

Submission
No 1424

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I was pregnant in 2019 / 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst I understand this time was stressful for many people, I do not believe that women receiving antenatal, birth and postnatal care should have been as disadvantaged as they were. The removal of 'birth support' teams, pressure to birth quicker, cancellation of antenatal appointments and classes, denial of visitors inside and outside hospital, restricted access to supports and over the phone 6-week postpartum checks to name a few.

I went into labour Friday 17th April 2020. My care during early stages was fairly reasonable although I did feel there was a lot of pressure to do or change things to encourage labour to move quicker. This went against my natural instinct to move, change positions and opt for strategies that brought relief for me. When I asked for an epidural and there was a staff handover my experience completely changed. The midwife on shift strongly suggested that I have my waters broken and start syntocin to speed up the process. The words used were "Do you want to have this baby today or not? You have had an epidural you won't even feel it." As I had felt quite pressured I agreed. Baby at this time was not showing signs of any distress and there was no other reason explained to me for the suggested intervention given I had gone into labour spontaneously.

I had 2 epidurals in different locations. Both failed and when topped up the relief wore off extremely fast. As a result I was confined to the bed. This meant no shower or bath for relief, no moving through the contractions, no opportunities for rest. Labour and dilation then felt as though it stalled even more despite the intensity of contractions and how painful it was being unable to move.

As I moved through transition phase I had a registrar come to see me. I was in excruciating pain and she said she needed to do a cervical check, I begged her to wait as I was not coping and was in so much pain, she ignored me and told the other staff present to "Get me on my back". She completely disregarded my wishes and the fact I was in no state to have an examination done. I felt powerless and as if I had no say in what was being done to me or my body. After checking she proceeded to say I needed an assisted delivery in theatre or c-section.

When I was in theatre the decision was made to put me under for a c-section. This is what upset me the most. After everything I had been through, the time, the pain, the intervention that was supposed to 'help' yet did anything but. To end up not being awake to experience my baby's birth devastates me. My husband also wasn't allowed to be present.

Given what transpired during my birth and lack of care following, it took me 3 years to be somewhat ready to try for another baby. Now that I am pregnant I am facing the very triggering reality that I soon need to do this all over again. I am seeking professional help to support me in preparation but my biggest fear in all of this isn't birthing my baby, it's the potential intervention and treatment I will be given in hospital.