

Jessica Fabian – 9 February 2021

I just wanted to share some of my thoughts on my experience maternity services in 2018.

### **Facilities desperately in need of upgrading**

The staff were amazing but the unit itself was tired, badly ventilated, incredibly clinical for those of us choosing a natural birth, and just isn't quite the birthing centre atmosphere that you'd hope for in 2021.

### **Husbands banned overnight**

This for me was actually traumatic. I had just experienced a fast and furious birth, and was left shaking in shock and terrified. It was a very late one - 1am and my husband was told he had to leave me and the baby because he couldn't stay, despite us being in a private recovery room. This was the absolute worst policy for a woman at the most vulnerable time of her life. I was terrified, I did not feel listened to and had to insist he at least be allowed to watch over us - napping in a chair. This has to be reviewed for first time mothers. I'm not sure the reasons for this policy - presumably safeguarding? But quite frankly, there should be the option for private rooms to accommodate partners and for other safeguarding measures to protect women on wards.

### **Staff are amazing**

For the most part, the staff were amazing. I couldn't have felt more supported with hands on help with breast feeding and a shoulder to cry on when everything felt just so overwhelming. Other than a couple of older style matron types who were a bit abrupt and matter of fact - they were wonderful, caring, compassionate ladies.

### **Pushy Doctors**

In the week before I gave birth, I felt under a lot of pressure to be induced. Something I really really did not want and had to fight for second scans and second opinions to have my voice heard. I do worry that women who aren't as comfortable with confrontation or standing their ground would be medically coerced to make decisions they don't want to. I felt patronised, and that my wishes were tantamount to causing a still birth. It was only because I had ante natal Hypnobirthing classes that I felt empowered to make my own, informed choices and baby arrived when he was ready.

### **Feeding support**

Whilst I fully support those wishing to breastfeed, and think the help offered by the health service is brilliant -there needs to be much better support for women whose mental health is suffering, under the monumental societal pressure to breastfeed. The pendulum has swung way too far in the other direction. The mantra 'breast is best' completely disregards what might be best for a mother's mental health and as a consequence, her bond with her baby. I do think health visitors need to recognise when a woman wants support to continue her breastfeeding journey and when she needs to stop for her own emotional well-being and that of her child.