

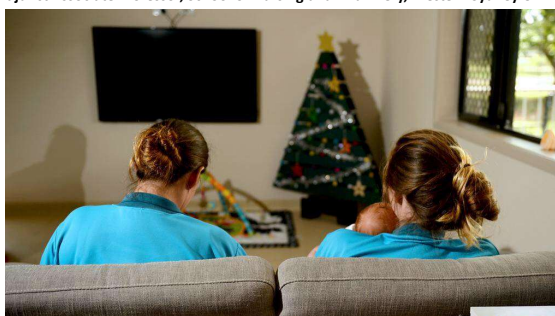
Addressing Intergenerational disadvantage: Breastfeeding support as a 'stay out of jail' card?

Julie Smith¹, Carol Bartle², Karleen Gribble³

1. Associate Professor, Research School of Population Health, Australian National University

2. Independent Consultant

3. Adjunct Associate Professor, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Western Sydney University



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Outline

- Prevalence and relevance
- Literature from Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy Review – what works what works for 'at risk' mothers & children
- Case Studies
- Conclusion



An Evidence Check rapid review brokered by the Sax Institute for the Department of Health, May 2018

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The scale and nature of the problem

Rising rates of incarceration of women worldwide including in Australia

Socially disadvantaged population (young, low education, low income, indigenous, experience of sexual assault/domestic violence/childhood trauma)

High proportion are mothers of young children, often primary carers and sole parents

Medical risk factors (premature/surgical birth, smoking, drug and alcohol abuse)

Additional risk factors from justice system (mother child separation, maternal mental health, fish bowl, autonomy, health care and parenting/lactation support access)

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How many infants and young children are impacted by maternal imprisonment in Australia?

No national statistics- in 2007 estimated that 145 000 children had had a parent imprisoned

2014 WA audit children born 1985-2011

Average 1500 children/year had their mother in prison (total 9352)

2/3 children indigenous

19% of all indigenous children experienced maternal incarceration

Half of all children under 4 years at the time of their first experience of their mother being imprisoned

192 children born while mother imprisoned

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“The child is innocent and is not a prisoner, this the fulfilment of his/her rights, in particular the right to survival and development, the right to health and the right to adequate food should not be compromised” IBFAN-GIFA

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Impact of breastfeeding cessation on infants

Increased risk of infections- 3-5x rate of hospitalisation

Increased risk of type 2 diabetes- 1.5x

Increased rates of SIDS- 3.7x

Increase risk obesity- 1.3x

Impeded cognitive development- up to 9 IQ point deficit

Increased risk of maternal neglect- 2.6x

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Impact of breastfeeding cessation on women

- Increased risk breast cancer- 1.4x
- Increased risk ovarian cancer-1.6x
- Increased risk type 2 diabetes- 1.5x
- Reduced maternal caregiving capacity

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Evidence Review – Modifiable factors and beneficial outcomes in prisons

Multiple barriers but also unique opportunities to benefit mother and child's future and society

Strategies supported by evidence include: prison nurseries, health care coordination, lactation and parenting support programs, avoidance of incarceration

Smith J, Cattaneo A, Iellamo A, Javanparast S, Atchan M, Gribble K: **Review of effective strategies to promote breastfeeding: An evidence check rapid review brokered by the Sax Institute (www.saxinstitute.org.au) for the Australian Department of Health.** *Sax Institute* 2018.

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Mother-baby programs

Allow babies and young children to live with their mothers in prison

Provide a safe environment for the child

Should provide individualised parenting support, including support for breastfeeding (increased rates reported where included in programs)

Outcomes measured include: Improved mental health for children, reduced recidivism, and increased likelihood of child remaining in the care of the mother

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Byrne MW, Goshin LS, Joestl SS: **Intergenerational transmission of attachment for infants raised in a prison nursery**. *Attachment and Human Development* 2010, **12**(4):375-393.

- Prison mother-baby program providing individualised parenting support and guidance
- Infants measured high rates of secure attachment (60%) despite high rates of insecure internal attachment representation in mothers
- High rates of positive discordancy resulted in infants having secure attachments at rates comparable to low-risk community samples
- Rates of secure attachment were greater where mothers were incarcerated for longer

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Issues with mother-child programs

Prisons are largely set up and managed by men and for men
 Application processes can be problematic
 Exclusion and inclusion requirements
 Age of child permitted in mother-child units
 Limited places in units
 Unavailability of units in some prisons, esp in regional areas
 Unavailability to women on remand
 Variable access to lactation and mothering support
 Seemingly less available to indigenous women

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Case study 1

Breastfeeding woman with a 12 week old baby admitted to a mother-baby unit in prison
 Random urine test request 2 weeks later, traces of THC metabolites found
 Decision made to remove the baby but mother not told
 Grandmother took the baby out 'for the afternoon' but as arranged with staff, did not return the baby
 When the mother was informed she had a severe trauma / grief / distress response which also traumatised the staff (who did not anticipate this)
 No arrangements made for mother to maintain her milk supply
 Baby was returned a few weeks later
 Issues – separation / trauma for mother and baby / interruption to breastfeeding / loss of lactation and breastfeeding / punishment for the baby / not in the best interests of the child

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Case study 2

Mother became pregnant after arrest

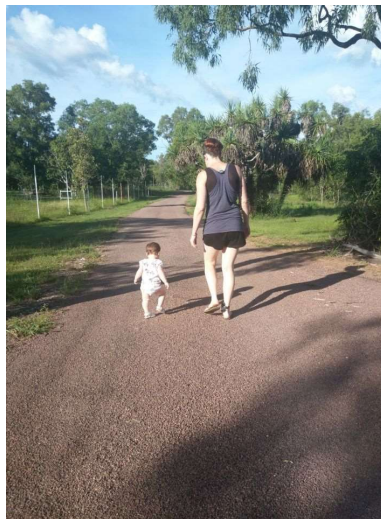
Time of sentencing, baby 3 months old and exclusively breastfed

Prison mother-baby program only allowed women to apply to be in the program from prison

Expert report written for sentencing on the impact of maternal incarceration on the infant

"It is my opinion that should Baby S be separated from her mother while her she is incarcerated that this will be detrimental to Baby S's health and development. Separation from her mother will be experienced as a severe trauma for Baby S. It may also have an impact of Baby S's mental health and make it more difficult for Ms M to provide care for Baby S when she is released from prison"

"Against my better judgement, I have decided that having a baby who is currently been breastfed does at least or is capable of constituting the sort of exceptional circumstances that would enable me not to sentence the offender to a term of at least 28 days' actual imprisonment. Had it not been for that, it would have been my view that the offender ought to serve at least six months of the term of imprisonment that I am going to impose."



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Conclusion

Rights of the child demands that the needs of infants and young children be considered in policies and practices in the justice system

Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy to be released in April

Social justice advocacy needed for equitable access to attachment and breastfeeding by the most vulnerable mothers and babies

- Avoid separation of mother and infant
- Ensure equitable access to health care, parenting and lactation support
- Maternity protection policies in prison

Beneficial and cost effective strategies are available

- Reduced recidivism
- Prevents maternal incarceration adversely impacting child health and development
- Reduces the health impact of incarceration on women and may help break the cycle of disadvantage



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