

**Submission
No 1102**

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Miss Amy Clews

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I am a third-year midwifery student currently preparing to enter the workforce as a registered midwife next year. I am terrified.

I started my degree with a passion for normal, empowered, woman-centred birth. I am coming to the end of my degree with a passion to do my bit to simply end the suffering faced by birthing women each and every day. At the start of every clinical placement shift in the birth unit, I find myself crossing my fingers that I don't see something traumatic that day. So often I find myself crying on the way home because of the things I've seen. Intervention after intervention - When did we become so fearful of normal birth?

From midwives and doctors laughing and scoffing at a woman's carefully crafted birth plan at the nurses station, to denying labouring and hungry women food because "she'll vomit it all over us" - a complete disregard for the woman's needs and autonomy. I've seen a woman in labour having her first baby - completely ignored in a birthing room. I went into the room - as the supernumary midwifery student - after noticing her buzzer going unanswered by any of the midwives on duty. Only to find her baby's head between her legs and her in tears that no one had offered her any pain relief.

The hospital I am completing my placement at denies women who have a caesarean section birth the opportunity to undisturbed skin to skin - an feature of bonding which is absolutely crucial in those first moments. Instead - because of their disregard of woman-centred care, the hospital does not employ a skin-to-skin midwife, meaning women get 5 minutes of cuddle time in theatres, only to have their babies whisked away from them while they go to recovery for 2 hours. On return to the birth unit, these mothers have to meet and connect with their babies for the first time - after everyone else. It is so hard to watch.

I want to stay strong and continue in this field. These women deserve better.