

Submission
No 695

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

The [REDACTED]

During the pregnancy of my first child, at 40+12 weeks, I was led into an induction for the reason of 'post dates', which led to a cascade of unnecessary interventions. After 14 hours of labour and 6cm dilated, with no indications that my baby was in any distress, at 11pm at night I was told that the on call surgical team had just attended an emergency c-section, and that it would be easier for everyone that I go in for an emergency c-section while they were all already here, instead of everyone going home and then having to be called back out again in a few hours. So I agreed, being made to feel that I didn't want to put the whole team out, and be the good mother that agrees.

Due to my c-section, my body and hormones took longer to regulate, and my breastmilk took nearly a week to come in. On the 7th day I had milk coming in, and I was feeding my baby on demand, but during an appointment with a midwife who had visited me at home, she weighed my baby and he had dropped below his birth weight. At this stage she suggested that it was safest to head back into hospital to monitor my baby overnight and keep an eye on his urine output, and use the hospital breast pump, even though my milk was clearly in.

The midwife on shift when we arrived at the hospital was very supportive of my breastfeeding on demand, and documenting wet nappies. However when she finished the evening shift, an older midwife came on for the night shift who told me my body was not providing enough for my baby, and that she would be supplementing him with formula while I pumped at feed time to see how much milk I was producing, and give him a breastmilk bottle to top him up. I was intimidated, on my own with my brand new baby in a dark room, and completely belittled in my confidence as a mother and my connection with my baby. This midwife took my baby away from me and gave him formula without my consent. It was humiliating, I felt like I had no voice. The next morning when the morning midwife arrived (who was a girl I had gone to school with so I felt like I could tell her what had happened), the night shift midwife came in with a consent form for me to sign to say that I had agreed to her giving my baby formula overnight. I did refuse to sign that form, but I cant take back the trauma that she caused me in those first few days of being a new mother, completely undermined and the guilt I feel for not being able to speak up for my baby and myself.

[REDACTED] Hospital

During the birth of my second child, which was a VBAC, I changed hospital due to the treatment I received with my first child. During the time of my pregnancy, the hospital policy for water birth at [REDACTED] changed to include VBAC births, and this was discussed at multiple antenatal appointments with midwives and obstetricians. On arrival to the hospital in labour, I was assessed with and unwanted VE (which is apparently a policy to be allowed to be admitted to the ward), and then asked if I could hop straight into the bath. The midwife on shift told me it was, quote 'absolutely not hospital policy', and demanded that I provide her with the names of the doctor I had spoken with in the antenatal clinic, and said she would not run the bath for me. My husband tried to keep my calm and moved me into the shower, where this midwife disappeared for about 10 minutes, then barged into the shower stating she had spoken with the obstetrician on the ward that evening, and they all agreed that there

was absolutely no way I would be 'allowed' to water birth, in the most mocking and condescending tone.

After achieving my VBAC at absolutely no credit to that midwife, I found out she was incorrect and hospital policy should have allowed me the water birth I had requested.

This midwife was a detriment to my birth space, unsupportive, disrespectful and argumentative to a vulnerable labouring mother, and had the potential to completely derail my birth. I felt mentally stronger this birth, and with the support of my husband was able to shake off her presence, and stay confident in myself.

The system is broken. Please start having trust in mothers again and supporting them in their decisions instead of fear mongering, coercing and causing so much unnecessary trauma.