

Submission
No 579

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

The birth of a child is suppose to be the happiest day of your life, well the birth of my son in January 2021 was so terrible I cannot think about the day without losing my breath. From not being listened to when trying to advocate for yourself to having the delivery midwife call my newborn a toad...this is my story.

Living in a rural town with no maternity care at our local hospital was tough. Having to travel into [REDACTED] for appointments. My pregnancy was during the first lockdowns in 2020 which meant my husband could not attend any appointments with me and the level of care and person to person contact was very minimal during my pregnancy. Towards the end of my pregnancy I was severely sick with bronchitis but felt I couldn't receive treatment or care because it was a "respiratory illness" even though I was worried due to reduced fetal movement. I was also stressed during pregnancy worried that my husband may not be able to be present at the hospital after birth because of the Covid restrictions.

I was overdue and "had" to be induced. When I asked why I couldn't wait longer and that I wanted to go into labour naturally as everything was healthy I was told "it's hospital policy" and shoved a piece of paper to sign. I had completed the hospitals birth plan form and once admitted and induced I gave it to one of the midwives but they didn't take any notice. I advocated for a water birth but was told there was no tubs available (even though two were free the whole time we were there). When it was time to start pushing I was doing so in a way that felt right in my body but the midwife told me I was doing it wrong and I had to do it her way (which I could feel was doing nothing). It had been 2 hours of pushing then they called in the doctor who said "yep forcep". Due to the sheer barbaricness of forceps they were my biggest no, which was stated on my birth intake forms. But I wasn't given a choice. I received an episiotomy, then forceps. Straight after my son was born I started hemorrhaging and lost 2L of blood, from the forceps! I had 3 midwives and a doctor all rushing around giving me needles and suppositories all while the doctor had inserted clamps to open me back up to stitch all the internal damage causing the bleeding. I had 3 separate labial tears on the outside too. Due to all the commotion the midwife kept calling my son a toad for "everything he had caused".

I was so weak from the blood loss (and no transfusion given) that I was not able to get up for 3 days. My milk was delayed and didn't come in until day 6, leading to my son being extremely unsettled. It was a very tough and long recovery, I had a stage 1 prolapse which I received treatment for from a physio. I was also denied any continuity of care living in a town without maternity services.

I suffered postpartum depression for 18 months and was close to ending my life due to everything that snowballed from my birth trauma. I couldn't speak about my birth without breaking down and I dreaded his 1st and 2nd birthday because of how traumatic the day was for me. I'm only now 2.5 years down the track feeling normal again and feeling like I can think and talk about it to start processing all those feelings. I feel completely let down by the system and lack of care I received particularly for something that is meant to be empowering and something that women have powered through for thousands of years naturally. I really do hope something comes out of this so future women do not have to endure what I and many other women go through!