

Submission
No 440

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 12 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

I am a midwife with more than 27 years experience.

I have trauma from the things I have witnessed as a midwife. I carry the trauma women have suffered in their own personal lives and the trauma they have experienced whilst labouring and birthing their babies.

I have cared for women whose baby's heart rate I cannot find. I have cared for women who have birthed their stillbirth babies. I have been to caesarean sections where the baby has died and the silence once the baby has been born is deafening. I have grieved with women and their families, I have grieved alone, I have cried for babies whose parents won't get to take them home.

I have cared for women whose babies are born with undiagnosed abnormalities, Down syndrome, Dwarfism, Spina Bifida, and congenital abnormalities. I have whispered to women, your baby has features that babies with Down Syndrome have. I have not told fathers the truth about their babies abnormalities because their partners have yet to hold their baby.

I have provided care for women whose baby I know will be assumed at birth. They trusted me and I knew that her baby would be removed. I carry these women's pain and trauma because they will not take their babies home.

I have cared for women accessing termination of pregnancy for social reasons and for abnormalities. I have never judged these women but I carry their pain and their trauma.

I have cared for women who have had preterm births, complicated births, caesarean section births. I have seen the fear in the women's eyes and the fear their partner has for his or her partner and their baby.

I have cared for women who have had continuity of care, those that haven't. I have cared for women who have not seen a midwife during their pregnancy at all. I have had women ask that I not care for them, I have had women ask me to care for them.

I speak up for women's and midwives safety and at times this has made me feel vulnerable.

I am a passionate midwife but I don't always feel safe and I don't always feel like I have psychological safety in my workplace. My managers and colleagues have perceived my passion as aggression.

At times I don't feel safe to speak up and be an advocate for the women or the staff whom are providing care to the women. The staff don't feel supported or listened to. They

consistently work short staffed. They are not able to provide the care they so want to provide. Just this week alone I have witnessed the staff cry and be so distressed by the ineffective care they provided to women due to high activity, chronic short staffing and a system that is ineffective.

At times I feel cynical and frustrated having worked in a system that is broken. The staff who I work with feel broken. At times I feel broken.

I am physically and emotionally exhausted. I feel anxious at times, I have difficulty sleeping, I have compassion fatigue. I realise that I am burnt out.

I am pleased that an enquiry into birth trauma and the impact it has on a woman for the rest of her life is taking place.

The impact of women's birth trauma isn't unique to the Birthing woman. I am carrying over 25 years of trauma as a midwife who has cared for women during labour and birth.