

Submission
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INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

To whom it may concern I am writing to you about my experience with the births of both my children.

In 2016 I was pregnant with my first child, I had a healthy pregnancy, I asked if there were options for birth as in water births etc, this was denied as it wasn't an option, they asked what my birth plan was and I asked for less medical intervention as possible and to have a midwife in the room as I felt nervous about what was to come. on the 1st of September at 3am I felt my first set of contractions, I was 39 weeks and 1 day, I rang my hospital

which was an hour away. They told me to take some Panadol and it may just be some bracks and hicks, as it was my first child I'd probably go over 40 weeks. I took Panadol and the pain increased I rang again at 5am explaining that the contractions were strong and I was counting them 5 minutes apart, I was advised to take my time and come in, as it was a 1-hour drive. At this time, it was flooding in the area and I had to take detours I told them I was leaving to come in. My husband packed the car and I made it out the door between contractions. It took an hour and 40 minutes as the pain was so much being stuck in a seated position and having contractions.

When we arrived, my husband found a wheelchair and wheeled me to the second floor to the Maternity ward.

I was controlling my breathing, and trusting that my body will know what to do. Once we reached the maternity ward, we were put into a birthing room. And told someone will be in shortly to assess me and see how far along I was. I asked if there was an exercise ball to bounce on as I felt this helping relieve the pain and they said I could take the exercise ball in the shower, then ran in and said put a towel on the ball after I had already slipped off. Eventually I was told to hop on the bed and hooked up to the monitors, to check on the baby and contractions. And for an internal examination to see how dilated I was, I was 6 and half cms. With the comments you don't seem to be in much pain, I was excruciating pain but focused on my breathe save my energy on what was to come. They told me at 10:30 that this will be a long drawn-out process and they'll come in and out to check on me. As they had others birthing. They left me with the gas and told me to use it to relieve pain if I needed it. I was unhooked to be able to move around and bounce on the ball, around 11:30 my legs went numb and I told my husband to get the midwife I was helped on to the bed I said I didn't want to lay on my back and was told that it was easier for them to control the situation if I was on my back, I wasn't being heard and turned around facing the pillow and the midwife walked out. I told my husband I need to push and he went and got the midwife, she did another examination and said my waters haven't ruptured, and I wasn't at 10cms yet. I still felt like I needed to push and again my husbands went searching for the midwife they came in and did another examination I was told I was 10cm on one side of the cervix but not the other and told they could rupture my waters if I needed them to and I agreed. And immense pressure was relieved, and then my body did what it needed to, it pushed as it needed to, I was being yelled at to keep pushing when my body had no contractions, then my body would do it, I was continually told to keep pushing and yelled at when I literally couldn't. I wasn't in control my body was. I was then all of a sudden told to stop pushing, I couldn't, I felt the pressure of the midwife pushing my baby back. I was given the gas as they force my baby backward. Yelling at me to stop. The cord was wrapped around my baby I was feeling the coolness of what I thought was my waters, but was instead my blood. My husbands face was white as a ghost I was bleeding and had been torn, my baby was out at 12.47pm a beautiful boy. I waited for

the scream which 1 minute felt like hours. They then told my husband to pull a cord which then 10 staff members rushed in. My shirt cut off me my baby placed on me for mere seconds, as I had hands inside me pulling my placenta out as it wasn't detaching my baby was then taken off and a midwife pushing down on my stomach and for the first time I yelled in agony. I was then taken away for surgery, as I had haemorrhaged due to difficult detachment of the placenta and had a 3B tear that I needed to be sewed up over 25 stitches. I was then in recovery I woke in the most agonising pain, they pumped me with strong pain medication, still nothing was helping it was the most unbearable pain I have ever experienced. They told me they couldn't give me more, then one nurse check my bottom half and I was still bleeding, again I had staff member pushing my insides trying to stop the bleeding. People telling me it's okay. I was so terrified that I will never know what my baby boy looks like. I didn't think I was going to make it out of recovery.

At 8pm I finally had stopped bleeding , I was then okay enough to be taken back to the maternity ward and reunited with my husband and meet my baby. As I was being wheeled in, I then had midwife take my breast out and start squeezing the colostrum from my breast, explaining as she's doing it, that the baby needs this, it's important I give it to him now.

Then my husband was finally allowed into the room. He was so relieved to see me and said that they said he had to prepare himself that I wasn't going to make it. We were both so traumatised. He was then asked to leave as it was the hospital policy that men couldn't stay after the birth.

I was so scared, for him to go, I couldn't move I had leg pressure cuffs on my legs and told not to move. To ring the bell and the midwife would bring the baby to feed. They would help change the nappies etc. I was then told to sleep and rest, but alls I could do was stare at my beautiful little human I created, so they wheeled him out to the nursey and insisted I rest.

