

Submission
No 481

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

In 2016 I gave birth in [REDACTED] Hospital. My birth did not go quite as I hoped, and ended up with an episiotomy after quite a while of pushing. I had a lovely midwife supporting me through this, however there was substantial tearing and swelling, which resulted in me needing to go to theatre for stitches. I am not traumatized by my birth, however I am still so upset at how I was treated afterwards.

On my second night on the maternity ward I called a nurse to help me as my catheter had come unstuck. I had a catheter as I was still extremely swollen and in pain. My night light did not work, so I turned on the brighter light over my bed, to which I was berated like a child at the possibility of waking others up. I will note that up until this time me and my baby were probably the quietest in the room.

The nurse told me my baby needed feeding. As I was very slowly repositioning myself, worried about my catheter coming out and also in pain, I was asked if I had a natural birth and was then told "come on, even women that have had cesareans can do this!" It was the middle of the night, I was sleep deprived, sore and completely vulnerable. I burst into tears in complete shock at her lack of compassion and she didn't even care that I was upset. I had a patient next door check in on me instead. Next thing the nurses came back, presumably after reading my notes and seeing it wasn't a straightforward natural birth.

They looked at my wound by shining a big torch instead of allowing the light to be turned on. This in itself felt a bit degrading. They then gave me endone, which I didn't ask for and didn't really want. I was so devastated by this experience that I begged to leave hospital the next day. Realistically I was not physically ready to leave hospital. I have wished so many times to go back to that night to defend myself, however I shouldn't have to defend myself in one of lives' most vulnerable moment. I should feel safe a cared for by our health system.

I ended up with ongoing pain for several months, with no information about any follow up options when actively trying to seek help. I'm still mind blown that follow up care for a broken bone is standard, however if you've had complications following on from birth there are no readily available options.

I have been luck enough to have continuity of care in all my pregnancies and births and have have had some lovely, well supported births by incredible midwives. I have seen these midwives have to advocate on my behalf to doctors wanting to intervene unnecessarily. I would love to see women empowered with education. For birth to not be unnecessarily medicalised when it doesn't need to be. For midwives to be given more respect and supported so they can beat support women.