

Description

Lock Down Birth

Maddie Mahon – Doula and Breastfeeding Counsellor, AIMS helpline volunteer

I wonder how many people have a bird's eye view of maternity care in lockdown? It feels to me that unless you're talking to parents all over the country and hearing what they are being told, how they are being cared for, the choices (or not) they are being offered right now and how they are being made to feel, it could be easy to assume that all is well.
The fact is, it isn't.As an AIMS helpline volunteer I am being given an insight into the lived experience of mothers facing birth during covid-19. Many are facing impossible choices, most are scared and all of them feel their concerns are not being heard – that's why they contact us.



Imagine

Imagine you are young, in early labour with your first baby. Your antenatal classes were cancelled so you don't understand what is happening to your body. The midwives just keep telling you to stay at home for longer. The sensations feel too much to bear.

Imagine you have no one you can ask to care for your older children, so you are facing giving birth alone while your partner stays at home with the kids.

Imagine you are a birth trauma survivor or have other reasons going to hospital would be dangerous for your mental health and you are told your homebirth plans will no longer be supported.

Imagine knowing that your best compromise for staying sane in all this is a gentle cesarean, yet your hospital refuses to listen to you. Or imagine being told that the elective cesarean you have booked for mental health reasons is cancelled at the last minute because there 'is no clinical need' and now you need to face labour without any mental or practical preparation.

Imagine being told that the doctor will decide how you give birth.

Imagine feeling backed into a corner, realising that your only option is to give birth without medical support..

Imagine being utterly petrified that going into hospital will bring this disease back to your immune compromised partner or child.

Imagine having to choose between your partner witnessing the birth and your older child being cared for in another room at your homebirth because the midwives are not allowing you to have 2 adults in the room.

Imagine being told you have to be induced but that your partner can't join you until you are in active labour and must leave within 2 hours of the birth. And imagine feeling cornered into having an intimate examination in order to be allowed to have your partner join you.

Imagine not being allowed to visit your poorly baby in neonatal intensive care.

Imagine not seeing the faces of the staff who care for you in labour. And to not even know their names because they don't introduce themselves and their badges are hidden under their PPE.

Imagine being pregnant and nervously checking the website of your local hospital every morning for changes to their instructions for pregnant or labouring women.

Imagine having to go for your scan alone, and not be allowed to use your phone to video call your partner during the procedure. Imagine getting bad news. Without a loved one, even on the end of the phone to share that moment with you.

Imagine needing major surgery to give birth and being told that you will not be able to have a loved-one's hand to hold or share that moment of joy with you.

Imagine being made to feel selfish and guilty for feeling upset that your needs for this birth are not going to be met.

Let's remember, many women have NEEDS. They are not wishes or desires. To be psychologically or physically safe, there are things they NEED. And in this crisis, increasingly, those needs are not being met.

Yes, in an emergency, we may all need to make sacrifices and compromises. Yes, in these incredible times there is a lot of amazing, positive work being done. People are having wonderful, life affirming, joyful births that light a candle in these dark times.

Remembering the suffering, much of it unnecessary, that many families are enduring right now does not invalidate the hard and heartfelt work of many, many midwives and doctors. We see you, thank you and appreciate you. But the voices of the parents whose birthrights are being trampled and withdrawn must not be silenced for fear of NHS staff feeling criticised.

We can plan maternity services from a place of fear and put knee-jerk policies in place. Or we can draw breath, think creatively and commit to trying to provide compassionate, individualised care to birthing people.

https://www.aims.org.uk/information/page/1 AIMS Birth information pages

https://www.aims.org.uk/contact#post-heading-3 AIMS Helpline details

Category

1. News & Views

Tags

1. Corona Virus
2. COVID-19
3. Fear
4. human rights

Date Created
21st April 2020