

Submission  
No 916

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

I gave birth to my first child in 2021. We did some preparations during pregnancy such as the hospital run antenatal classes, breastfeeding classes, and a calm birth course. I went through gp shared care. I went into spontaneous labour at 41 weeks after an uncomplicated pregnancy. I laboured at home for quite a while before going to labour ward. I was examined when I arrived and was told I was only 3cm dilated, they wanted to send me home but allowed me to stay as my contractions were frequent and strong. After labour for a while longer I was examined again, and told I was still at 3cm. I was allowed to use the shower but they said they didn't want me to use the bath as it would slow my labour. At this point I had been at hospital for 3 hours. I was offered and I accepted pain relief. First gas, then morphine, then ultimately an epidural. I was catheterised and then at some point they found I had a temperature spike so was hooked up to IV antibiotics and then an oxytocin drip to push the contractions along. After another examination they said that baby was facing the wrong way which was why I wasn't progressing. They ruptured my waters, saying it would speed things up. A bit of meconium was present so they said a c-section would likely be required. About 1 hour after getting the epidural they said I had dilated to 10cm and should start pushing. I could feel contractions but not pain. Baby's heart rate was dropping between contractions so lots of doctors were called in. An ultrasound confirmed baby's posterior position. They recommended I go in for immediate c-section. I told them that I really didn't want to do that and would prefer a vaginal birth. They agreed that if possible they would allow an assisted vaginal birth. I was taken to theatre. I asked if I could still continue to push with the contractions and they said I can if I like. While being prepped for the c-section they noticed baby had turned into a better position. They said they would do an episiotomy and use forceps to help birth baby. I also suffered a 3rd degree tear and mild hemorrhage. I was mainly relieved to have avoided a caesarean and that the most important thing was that my baby was ok.

I found the following night in the hospital the hardest. I was in a shared room so wasn't allowed to have my husband stay with me. I felt very unsupported during this time. I was hooked up to an IV so couldn't reach my baby, and couldn't get out of bed easily because of the pain from my tear. The midwife looking after me wouldn't come when I pressed the buzzer, and scolded me when she found me co sleeping with my baby. I did my first nappy change alone in the dark and when I found her (had to leave my room) to tell her I felt the urge to poo and was scared, she replied that it was just like a regular poo and to just do it. When I said I needed more help especially with getting in and out of bed she said well what would you do at home? When I was upset she asked if it was day 3 after giving birth as women are more hormonal and emotional then. It had been only hours since birth.

My recovery was difficult. I bled for several months and had severe pain. I was concerned but as it was during covid lockdown so it was hard to find a doctor to see. I also found that I couldn't raise one of my legs, apparently a result of a damaged nerve from labour. I saw a physio and it took several weeks for movement to return. I was assured that this was all very normal.

I felt like I was pressured into a lot of choices during labour and that ultimately I should be grateful that doctors were there to help and I couldn't complain about anything because my baby and I were alive.

I recently gave birth to my second child. It was during this pregnancy that I reflected on my previous labour and realised how traumatised I was by it. The first thing I did differently was research care providers. I had found women and babies clinic disorganised, one

appointment I was made to wait 7+ hours in the waiting room. I found the Midwifery Group Practice at \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital. Here they were so much more informative than my gp or midwives at my \_\_\_\_\_ visits. I did see one doctor there , after my 20 week ultrasound. She informed me that my baby was measuring big so they would most likely be recommending an induction at 39 weeks. When I asked about alternatives I wasn't given any. This made me concerned that I would be sent down an unnecessary medical route that would be similar to my first labour. This prompted me to start doing some research into medical interventions in childbirth.

I decided to prepare for a physiological labour and birth with as little interference as possible. Even after all of my research and with this decision I still struggled. At most appointments with my midwife I was asked if I want to do something and most of the time my response was I have to do that bit don't I? She responded that I didn't actually have to do anything at all. I declined all ultrasounds from 20 weeks as well as all vaginal exams throughout pregnancy and labour.

When labour started I called my midwife, who was able to listen to me while I had contractions and told me when to head into hospital. From the first contractions to when we left was about 12 hours. We arrived at the birth centre at the same time as my midwife, who set us up in our room, checked my blood pressure, then left us alone for a little bit. At one point my midwife came and asked if I wanted doctors to come and see me. After around 2 hours my contractions had intensified. I moved to the bath where I laboured for just 20 minutes before my son was born. I stayed in the bath for a little while before being helped to the bed to deliver the placenta.

My midwife gave me a quick vaginal exam and found slight tearing so a doctor would be in to assess further. I had gas while the doctor assessed me. They found I had a 2nd degree tear, which they stitched.

I was later told by my midwife that during labour there were doctors insisting they come in. We had discussed several times previously that I did not want any interventions of any kind and did not want any doctor involvement unless medically necessary. She had to be quite stern to keep them out, as apparently they were quite insistent. They also wanted to give me something to speed up the 3rd stage, which was strongly declined.

Recovery from this labour was very different from the first. I was at home 4 hours after giving birth. My bleeding was light and had stopped after a couple of weeks. I had a few follow up visits with my midwife where we could go over what had happened during labour and how I was feeling about it. I felt much more supported talking to someone who was actually there and had helped me through the experience.