

Submission
No 561

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 8 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

To whom it may concern,
I would like to write of my experience which is very multi-faceted.

I was fortunate enough to afford to hire an independent midwife for the birth of all three of my children. I chose this path as I wanted to birth my babies in the comfort of my home, surrounded by my closest family and friends, with minimum intervention and disturbance, as I trusted my body and the expertise of my midwife to guide me through the process of birthing and journey through motherhood.

My midwife, who after 3 births became a very integral part of my family, provided ongoing professional care, monitoring, guidance and support to me, my husband, and my children throughout my perinatal stages. She was always available to talk to me when I had any questions or concerns and provided me with all the information I needed regarding the process of birth and post partum, the choices I had as well as physical mental and emotional support whenever I needed it.

She was 100% present with me and my family throughout this time, and I couldn't have asked for a more positive experience with her constant care, regardless of the birth outcomes I ended up having.

In fact, with my third baby, I was labouring at home and without me being aware of it, I had a cord prolapse, a rare and life-threatening obstetric emergency, and if it wasn't for my midwife arriving to my house and diagnosing this, I would have kept labouring at home on my own for hours more without knowing of my situation. Without my midwife there, who calmly and professionally medically managed my situation, while liaising with the hospital to expect our arrival, as well as guiding the paramedics who didn't seem to manage the situation very well, to delivering me to the operating theatre, and staying by my side at the operating table, as my baby had to be birthed via emergency C-section while I was put under general anaesthesia.

My midwife saved my babies life, without her expertise and care- my baby would have died.

The days, weeks, months and even years following this birth were very difficult for me. My daughter was diagnosed with mild cerebral Palsy and the journey with her has been very challenging.

While in hospital after her birth, recovering from the trauma and abdominal surgery, I remember being visited by a counsellor, to check on me and my mental state. This was a couple of days after birth, I was still heavily drugged, and had not yet known what my daughter's condition is, whether she will survive and what her future held, as she was still in the NICU. I was unable to respond to or talk much with that counsellor, as I was not ready to face the reality of what was to come. This was the only mental health care I received after this traumatizing event.

We were sent home 9 days later with a list of specialist appointments to follow up on, and nothing else.

It was my independent midwife who came to see me EVERY DAY for weeks after my daughter's birth. She helped and supported me in all aspects of caring for myself, my newborn baby and my older kids. She supported my mum who was present at the birth and experienced trauma herself, from witnessing the situation unfolding and the unknown wellbeing of my baby. She supported my husband and his parents. She was the one constant omnipresence that has stayed with me even until today, 10 years later.

If it wasn't for her, my experience would have been very very different, potentially tragic, and I don't know if I would have survived this journey mentally and emotionally. I prioritized investing in hiring an independent midwife as I knew this was the best care option available, and believed that I, as does every woman, needed and deserved that.

As a doula of 20 years myself, I have had the honour of supporting women and families throughout their pregnancy, birth and post-partum journeys, and have experienced first hand a myriad of scenarios where women have experienced birth trauma on all levels- Physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

I can whole heartedly say that the experience for a woman who has had the right ongoing, constant support, regardless of the birth outcome- is severely different to that of a woman who has no continuity of care from a professional. The effects of birth related trauma ripple throughout a woman's entire lifetime, affects her children, her family, her community and her children's children.

I would like to add, that although I had outstanding care from my midwife and still feel supported by her 10 years later, I still carry, live and relive the trauma from my daughters birth and am worried and anxious about her future daily. I have wanted and tried many times to reach out for professional help over the years, but unfortunately have mostly been unable to afford psychological help and or find a suitable and available counsellor to help me.

I hope that my story can serve as an insight into the undeniable necessity for continuity of care for women in their childbearing stages, and for the government to acknowledge and support change to honour the needs of women by ways of subsidizing costs for women to access independent midwives and Doulas to provide that care for them.

Sincerely,