

Leila de Moura – 10 February 2021

I had briefly commented my experience of the birth of my daughter on the bailiwick express page and I have been recommended to share my experience with your team.

I will go into as much detail as possible.

My daughter was due in September, however due to a concern I had with my daughter, I went into hospital in August (exact date slips my mind). I was told all was well, but that I wasn't going home as they wanted to induce me as my daughter was measuring small.

I was fine with this and understood why we were doing, what we were doing. The inducing period took around 4 days. I had my own private room for this process, however had to share a bathroom, which was fine with me, but I could hear and see other women going through labour, as they would also have to use the bathrooms. This offered both myself and any other women I had seen, very little privacy as if a woman was in labour, they wouldn't be able to lock the doors but use some sort of shield instead. This also brought on additional anxiety, especially as a new mum.

The last day of inducement and finally early labour, I had a lovely midwife and a trainee midwife, who was also lovely. They were kind with me and supported me amazingly with my pain and gave me comfort whilst I received my epidural. Come to 9pm on that day, I had a new midwife, this one unfortunately was unkind and judgmental. I shared with her that I was scared and she said 'i would just go home if I was you'. This was against all the other medical advice I had received, so I ignored her.

As I had an epidural, I just had a sleep and around 12pm, I woke up and told the midwife I needed to push. She had called me a liar as there was no way I would know because of my epidural, but she checked anyway and she could see my daughter. Things moved quickly from here and I went from only having her and my partner with me, to around 6-7 medical professionals in the room due to my daughters predicted size. Unfortunately I had a failed epidural and felt the pain of her coming. During the delivery I had everyone telling me to push and the whole process became overwhelming for me, and I said I didn't need everyone to tell me to push and that I was scared. The midwife I had then told everyone to stop, and for me to do it on my own with no support. I pleaded with her that this wasn't the case, that I just need calm support. We continued with the birth, and my daughter was born at 2:40am.

Annalia was placed on my chest and the midwife told me I needed stitches, I asked if she was going to numb the area before stitching me as I was sore, she told me I wouldn't feel anything, but I did. Only once I complained about the pain, did she only then believe me.

Once that was done, she told me to feed my baby, of which I told her that I hadn't been able to produce any milk. Without my permission, and very roughly, she stuck her hand down my top, pulled out my breast and squeezed me hard enough to hurt me, but to also draw out some colostrum and told me 'see; now feed your baby' of which I tried, but Annalia was too small to know how to feed. She was then taken to SCBU and all the doctors, midwives and my partner had to go.

I was left in the room alone, without the ability to walk due to the epidural, and the calling buzzer was left hanging on the wall behind me, too far out of my reach.

The hours went by, where I would call out for help, go in and out of sleep, sat in all the liquids from the birth. Until around 7:30am, where I had finally gained enough strength in my legs to slowly get to the midwives desk. I asked my midwife if she could kindly remove my epidural, as this was hurting me and if I could go rest properly. At my dismay, she responded with "after my breakfast". I was made to walk back to the delivery room alone, and around 15-20 minutes later, she came in and removed my epidural. I was then made to walk down the corridor to my room, alone; with only the support of the beams attached to the walls.

I finally got to sleep around 8:20 in the morning, but I woke up only a few hours later to feeling vulnerable, broken and really sad.

Annalia and I spent another couple of days in hospital with trying to get her stronger and establish a good feeding routine, which we did by dry pumping my breasts to encourage milk flow and we were able to go home.

4 days later, I became very unwell, I called the maternity ward as I thought it may be labour oriented. I went into hospital as per their recommendation, and was found to be battling a 43.c temp caused by a serious mastitis infection. I believe the dry pumping of my breasts over stimulated them and caused an impaction.

Understandably, feeding Annalia on my infected breast was incredibly painful and it was really effecting my mental well-being. I had already faced a difficult time in hospital, and I was back again only a few days later.

The midwife's were incredibly biased towards 'breast is best' and honestly, originally, I had been too. However all the pain, discomfort and the fragile state of my mind, I pleaded with the midwives for formula for my baby, but I would always be guilt tripped into trying the breast 'one more time'.

After a day or two on the antibiotics that were safe for both myself and baby, I started to peak a temp of around 41.c and this is when they had to change my antibiotics to one that would not be safe for baby. This is when they were happy to feed Annalia formula.

On day 4 or 5 of my second stay in hospital, I was able to go home. This is where I thought things would get better, but unfortunately my labour and experience left so much trauma within me, that I began to have horrible nightmares and developed PND and started to seek support. I was diagnosed to have PTSD and clinical PND of which I have been able to overcome most, but I still have my anxieties over ever having another baby.

Throughout my whole stay in the hospital, I mostly felt like I was not of importance, that my baby was the only patient and i was only there for her milk. My needs were constantly ignored, so much that I struggled to understand that I do in fact matter and when Annalia was 6 weeks old, my family had to call a dr home as I was suicidal. Although the wait for proper mental health support is long here in jersey, I was able to wait long enough to now be on the other side of the terrible journey.

My experience at the hospital was a mixed one, with a few highs, but mostly judgment, invasion of privacy, rudeness and little understanding.

I would love to be able to give my child a sibling, however without knowing that the maternity ward has improved, this won't be happening. I cannot afford to go back to a place that has such a mix of understanding.

Mental health training needs to be given to all staff members. Midwives need to be less judgmental of first time mothers and they must listen to us. A women's first pregnancy/labour is filled with excitement and worries, and a negative experience such as the one I have experienced can be detrimental to that women's health and how they bond with their child

I also just want to highlight why I haven't raised this before, well it's because for the first 2 years after my child's birth, I was recovering my body and mind, and honestly, I didn't know I could complain or how to do. Once I realised I could raise my concerns, I believed it would be too late, but I'm happy that I have been able to have my voice heard.

I am more than happy to answer any questions you may have.