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Dietary provision for pregnancy and lactation in women's prisons: an illustration from the case of Helen Archer

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UK guidelines state that women require additional dietary energy¹ and other nutrients² during pregnancy and lactation. In light of the very low typical daily budget per prisoner in the UK,³ it is valuable to consider the effects of diet on pregnancy outcomes and lactation for women in prison. The case of anorexic Helen Archer and her baby Jack will be used to illustrate: (1) the vague and sometimes scientifically inaccurate regulatory guidelines on diets for pregnant and lactating women in prison;³ and (2) reports from prison inspections on the provision of nutrition in women's prisons and mother and baby units.⁴

Supplementation of the diet with produce from the prison gardens where Helen worked briefly will be taken into consideration. Recommendations for more specific and accurate guidelines will be proposed.

Word count: 199

¹ Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (2015) Dietary reference values for energy. Norwich: TSO.

² Department of Health (1991) Dietary reference values for food energy and nutrients for the United Kingdom. Report on health and social subjects no. 41. London: TSO.

³ Prison Service Order number 4800 (PSO 4800) Women prisoners. Available at <https://www.justice.gov.uk/offenders/psos> (accessed 26 October 2016).

⁴ HM Inspectorate of Prisons. Life in prison: food. Available at <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2016/09/Life-in-prison-Food-Web-2016.pdf> (accessed 26 October 2016).