

Rachels' story

The abuse I suffered started when I was pregnant with my daughter (she is now five months old) and was not allowed to give birth at my choice of hospital as I was told by two separate midwives that I was too fat and too old so therefore too much of a risk, in those words, to my face.

On the day I gave birth I went into hospital and was told I was 3-4 centimetres dilated. A doctor then joined me and told me if I wasn't in proper labour then I should go home, home was 17 miles away!

I was then hooked up to monitors for an hour and when that eventually came off I was monitored constantly every 20 minutes with a midwife and a student playing lets find the heart beat at the same time, all over me like a cheap suit, even though there was no problem.

I requested less frequent monitoring, only to be told that they would have to put a clip on my baby's head. They then sent my birth partner out of the room leaving me with no moral support, the male midwife who did this was rude, and completely ignored me when I asked him to go easy. He fisted me hard, hurting me and upsetting me making me feel like I was being raped. Strong words, yes, but this is how I felt.

He then told me he knew it would be uncomfortable but that was just my tough luck. During my labour I also tried to ask for help with a stabbing pain in my back (not a labour pain but sciatica) and was told by another midwife to just get on with it you'll get over it after you have it.

They botched up putting a drip in my left hand to speed me up and had to replace it in my right, leaving me with black bruising that didn't go for 5 weeks. They constantly tried to badger me into an epidural, which I had said under no circumstances would I have on my birth plan; it wasn't until the anaesthetist told them I could sue that they left me alone for a while. But not for long, they constantly ignored my birth plan, I requested pethadine, but oh no they wanted to give me an epidural again, as they thought I might need a caesarean as I was told I was not progressing fast enough and we are really busy.

After having my baby after 16 hours of labour, episiotomy, and a ventouse delivery, I tried to breast feed, the only help I received was being told "you need to put tit to target and get on with it". I then contracted an infection in my wound and stitches from filthy baths at the hospital (take bleach with you, the cream cleaner they offer is never enough to kill the germs). This took 4 weeks and 3 courses of antibiotics to clear up.

All I wanted and was to have as natural a birth as possible, I was denied this from the moment of setting foot in the hospital. I still feel bitter, disappointed and yes raped too, to this day.