My husband was the first person on the ward the next day and stayed to help out as much as he could we were both so emotional and couldn't process what just happened, we had a staff member come in and say that there will be someone to speak to us about the trauma we experienced and that they were sorry for how things played out. That person never came there was no further follow up and the care got worse. That second night the night nurse told me to get out of bed and change my own baby's nappy and to get up to feed him myself. I had a catheter, leg compression things on my legs and was told to limit my movement that I was able to pick up my baby by myself due to my stitches etc. that night nurse also didn't change over the antibiotics and saline running through my arms so when there were empty they started drawing backwards. They didn't answer the buzzers and alls I could hear were mothers yelling out for help. I pulled my baby's cot towards me grabbed him out and cuddled him until the shift change. Where I had nurses running in saying, ohh my god im so sorry. As the IV machine was beeping and they buzzer hadn't been answered. I just wanted to get out of the nightmare I was in. I requested to go home, and was told I had to stay until my sons hearing test was complete, and until I had finished the course of antibiotics because I was at risk of infection , I asked for it to be done because I didn't feel safe. They assured me I would be safe and this doesn't usually happen. I requested to be transferred to bright hospital and they couldn't do it over the weekend. That Monday I was allowed to go home in the care of Dom nurse who would visit and check on my healing, I needed to attend a lactation clinic and the incontinence nurse. There was nothing in place for my husband and I to receive any trauma counselling for what we just endured. I ended up being diagnosed with PTSD and postnatal anxiety.

In 2018 I miscarried, and was told that I need to lose weight.

In 2020 I was pregnant with my second child, this was a very anxious time for me, I went to get my date scan and was told that they couldn't see anything and it was a non-viable pregnancy, which was heart breaking I complained as I felt the sonographer didn't do his job properly 2 days later I was phoned to come in which there was a heartbeat and a clear picture and got an apology, and that I must of got my dates wrong. Going forward I told that I could only have this baby via caesarean, this pregnancy I had issues with bleeding and low blood pressure I needed iron infusions. I was booked in at 40weeks which I said I gave birth at 39 weeks and 1 day last pregnancy could I be booked in earlier, I was told that other than my blood pressure that my pregnancy was boring and very straight forward. July 7th At 37 weeks and 5 days I started contracting, I contacted the hospital and this was during covid so they were limiting the amount of visits, and told me if I felt I needed to come in I could go in but couldn't take my husband with me and if I was in labour than they would call him to come in, I said we live an hour away and I would need to then organise my son to stay with family etc. so they told me to hold off for as long as I could, I waited for the next day 8th of July and the contractions were on and off but strong. They told me I was 3cms dilated and that I would go in for an emergency caesarean, they gave me morphine for the pain but it didn't work as I'm intolerant to morphine-based products, it does nothing for me. This was written by my doctor that I would require something other morphine for my spinal for the caesarean. I was prepared for the caesarean I had compression stockings out on my gown, then had a doctor come in and do an internal examination they said ohh your only 2 and a half cms you can go home. I wasn't there to give natural birth as I was informed, I could only have a caesarean, she said they couldn't get the staff required to come in and that I could wait longer. I was sent home and told to come back the contractions got more closer together. I raised my concerns and said I felt so let down and scared that I was gonna have my baby on the side of the road given we live an hour away, she told me to get a motel if that elevated my concern.

I said most motel hotels aren't taking people because of covid. We went home and I began my breathe work I waited until 5pm on the 9th of July and we drove yet again to the hospital. I was then internally examined and told I was 6 and half cms and we were having this baby tonight! During the caesarean I started to feeling my legs and told them it was hurting which they told me it I shouldn't be able to feel anything, I said it's really hurting and I can feel my legs, which they said I shouldn't be able to, I then lifted my legs and they immediately gave me gas. At 9.05 my son was born. And they let me have him on me until I couldn't take the pain and the gas was placed on me for longer periods of time until I was all sewn up.

The doctor then rubbed the area "clean" and I heard him oh no, to which I said what he said ohh I'm sorry I've rubbed to vigorously and it's come undone. I then was given fentanyl and gas to control the pain. Whilst he and a senior colleague re sewed the wound site.

On the 11th of July I was sent home due to bed shortages and I wasn't a first-time mother, my baby was feeding well and I would be more comfortable at home. I would have a dom nurse come check on us for the first couple of weeks. I raised concerns that my son was jaundice and I felt he wasn't gaining weight, to which they said he had his dads tan and his gaining weight that I wasn't to worry. During the week, my dom nurse removed the honey comb like dressing on my caesarean wound. I then had immense pain, in my right hip, my

husband took me and my new baby to the emergency department my blood pressure was low and they did some scans the muscle had been pulled they said this could of been from the caesarean. I was given pain relief and sent home to rest.

A week later I was still in pain and had heavy bleeding. My husband took myself and my new baby to the hospital, one of the nurses asked about my sons colour and I said I keep telling my dom nurse that I think his shrinking and his jaundice, in which she replied very, the maternity ward was called and my son was assessed while I was being looked after he had in fact lost 15% of his birth weight. And was just below the level to require the UV lights he had a lip tie which was preventing him to feed properly.

He required surgery to fix the lip tie and I ended up having a hysterectomy due to ongoing haemorrhaging.

I felt so let down and out of control in both my birthing experiences, my voice, my concerns, my body wasn't looked after. I am left with PTSD, anxiety and depression.

I hope that sharing this story can give you some insight to how medieval birthing feels in our public hospitals.

Kind regards