

Submission  
No 626

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 7 August 2023

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Partially  
Confidential

My birth experience has made me question whether I would like to have another baby, not because the experience was difficult but because I was treated unkindly and disrespectfully by some of the staff at my local hospital. Some staff were kind but those who weren't made a big impact when I was in the most vulnerable state of my life.

After a long labour at home and in the birth centre at [REDACTED] I had to move to the hospital ward and because my contractions were slowing down, I agreed to an epidural so that I could rest and hopefully finish dilating. I was more exhausted than I've ever been in my life and I felt demoralised. Once I requested the epidural and accepted that I need some help to rest, I then had to wait over an hour for the epidural. During this time, the midwife I was assigned to advised me I had to lie down on the bed for the fetal monitoring system to work.

Across the hall, in the birth centre, I had returned Doppler monitoring every 15 minutes and there were no concerns. I cried and tried to explain I had not laid down during contractions for 35 hours as it was too painful and that I was really anxious about this. She responded "well you're going to have to figure something out, aren't you". She also said to me "you know, we're not that bad over here" and I had to try to persuade her that I had nothing against hospitals - something I had no energy to do and was not appropriate to ask of me. She was rude to the birth centre midwife who was handing over to her and made me feel anxious to have them both in the same room. The birth centre midwife had to go as she'd been with me for 12 hours.

I had been using nitrous oxide to help get through contractions so I requested this. However, when I was breathing it in, it didn't seem to be having the effect it was in the birth centre. My exhausted husband and I tried to work out why this was and I sobbed through contractions which no longer felt like something I was trying to work with now that I'd said I desperately needed a rest. The midwife also chastised me for breathing the gas before a contraction and wanted me to only breathe in the gas during - when in fact, it had been explained to me in the birth centre that breathing it before allows it to build up enough by the peak to be helpful. Also, it was the only thing I had felt was helping me for the time being.

Later, the next midwife who came on shift told me the other midwife had turned the gas to the lowest setting and that's why it felt like it wasn't working. This new midwife was kind and tried to help defend me from other staff including midwives and doctors who stood in my space/barged in during my contractions and had casual conversations in my room either about me (saying things like that I'm not going to be able to push her out and will need instruments or just random chats about me like I wasn't there). It was so dehumanising. I felt so shockingly disrespected and was especially shocked about the lack of respect given to the situation as well - I was extremely informed, a brave warrior, a motivated athlete doing a very hard, intense and painful thing and was treated like an annoying, petulant child who didn't know anything and was being a hassle.