

Anonymous – 20th March 2021

I was so pleased to hear that this is being done. After my two birth experiences I would go so far to see change happen, to help other new mums. It's a time in life where you need the very best care - and I don't see why Jersey can't have a top quality service.

I consider myself made of very tough stuff - but the negligence and poor care by midwives was too much to bear.

Here is what happened to me - please stop it from happening to others:

First child, (Child Name), born (DoB):

1. The next day after he was born it seemed to me that he wasn't moving as much as the other babies around me on the ward, or crying at all like they were (being a new mum I had no idea what babies should act like) - the midwife said he was fine so I persisted, as I felt he wasn't, and said 'well how do I feed him if he doesn't wake to feed?' And she then asked when he last fed which hadn't been since the day before, she said he'll be fine and he'll wake to feed when he's ready, I still persisted and said 'what if he doesn't, what happens, please check he's ok' - so she went and got a machine to take a reading - the results were awful and he was rushed to SCBU - a midwife in there asked me which machine they'd used to do the reading- I said I had no idea what it was called, let alone which number machine it was? She said one was 'on the blink' and wasn't working. So they stopped just before putting tubes and needles in him and went to get another machine - that machine had much better reading - but I was like 'which machine do we trust? We need to do it a third time to see which one is right?' - at this stage there was a doctor looking after him though and so I just trusted what he was doing.

What I'd like you to take from this is mainly that it's not ok to put all the onus on an exhausted new mum, with no medical experience, to know if her baby is ok? There should be much better care watching the baby, seeing if it's waking to feed, seeing if it's acting how they'd expect. Also obviously there shouldn't be faulty equipment being used.

2. As my baby was weak and sleepy it was very hard to get him to feed, I was awake all hours, following a 2 day labour, and without my husband to help (another quick important point would be - if there was anyway to make sure that partners could stay the nights to help that would make the world of difference to help recovering mothers) A midwife came in, in the night and could clearly see I was deliriously tired and said 'oh is it ok if I take your baby for a cuddle, it's the best bit of my job, I'll take him to the nurses station and you can get a bit of sleep for an hour or two' (so very kind) I said yes and off she went. '15 minutes later, a different midwife barged into my room, and said 'here's your baby we don't provide a nanny service' - I tried to explain I didn't ask for them to look after my baby and that the other midwife had offered - and she said 'well she's gone on her break and I'm not having your screaming baby it should be with you.' Turned and left.

Leaving me feeling like I'd done something wrong!?

3. Each and every new midwife who came to my bedside, (and there were lots, didn't really see the same face twice) had no idea who I was and what was going on, so I had to explain my situation to all of them as they'd be telling me what to do - and it wasn't applicable to me and my situation.

Can't they read your notes before they talk to you? Or even better, have one midwife assigned to you for their shift, who then hands over, in front of you, telling the next midwife all that's happened ready for them to look after you.

4. The majority of the different midwives had different opinions on how things should be done - it was infuriating - you just want someone to help, not completely contradict the last midwife.

5. I was desperate to breast feed and I'd have one midwife who'd sit and help the baby latch and feed, and then say 'I'll pop back in an hour to try again and we'll get you breastfeeding' then I'd ring the buzzer an hour and a half later and ask for that midwife - to be told she's gone home.

6. When I got home and had my first midwife visit, and I said I was worried how yellow my baby was, my midwife agreed and so cleverly checked what the midwife in hospital had written down at his birth - to discover that she'd used a chart specifically for a full term (40 week) baby. My son was born at 37 weeks and there is a big difference in relation to where his acceptable jaundice level should be - we were rushed back in to hospital as actually when he was born he should have been put in SCBU given light therapy to urgently help him! But this was missed - this level of negligence could have cost him his life - it's that serious. The head midwife said they'd launch an investigation and how sorry she was. I also talked to her about breastfeeding and she was brilliant and so helpful, she then said 'I've just helped someone else crack this, we'll put you in a private room and I'll come in and we'll get it sorted.' I went into the room and sat and sat... for hours... when I rung the buzzer I was told she'd gone home. So we left.

Second child, (Child Name), born (DoB):

1. I had a c-section because she was breech, the following day my catheter was taken out by a midwife. And then a different midwife came in to say I had to try going for a wee. I said how much pain I was in and that I really couldn't move, she said I had to, I thought to myself 'well everyone must do this, I'll be ok, just get to the toilet' - the pain moving was indescribably bad, I tried to explain how very painful it was, but over a while I shuffled to the toilet - where I passed out. I came around to a lot of people lifting me back to bed and putting oxygen on me - the doctor told off the midwife for taking my catheter out before checking I could move and to never do that again.

2. The warring between the midwives was toxic. One would say something to you, the next would roll their eyes and say don't listen to her, the next would agree with one or the other or tell you something different. It's so scary to not know who to listen to, and to listen to them not liking each other and disagreeing with the way one midwife does something. I was desperate to get out of there - but in so much pain.

3. When I went for my c-section I took off my favourite gold necklace - when I came back from my c-section I was put in a different room, when I came out of hospital I realised I didn't have my necklace. I called the maternity unit, the laundry unit, lost and found - no necklace (just incase anyone has had the same experience)

4. Do you know if they're meant to check that you've had a bowel movement after having a baby before you leave? They didn't with me and the following week after the c-section I was in agony trying to go - I had to call the maternity unit and ask for advice- and pick up a laxative etc - but it was a horrible painful experience with a fresh c-section scar. If they were meant to check if I'd gone to the loo before releasing me from the unit I wonder if that could have been avoided.

5. When I was pregnant I went in to A&E as I was having bad pain, I also went into the antenatal department with bleeds, sat on a plastic chair for hours with no food, no one spotted that my placenta was growing in a place that the doctor who did my c-section had never seen before, and that was likely to be the reason of all the pain and bleeding. I didn't go in a few

times when I was having bleeds as the idea of being sat on a metal chair, heavily pregnant, for hours on end, waiting to be seen, was too much.

6. At the end of my pregnancy at around 37 weeks, I was in antenatal department, my baby was breech so I was asking what the plan was with the c-section, as I'd given birth to my son at 37 weeks, so was wondering what the plan would be if my waters broke again. They were so dismissive, they didn't know I'd gone in to labour at 37 weeks before, a nurse said 'I like to worry' it was so belittling - I persisted as I genuinely thought it was quite likely my waters might break again early and I didn't want a high risk natural birth. I had to ask what do I actually do? Call and drive in - and she said 'oh no that would be an emergency call 999 and drop to the floor with you hips in the air' - That I had to ask for this advice which would possibly save my baby is bizarre? Why would they not just say as part of the appointment "we see you went in to labour early with your first, if this happens again it's important you get on the floor with your hips up and call an ambulance"

It's that feeling that no one is reading your notes or giving you vital advice. That you have to research everything online (a poor place to find information) to survive and know what's going on. It's appalling.

I feel like I may have missed some things - but this paints a picture of my experience - I hope so much that things can change - that you can train them better, that they can show more care, that they can work together better, that they can show more competence, that they can check each baby is doing ok, that they can help new mums more, help them recover, help them with breastfeeding (I'm so sad I wasn't able to breastfeed either of my babies and wish I'd had better help to achieve this).

PLEASE PLEASE help.

Please let me know if there is anything more I can do to make change happen.

Best regards