

Submission  
No 640

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

Being a first time mum, unsure what to expect - we had hoped for a natural vaginal birth with no interventions.

Unfortunately, I contracted Covid when I was 36 weeks pregnant. My mum had preeclampsia with me, so I was told by midwives it may be a risk and to watch for signs.

Headaches were the trigger to check my blood pressure, which was incredibly high. I called [REDACTED] hospital maternity ward.

I was told "I don't know why on earth you would check your blood pressure with Covid, it will be all over the place. But I guess come in to be monitored anyway since you've told me now"

I went in with my partner and they spent 4 days with multiple medications to reduce my blood pressure, without success. All while being in a vacuum sealed room in isolation.

Once we were negative to Covid, I was instructed to return for fetal monitoring for 2 hrs. Blood pressure remained high and I wasn't allowed to be discharged.

2 further days of laying in bed trying new doseages and medications with no success, and incredibly high stress.

Once I hit 37 weeks it was recommended to be induced. I was fine with this and requested if a c section was an option, to which I was told it was the last resort.

I was induced with gel on a Tuesday night, this was incredibly painful as my cervix was so far back they needed to manually try to move it. This commenced contractions. The gel was reapplied every 6hrs by a different midwife each time, all equally as painful.

After this didn't work, it was suggested I have the balloon inserted. This was in for 24hrs and my cervix didn't move at all.

I was taken the following morning to the birthing suite with 3cm dilation following all previous methods tried, all while still requesting a cesarean.

I was provided a drip to induce active labor. This increased contractions I'd been having since Tuesday night, dramatically. After 6hrs of contractions and incredible pain I requested an epidural as I couldn't take it anymore. I was still recovering from Covid, exhausted, scared and vulnerable.

The epidural helped, but was another scary experience I wasn't planning on. I was having contractions whilst it was being put into my spine. Terrifying.

After an additional 7 hours contracting in the birthing suite, and continuously being vaginally examined, I was informed I was still 3cm dilated and my baby was in the wrong position to be birthed vaginally, and would I consider a caesarean.

Finally after all of this time, myself and my partner felt validated and went to have our baby.

The c section was the first surgery I've ever had, and being awake throughout was both terrifying and amazing. After 20 minutes my baby was born and she was perfect.

She had a "cone head" from me pushing so hard for so long and her being in the wrong position.

Following this, my partner was allowed to stay in the hospital with me for one night and support me. We tried to feed her as best we could but we really had no idea what we were doing.

The next night, my partner had to leave and I have never felt so alone. I couldn't get up by myself, to hold or feed my crying baby. She would cry for hours on end in the room, multiple midwives would come in and try to extract colostrum or milk but next to nothing was being produced. The last midwife who had heard my baby crying for so long, offered formula to me.

My preference was to breastfeed but after the exhaustion, no sleep, recovering from major surgery and being isolated I didn't care I just wanted it all to stop. The nurse told me she would be in trouble for offering me formula and made me promise not to tell anyone. To this day I don't know if this was a good or a bad thing. I since believe the high stress caused throughout that week contributed to be being unable to produce what I needed.

Finally, after feeling incredibly depressed, after 3 days I requested to be discharged. I couldn't do it. Knowing I needed my support, the constant changing of the midwives and no physical support to recover from my surgery - I couldn't do it in hospital anymore.

We went home, and I had physical, emotional and spiritual support to become a mother - to which I am still adjusting. I struggle with what my birth was everyday and have daily thoughts back to it.

Sadly - the experience made me feel devoid of choices, profound shame, like a failure of a mother not being able to produce milk, depressed my story isn't what I dreamed of for my baby and myself.

I needed to go on anti depressants to function daily now.