

Submission
No 217

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 2 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

My second birth was incredible, but only because I did my research and made sure the experience was incredible, after experiencing a somewhat traumatic first birth. My first birth was during covid lockdowns and was at [redacted] hospital. I was GBS positive but at the time, nobody explained what this meant. They just said I would need antibiotics during labour. I went into labour naturally at 38 weeks and upon arriving at hospital, was recommended I be induced.

My waters had broken and I was progressing, so in hindsight and with my current knowledge, I know I did not need an induction. I have no recollection of the effects of an induction being explained to me. I did not know what I was in for. I accepted it and it was horrible. The drip made things progress far too quickly and I was vomiting and pooing at the same time in the shower for hours. We did not have a bathroom in our room, as they were renovating the hospital. We had to walk down a long hallway, in front of people, having my labour constantly interrupted. I did not feel safe. Finally when they deemed me ready to push, I was told to lie on my back (something that I was adamant that I did not want to do, as I knew how ineffective this position is in labour). I kept trying to get on my hands and knees as I felt more comfortable but they kept getting me to go on my back. I pushed for a very long time and the midwife touched me with her fingers on the spot where I must have been about to tear, but it was excruciating and she did not inform me that she was going to do this. Was vomiting the whole time. I ended up having a tear which affected me more than 2 years after. I believe I was stitched up too tight.

Every time I had intercourse with my partner I would bleed from re-tearing or grazing the tear scar tissue. I held on to a lot of intense feelings since that birth and going into my second pregnancy I felt a lot of fear around being GBS positive again and a huge fear that they would push to induce me. I was aware of the high rate of induction at [redacted] hospital and I knew I would have to fight for myself. I was right.. they encouraged me to have an induction after 38 weeks. I politely declined. I hired a student doula and educated myself and I learned that prophylactic antibiotics for GBS is not evidence based. So I chose to not have the antibiotics this time. I was very happy with my choice. I went into labour naturally at 39 weeks and had the most amazing midwife at [redacted] hospital.

But I do believe my experience was more positive because I was prepared to fight for my rights, I had a doula and I was more aware of evidence based practice. I believe there are big issues in hospitals, particularly [redacted] with their high rate of intervention. I strongly believe we shouldn't be birthing in hospitals. We should have birthing centres attached to hospitals, so we can birth in a non-clinical environment but still access help in an emergency. We go to hospital when we are very sick, so why do we birth in hospitals when we are not sick? I'm a massive supporter of midwives, however they are not supported to fulfil their roles. They need more support and need to be recognised for their expertise. Let's invest more in birth and government funded home births in particular. Let's put an end to birth trauma.