

Submission
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INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

As a Mum to a now toddler, living in an area without hands on support or a 'village', I don't have the time to write my story, but I want to have my say.

I believe every person deserves to have supportive and practical, continuity of care from antenatal well into the postpartum period.

This should include free birth, breastfeeding and infant CPR/first aid classes. Most importantly free women's health physiotherapy assessment and treatment.

Because I didn't get those things and they will make a difference.

My name is _____, I live in _____ I'm 34 years old and I have a 22 month old.

I had my first birth at _____ hospital on 28/9/21 during lockdown.

My labour was going well until it wasn't. I was able to labour at home to 7cm dilation.

Once I started labour in the birthing room the midwife was inattentive, left the room often, aggressive when trying to find my son's heartbeat through the belt monitor, ignoring me when I repeatedly said I couldn't birth on the bed due to pre-existing back pain and a problem with my hip.

I wanted nothing more but to get into the bath and birth in water.

My husband was trying his best to be an advocate for me but as first time parents without practical face to face classes (we had maybe an hour PowerPoint presentation over zoom from the hospital in addition to our own research), we were unprepared and overwhelmed.

He was also gripped by me for every contraction and limited in what he could do.

I had been unable to keep down more than 2 squares of chocolate since the night before, the antiemetic that accompanied the morphine helped, but I had no food offered while in labour.

I had not been encouraged to void during my entire labour, it wasn't until I was close to pushing that someone queried this and a catheter was inserted.

I was made to get onto the bed so my son could be monitored with a clip in his scalp as there was difficulty finding his heartbeat.

My son was facing the wrong way and I was labouring back to back. In addition to my pre-existing back pain, this was incredibly painful. Morphine did nothing, gas did nothing, my only pain relief was the maternity TENS machine I had organised for myself.

I was finally allowed to labour on my knees facing the back of the bed.

I was pushing for 2 hours.

I was eventually told I would need intervention as we were both too tired. I tried to ask questions, I tried to advocate for myself, however I was exhausted and was so scared by this time.

My legs were put in stirrups despite my protests of pain.

My son was born after two failed vacuum attempts, an episiotomy and 2nd degree tear. There were two knots in my son's umbilical cord.

Strangely enough the gas was effective as I was being stitched up.

I had no continuity of care except a student midwife I had seen a couple of times in previous antenatal checks.

While she tried to run the bath for me, I realise now she could not have advocated strongly for me, whether due to lack of experience, confidence or the dynamics of the room.

She removed my placenta (her first time) and attempted to help me with breastfeeding for the first time. I now know I needed more experienced support there.

We discharged after two nights as there was minimal support, the ward was hugely understaffed, I saw two lactation consultants but despite this had big problems with feeding initially. We believe it was due to forceps delivery and injury on my son's head. He was borderline jaundiced, resulting in us being readmitted within 24 hours due to dehydration.

This new admission was at hospital, a 'covid safe' hospital. Where I was barely looked at despite being 2 days post partum, and isolated as I was not allowed any visitor, including my husband.

I was also experiencing grief at the time due to the death of a close family friend the day after my son was born.

To assist with my son's dehydration I was put onto a strict feeding regimen of breastfeeding, formula and pumping. I was not given appropriate breastfeeding or pumping support, and despite not wanting to feed my son formula I was pressured into this. I believe I had nipple damage occur during this time which has continued to this day.

I was not fed appropriately for someone so newly postpartum especially while also breastfeeding. Instead given some leftover meal orders from the food service as my son was admitted on a Friday afternoon and I wasn't deemed their 'patient'.

I was asked if staff could give my son a dummy as he wouldn't stop crying while they tried to take bloods. I can still hear his screams from down the hallway.

My son has a scar on his arm from incorrect IV insertion/securement, and was delayed his dehydration electrolytes as someone forgot to get them. I remember the pediatrician admonishing them in front of me (supposedly out of earshot).

I had a nurse tell me one night as I tried to rest between feeds, that there was something wrong with my son's airways. There was not.

I told the pediatrician I was not coping and needed to go home, but because of the delay in addressing my son's dehydration I had to stay another night in isolation. I was in the depths of the baby blues in this time also as my milk came in.

She allowed me to meet my husband briefly in the carpark. He had not been anywhere during this time and took a covid test.

I was seen by the hospital social worker who essentially empathise but there was nothing they could do. I had been included in the MSP from [redacted] hospital, however as I was now at [redacted] they could only call me to check on me, and said I wasn't at risk and would be okay, and not to contact them again as they don't have the staff or resources.

We had the first visit post birth over the phone while the midwife was in the car, she then donned her PPE and we were sent to [redacted]. After this I had one phonecall from the MSP (discharged), then 2 phone calls from the MCHN in which the first gave incorrect feeding advice, and the second was more a questionnaire for their own records and no helpful information.

I was told a pack would be sent out, I never received this. The second caller had an incorrect email for me and could not work out the zoom/telehealth option.

I am now almost two years post partum and am still fighting to regain my health and strength after this time. This is at great financial and personal cost.

Women deserve better. Mothers deserve better. Fathers/partners deserve better support for their partners and for themselves too.

We need financial, and physical support to ensure health and safety for all. Mothers, children and families combined.