant women and mothers of children under two in contact with the CJS.
 - The principles of trauma-informed care: safety; trust; choice and empowerment; respect; and kindness, should form a central focus across every system.
-

Prospects for change



- Advocacy services build bridges
 - The new HMPPS policy framework on pregnancy and motherhood
 - Mother and Baby Unit case review
 - Independent review of children's social care
 - Probation reform
 - The national concordat on women in the CJS
 - Born into Care guideline development – Nuffield FJO
 - Integrated care partnerships
-



Thank you

**Naomi Delap and Kirsty Kitchen
Birth Companions**

naomi@birthcompanions.org.uk

kirsty@birthcompanions.org.uk
