

Submission
No 414

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

My labour at [REDACTED] hospital in 2011 was wonderful. My request for little intervention was respected. I was able to have delayed cord cutting, no oxytocin to deliver the placenta but to breastfeed first to help deliver it and the doctor who sewed up my tear was deeply respectful. I remember the midwives as being there exactly when I needed them. Which is in direct contrast to my experience leading up to my birthing.

I was obese and I felt as though I was immediately diagnosed as a problem. Much of the conversation in each check up appointment was around losing weight and the dire consequences of being fat. I needed to attend the high risk clinic which meant hours of sitting a waiting for my appointment. I never saw the same dr twice so despite the clinicians flagging that may have a difficult birth no thought was given to assisting me to develop a trusted relationship with a medical team. I flagged my particular needs as someone who lives with specific learning disabilities who may need additional support in high stress situations with reading and understanding forms etc. I was provided with very little information about what might happen and what choices I could make. I am lucky in that I am an educated, highly intelligent white woman and so I was able to educate myself about what might happen and what the outcome of each choice might be. Other women I spoke to while waiting at the clinic did not have the resources I did. I was diagnosed with gestational diabetes. I went to the diabetes education class where the advise given was check your sugars and eat almonds when you are hungry and after that every check up was about how much weight I had gained and how my any was too big. And dire threats about the effect of eating McDonald's would have on my baby. I had intense cravings for vanilla handsoap but was too afraid to tell anyone. I was not offered support with my mental health and I was too afraid to ask again even though I now felt that every mouthful would kill my son. At my final appointment before I had my son I was told I would need a c section because I was not healthy. I was actually in early labour at that appointment and had my son the next day. Much later I was able to view my records and found that my test results showed that I had elevated protein (I think it was that) but the dr did not explain that to me just that I would need a c section and to call to book it in. I felt I was being rail roaded and it was clear to me that the dr was keen to move on. I also attended the laceration consultant as I had flat nipples and I was not given the tools I needed there to breast feed successfully instead told that I would be fine.

After my son was born I was ok breastfeeding was not working but I was told it would come with time. I was somewhat lucky in that one of the midwives told me to give my son a dummy as he had poor suck. I will be forever grateful to her as she was not meant to tell me that but it helped my son I later life avoid speech delay.

My son ended up in special care on day three. The lactation consultant told me to cup feed to avoid nipple confusion. The special care nurses told my strongly to bottle feed. I felt a failure and this is when I began to experience post natal depression. I believe that more support to breastfeed and if I had been given a better understanding of how my son's poor suck and under bite would effect breast feeding I might have been able to like myself enough to be a better mother.

At my first mother's group in [REDACTED] I was the only person there who had had a normal birth which is telling. So ultimately I have to commend [REDACTED]'s labour ward as I had been set up from the start of my pregnancy to have a high intervention labour, to have very little agency and to have my confidence as a person eroded but instead I ended up having the only normal and good labour out of almost 20 women and felt that the labour was only of the best things about having a baby.