

Description

Why Midwifery? Why Now?



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I’m Chelsea, a 35 years old mother of 1. I

understatement! My journey into midwifery actually started a few years ago. However I fell pregnant so starting a degree was put on hold and I began my journey into motherhood.

I had a fabulous team of case loading midwives who supported women in Peckham, South East London. They were friendly, they listened to me, they answered all of my questions and I felt my choices were respected. On the big day I laboured at home and called the midwife early evening. We chatted about home birth and I did consider staying put. Looking back, I should have done just that.

Why? Because the morning after a paediatrician insisted my daughter needed to have a tube down her throat to check her oesophagus and stomach were connected. Why? Because I had freaked out about her newborn snorts and breathing during the night, which I now know is normal if a bit scary.

The same doctor also carried out additional heel prick tests and said I should also give her a top up feed of formula because my baby was dehydrated. She wasn't. She had a perfect latch and was feeding regularly. I politely refused. I was in a separate room from the other mums and babies on the postnatal ward and barely saw anyone. I had to shuffle to the midwives station a few times to ask for pain relief (I had a second degree tear so needed suturing) which took an age to arrive. Eventually the doctor returned and insisted on the formula "for her own good". Again I said I would rather not as we were establishing breastfeeding, so a midwife was sent in to feed her. I've never felt so helpless and angry, but I went along with it. I was worried and very tired. Amusingly, my daughter spat up the tiny amount she was fed.

I had gone from an empowering, beautiful birth experience to feeling dismissed and unsure of my very new maternal instincts. Why was I made to feel I was wrong for wanting to exclusively feed my baby? Why was she poked and prodded so much when she was perfectly healthy?

It wasn't until a report highlighting the frightening statistic that black women are 5 times more likely to die from pregnancy and childbirth complications than white women in the UK (MBRRACE-UK, 2018), that I really thought deeply about things. Were my requests for pain relief seemingly ignored because of an archaic view that black women can withstand more pain? Did the doctor dismiss my wishes to exclusively breastfeed due to unconscious bias? Could my experience have been improved if I had been cared for by someone who looked like me?

Though mostly positive, my experience has motivated me to become a midwife to advocate for women. As a black woman, I feel I have a duty to look out for other women of colour. I want nothing more than to help reduce this alarming gap in outcomes highlighted by MBRRACE-UK. There's a lot of work to be done, and I'm ready and willing to get started.



References

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