

# **Beverley Maragh and Pamela Stewart**



Email : [borninside@mariamontessori-org](mailto:borninside@mariamontessori-org)

# Born Inside

- A collaboration between AMI (0-3/3-6) trained Montessori teacher/lecturer and Psychotherapist.
- Our work started in Holloway prison, and now we are at Bronzefield
- Where It had taken us one year to get through security and to have our project approved.
- We attend the prison one day a week, for one hour with the mothers and babies on the unit.
- One hour with the pregnant women which we used to see individually.
- Now at Bronzefield we have a group for both the mothers and babies and the pregnant women.
- The groups take place each week.



Our work began at Holloway prison situated in North London, in January 2012  
The mother and baby unit was then closed in October 2013.

# Bronzefield



We started our project at Bronzefield prison Ashford , near Heathrow in January 2014 .

# Background Information

- Annually, approximately 17,240 children are separated from their mother.
  - Only 9% of these children are cared for by their father.
  - 15% of these women are foreign nationals.
  - 46% of women have experienced domestic violence.
  - 53% of the women have experienced emotional, physical and sexual abuse as a child.
  - Around one-third of women prisoners lose their homes, and often their possessions, while in prison.
- A Prisons Inspectorate survey found that 38% of women in prison did not have accommodation arranged on release
- The Home Office has reported that 66% of women in prison have dependent children under the age of 18 years.

Form birth companions report 2012 /2013



- \* When I entered the prison my perception changed.
- \* Can you spot the prisoner ?

# The mother and baby unit

- In Bronzefield there are approximately 500 hundred women in Bronzefield
- On the mother and baby unit there is space for 12 mothers and 13 babies and one of the rooms is for twins
- The mothers have to apply for a space and have to present themselves to a board that will make the decision to offer them a place on the unit or not.
- In Bronzefield the same procedure applies.
- The babies can stay until they are 18 months old.

# The women we have worked with.

The women we have worked with are aged 18 to 42 years old.

About 25% of the women we have worked with have fathers were also in prison .

Some of the women were first time mothers and for some this was their 9<sup>th</sup> child and a couple of the women were even grandmothers themselves.

Sometimes we worked with 3 generations at one time (grandmother, mother, daughter).



# Some of our challenges

**\* A quiet baby is a good baby. (Babies are placed within a bouncer, a stroller or play pen). These create a non moving prison for the babies all of their own)**

**The mothers must use their buggies to transport the babies from A to B. This is the case even for the walking babies.**

- Some babies are often sent home to bond with other family members and siblings. This can cause disorientation for both the baby because they become unsettled on return and for the mother because they choose to stop breastfeeding and find the baby unsettled.**

- Some of the mothers have already had children and can be a negative influence on the other first time mothers. prisoners.**

- Often they are dressed inappropriately and now that the royal family have displayed a photo of baby George in shoes – the children will definitely be dressed in shoes. (One mother wanted Timberlands for her child).**



# How we use the Montessori approach

- Talk about the importance of movement that still allows them to follow the prison rules.
- Encourage the mothers to lay the baby on their tummy once they are awake.
- Allow the child the space to move on the floor.
- Look at simple toys which can be made and are small enough for a baby's hand.
- Look at the clothing that allows movement.
- Not put babies into shoes unless they are walking.
- Encouraging mothers to talk directly to their babies and use the correct pronunciation of their words.
- For some mothers to speak in their mother tongue first and why this is important.
- Read to their babies .
- Cut down on the amount of television time.

# The importance of Movement

*“ Movement helps the development of mind, and this finds renewed expression in further movement and activity”*

Maria Montessori (2007) The Absorbent Mind p.131



# Some of our achievements

- The mothers have begun to set up the room before we arrive for the session.
- The mothers have begun to sit on the floor with their babies, and have started to actively play and enjoy the achievement of their own children.
- Mothers have started to collaborate in planning and cooking meals for the babies.
- Mothers that have been released are unashamed to continue to connect with us outside of the prison and to share in their child's developmental progress.
- Mothers express their hopes for themselves and their babies once released from prison.

# Summary

- **Over the last 4 ½ years.**
- **We have worked in two prisons.**
- **We have worked with over 60 women with their baby.**
- **Some have transferred to other prisons or have been released home.**
- **45 babies from 5 days to 15 months.**
- **We are currently working with a group of pregnant as well women which has been over 100 so far.**

# Education for life

*The child can only build well if this help is given in a suitable way. Thus the authority of parents does not come from dignity standing on its own feet. But it comes from the help they are able to give to give their children”.*

Maria Montessori (2007) Absorbent mind p.15