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THE HOME SECRETARY'S OFFICE → PM

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PRISON SERVICE PRESS

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## NEWS RELEASE

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13 March 1997

## ROISIN MCALISKEY TO KEEP HER BABY IN HOLLOWAY

Roisin McAliskey will be allowed to keep her baby with her in the Mother and Baby Unit (MBU) at Holloway, the Prison Service announced today.

The decision was taken by Alan Walker, Director of Operations (South) following a recommendation from the local panel of specialists, including independent medical and child care professionals, who considered Ms McAliskey's application earlier today (yesterday).

Commenting on the decision Mr Walker said:

"I have agreed with the views of the expert panel that it would be in the child's best interests for them both to be located in the mother and baby unit. While prison can never be an ideal place for a baby, the unit offers a reasonably relaxed regime geared to helping the emotional, physical and all-round development of the child as well as teaching parenting skills to new mothers. It is staffed by trained officers and nursery nurses, and is regularly visited by health visitors and a community paediatrician."

Following the recent reduction in Ms McAliskey's security categorisation to standard risk Category A, in the final weeks of her pregnancy she will be able to join the other expectant mothers for ante-natal exercise and classes. She will also have access to the chapel. Strip-searching has already been substantially reduced to the same level as all other Holloway prisoners.



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The Mother and Baby Unit at Holloway has seventeen places for unconvicted and sentenced women. Mothers are able to walk freely around the unit and their rooms remain unlocked at night to allow the mothers to care for their babies. Arrangements can also be made for the children to be taken outside of the prison by their families.

Ms McAliskey continues to receive full ante-natal care, which includes daily visits from the prison doctor, and weekly check-ups with a gynaecologist, an obstetrician and a midwife. She is only locked in her cell at meal times and during the night and is able to associate with other prisoners. Although Ms McAliskey has the opportunity to exercise this has so far been declined. In common with other prisoners, she will give birth in an outside hospital and will not be restrained while she is there.

#### Note to Editors

The announcement was confirmed by the Home Secretary in a written Parliamentary Answer to Mr Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth).