



DEPARTMENT OF
CORRECTIONS
ARA POUTAMA AOTEAROA

New Beginnings

MOTHERS WITH BABIES UNIT

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“The best part of it is being able to see every milestone, noticing every tooth grow and seeing all the little things that we can take for granted.”

What is the Mothers with Babies Unit?

The Mothers with Babies Unit gives you a unique opportunity to be with your child, and get the help you need to make positive changes and stay offence free when you are released.

You get to care full time for your child in a safe and supportive environment with wrap-around services to support you in your parenting.

Placement will be in the best interests of the child.
See page 7 – for entry criteria.

What's best for baby

Your child deserves the best possible start in life.

The Mothers with Babies Unit offers you and your baby:

- > a stable, safe environment
- > a chance to grow your relationship
- > support from experienced, caring staff
- > support from skilled outside providers
- > access to rehabilitation and reintegration programmes.



Mothers with Babies means..



Seeing baby grow



Sharing first smiles, first teeth, first steps



Help and support



Learning to be a good mum



Giving baby a better start

Got a question? Make a note here:

Other solutions

If having your baby with you in prison is not the best choice for you both, there are ways we can help you to stay in touch and grow your mother/baby relationship.

You can use special bonding facilities on site where you and your child can regularly spend time together for bonding purposes.

Read more about this on page 13.



Where are the Mothers with Babies Units?



Our three Mothers with Babies Units are in Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facility, Arohata Prison (Wellington) and Christchurch Women's Prison.

If you join the programme, we will try to place you near family, whānau and other significant people in your baby's life.

The aim is to help you grow positive relationships with others who can support you in your parenting once you are released.



The Mothers with Babies Unit at Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facility

Entry criteria

You may be eligible to apply for Mothers with Babies if:

- > you are pregnant and will give birth before your release from custody
- > you have a child who is younger than 24 months, and
 - you were their main caregiver before you were imprisoned OR
 - you are likely to be their primary caregiver on release
- > you have no convictions for sexual or violent offences involving children.

You must be:

- > drug free and have no serious misconducts
- > motivated to live in the unit and care for your child
- > willing to be assessed to ensure that the decision to care for your child in prison is a safe and appropriate option.

Your application

If you are interested in joining the unit talk to your case manager about applying.

The application process can take some time and we understand that waiting for an outcome can be a worrying time for you and your family/whānau.

We will complete the application process as quickly as possible and update you on progress.

Bear in mind that the process involves assessing alternative caregivers*, and at times getting the views of your baby's father. These things can take extra time.

**An alternative caregiver may be a family/whānau member or other support person who is approved to care for your child.*

“If the Mothers with Babies Unit is the right option for you and your baby, we’ll do what we can to make it happen.”



Joining the Unit

Your placement will always depend on what's best for your child.

If possible, you will move to the unit a few weeks before your baby is born so you have time to set up your room and get familiar with the routines and environment.

If accepted, the length of time you stay in the unit depends on when you are due for release, and the age of your child. The law allows you to keep your baby with you until they turn two. Your case manager can tell you about the options if your baby will turn two before the end of your sentence.



"Being in the unit has allowed me a second chance to be a mother.

Watching her grow, every day waking up next to her, seeing her laugh and smile, being there when she cries, comforting and cuddling her.

She has been my strength."

Living in the Unit

Rooms and roommates

The Mothers with Babies Unit is a type of self-care unit. You and your baby will have your own bedroom. A cot is provided for baby.

You will be in the unit with up to three other mothers and their children, and share kitchen and lounge areas. You'll also cook and clean for yourselves. Laundry facilities (a washing machine and clothes line) are provided.

Personal belongings

In the Mothers with Babies Unit you may wear your own clothing (no gang attire is allowed).

You may have various items your baby needs, including furniture, toys, toiletries, and books.

Unit staff will be able to tell you more about how much property you can have with you.

You will be expected to:

- > care for your baby
- > prepare meals for yourself and for baby
- > keep your rooms clean
- > do your own laundry, including baby's
- > follow safe sleep practices*.

**If you have questions about safe sleeping, talk to your case manager.*

Got a question? Make a note here:



"I have grown as an individual and as a mother, and every day I spend here I go from strength to strength."

Your responsibilities



Like mums on the outside, you are fully responsible for meeting the needs of your baby.

This means providing all food, bedding, clothes and toys. You can arrange to buy the things you need for your baby and have them sent to the unit. Keep items you supply safe for your baby and others.

You may be eligible for Working for Families Tax Credit or Child Support to help you cover these costs. Staff can help you with applying to Work and Income.

Letting others help

Other mothers in the unit and staff may be able to help with childcare for short periods; however, you are the primary caregiver and responsible for your baby's care at all times.

**If you have questions about safe sleeping, talk to your case manager.*

Got a question? Make a note here:

The rules

The Mothers with Babies Unit is a special environment but all prison regulations, routines and rules still apply. This includes visits, searching, and drug testing.

Zero tolerance for drugs

Mothers with Babies Units have a strict Drug Free Policy to keep you and baby safe.

You must give a drug free test before your application to join the unit is considered.

