

Submission  
No 335

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 15 August 2023

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Partially  
Confidential

I birthed in 2022 through the [redacted] Midwifery Group Practice, however was transferred to [redacted] Hospital due to being in "prolonged" labour (approx. 14 hours prior to first transfer) and 40 hours in total - which is actually quite normal for a first birth. As someone who planned a low intervention homebirth, transfer to a hospital was something I had expressed not wanting to do, and did not feel as though I was asked for consent for this transfer. It was implied that I would be putting my baby at risk by not going along with the transfer. While at [redacted] Hospital, I was given multiple vaginal examinations despite protesting and saying I did not want any more, especially from the obstetrician who's vaginal examinations were particularly painful. During the obstetrician's first examination she broke my water with a needle without my consent or knowledge. I learned of this violation when I stood up and found liquid gushing from me. I thought I had peed myself and my husband told me that he had seen the doctor break my waters with a "crochet hook".

As my labour went on, my midwife expressed fear on multiple occasions that if the heart monitor (which was strapped to my abdomen despite my reluctance) moved and read my heartbeat instead of my baby's, that the doctors would come rushing in to intervene. My midwife obviously had a lot of fear around the possible interventions that would come my way if the doctors came in. This created a stressful environment for my final stages of labour and I believe hindered my birthing experience and the progress of my labour. My birth plan requested that I not receive an episiotomy, and this was written on a whiteboard clearly in my birth suite. I was told after 3 hours of pushing that they had let me go as long as they could and a forceps or cesar birth would be necessary. I was asked to sign consent for a C-section before it was actually necessary which caused me a lot of distress. When providing consent for the forceps delivery, I was told I would have an episiotomy. I said that I did not want one and was told that this was standard practice and necessary.

I had to really fight not to have an episiotomy, despite it being clearly stated in my birth plan. I was told I needed to have an epidural for my assisted delivery. I was then transported onto a trolley where I waited for around 20 minutes without pain relief, unable to get up, while they found an anaesthetist. I was not offered gas or any other options in this time. When my baby was born, she was having some minor respiratory distress and was taken to a NICU station which was behind my eyeline, so in the first minutes of her life I was distressed and unable to see if she was ok, whilst being strapped to a surgery bed whilst being stitched. Being unable to see my baby in these first moments was incredibly distressing. In the weeks following my birth I asked on a number of occasions for my medical notes to understand what medications/procedures myself and my baby were given. I never received this information.

I experienced flashbacks, trauma and a sense of violation from the obstetric violence I experienced. It impacted my postpartum and my ability to fully be present and bond with my baby. I also felt a huge amount of shame that my birth was not how I wanted it to be, and that my power and consent was taken away from me.