

Submission
No 1353

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I was told early on about the midwifery group practice and knew I wanted to have continuity of care. It was wonderful seeing our assigned midwife mostly at our home, as it was during covid so it allowed my partner to be present and involved in our appointments and I loved being at home in our familiar surroundings. I was very comfortable with our midwife, she was so knowledgeable and supported us to make informed choices that were important to us and our journey. Just over half way through my pregnancy I was told I had a “low lying placenta” and would need further scans to see if my placenta moves otherwise I’d be having a c section. I remember those words so clearly. I was definitely not expecting to hear I wouldn’t be able to have the physiological birth I envisioned and I was also not totally aware of what it all meant. This was not explained to me in depth, rather just brushed over and to be discussed at the next scan. I was so worried after this appointment. I did a lot of research and worked on my mindset and of course spoke to my midwife. She was fantastic and supported my decision to not have another scan until late in my pregnancy. If I had one at 28 weeks and my placenta hadn’t moved I would be classed as high risk and would no longer be able to be part of the group practice. My appointments carried on as normal and I was so positive about my placenta moving. My partner and I did a private hypnobirthing course and also the hospital Antenatal classes too.

At 35 weeks I had a follow up scan to check on the progress of my placenta. This was a really unpleasant experience where I left feeling like an inconvenience. I was scolded for not coming in sooner and having a scan done. The scan was rushed and I truly believed the sonographer had made a mistake with the measurements as she was in such a fluster when she informed me my placenta was even closer to my cervix. I found the internal examination painful and uncomfortable and was left on the wedge for a time while the sonographer went to get a “chaperone”. I was utterly devastated by the news but also so disappointed by the delivery of this information. I was clearly struggling and this was not acknowledged. The care or lack thereof made the news all the more unbearable and I felt so vulnerable as I was without my partner at this appointment. I immediately wanted another scan to check again as I felt so dismissed and not seen or heard at the previous one. For the next scan I actually called and requested a lovely sonographer I had had early on because this appointment would be the final scan and would determine what kind of birth I would have. It was important to me that this news and information be delivered in a gentle and caring way, validating my grief at not being able to birth spontaneously and naturally. I got the news I had hoped I wouldn’t hear but I was held and supported when it was delivered. I would have to have a planned c section as my placenta was too low, covering my cervix.

From there I was assigned an OB and had a “booking in appointment” scheduled. To my surprise I was greeted by a student, not the OB I thought I was meeting. A quick glance at her computer screen during my appointment meant she didn’t know my history and made lots of errors about my pregnancy, including that it was an IVF pregnancy. I know mistakes happen but the whole situation was really uncomfortable. I was sitting there hoping to get guidance and information to help me come to terms with my impending c section and get prepared but I was continually met with errors. The student also made many assumptions including that my baby would be big and accusations that I potentially had GD as I did not take the Glucose Tolerance Test. From here my journey to delivery was quite rocky. I felt like I had to push to have any sort of choice in my delivery. Twice I sat and waited for appointments which were

delayed and once seen to I was shuffled in and out without any time to ask questions, write notes or process anything. I felt totally unsupported in this later stage of my pregnancy that I actually called on my group practice midwife to accompany me to one of my last appointments where I had to beg to keep her for my scheduled c section. This was granted and I was so so relieved to have a familiar face on the day. However I had to advocate so much to get the information I needed about my planned c section. I was made to feel like I was asking silly questions when asking who would be in the room, what drugs would be administered and when etc. I struggled to believe other women just turn up to their c section not knowing about the life changing operation they are about to consent to.

The birth of my baby was a joyous one but it was not without undue stress, worry, frustration and anger along the way. Maternity health must do better to support women in their pregnancy, birth and post partum experiences. What was the most important journey in my life was met with so much dismissal, assumptions, misinformation and fear mongering. As a result, it has completely put me off birthing in the system for my subsequent births.