If you fail a drug test while in the unit you will have to leave immediately.

Your baby will be placed with their alternative caregiver in the community.

If drugs or alcohol or any related items are found in your room or in your possession, your baby may be removed from the unit and placed with their alternative caregiver in the community.

Zero tolerance for violence

Like other parts of the prison, the Mothers with Babies Unit will not tolerate violence. The safety and wellbeing of your baby and the other children in the unit come first.

Any violence will have serious consequences.

In the Mothers with Babies Unit, any misconduct will affect not just you, but your baby, too.

Visitors

Approved people will be welcome to visit you and your baby on certain days and at certain times. Unit staff can tell you more about how visits work at each site.

You can ask for help

Every mum needs encouragement and time-out at some stage. The sooner you ask for help, the better. Talk to staff if you feel like you are not coping or need some extra support.

Getting the right support

We have joined up with other agencies and organisations to help you use your time in the unit to build a strong foundation for you and your baby.

We work with Child, Youth and Family and NZ Police to make a good decision about you joining the unit.

We work with others including Plunket and health professionals to:

- > make a good decision about you joining the unit
- > make sure that you have the support you and your baby need
- > build your confidence in parenting
- > guide you in day-to-day activities with your baby.

Your case manager will ask for your consent before speaking with other agencies or other people that you would like to involve in your plan.

If you have any concerns about us speaking with these agencies, please talk to your case manager.



*Got a question?
Make a note here:*



Mothers and Bonding Facility

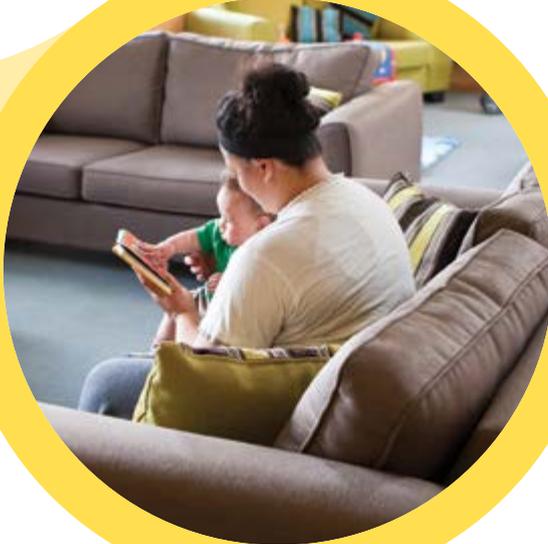
Sometimes the best decision for your baby will be for them to be cared for in the community by an alternative caregiver. This might be because of baby's age, your needs, the length of your sentence, or your feelings about baby being in prison.

If this happens, we will support you to keep in touch with your baby.

If you are not eligible or decide not to join the Mothers with Babies Unit, you might like to use the Mothers and Bonding Facility on site. This special space is set up like a typical lounge room at home. This space is for you to feed and bond with your baby on a daily basis in a safe, suitable environment.

Your baby will be brought to you by their caregiver at arranged times.

Talk to your case manager if you want to apply to use this facility.



Finding a balance

While you are in the Mothers with Babies Unit, you will still attend the programmes agreed to by you and your case manager as part of your offender plan.

We will help you to find a balance between your parenting responsibilities and your plan.

Staff will work with you to make sure you have access to the full range of rehabilitation and learning opportunities available.

Sometimes you will be able to take baby with you while you attend your scheduled activity. But if this not possible or appropriate, your unit staff will help you arrange alternative childcare.

Getting out and about with baby

We are here to help you in your parenting role and to support your child's development.

You and your baby will be able to access many of the same services you would have in the community such as

antenatal classes, immunisation, a midwife, Plunket, early childhood education, parenting support, and other services if needed.

Some of these may be free to use, but it is your responsibility to pay any fees involved, including any medical costs.

Depending on the length of your stay and the needs of your baby, you may be able to join in social activities outside of the prison. This is strongly encouraged for all older children who live in the unit so they get to experience aspects of life in the wider community.

You will be involved in the decision making, and during these outings you will be escorted by staff at all times.

You can talk to staff about walking baby within the prison grounds and a stroller can be provided for this.



“This opportunity has made it clear what changes I need to make... to ensure the best possible future for me and my children.”

When it's time to leave

You will leave the Mothers with Babies Unit if:

- > you are released
- > your baby leaves the unit
- > your baby turns two.

We recognise that leaving the unit or prison may be an anxious time for you.

Your case manager will work with you to plan for leaving the unit and make sure you have the support you and your baby need. This may include working with a probation officer. Your transition plan will be tailored to your circumstances.

Got a question? Make a note here:

Getting help on the outside

Your transition plan may include support in some of the following areas:

- > help with accommodation
- > parenting support in the community
- > early childhood education information
- > health care for you and baby in the community
- > education, training or employment support for you
- > support in strengthening family/whānau relationships
- > staying offence free.

For more information

Your probation officer, case officer, and Mothers with Babies Unit staff are here for you. If you or your support people have any questions about the information in this booklet, talk to one of us.

www.corrections.govt.nz