

I am an Independent Midwife and often have the privilege of caring for many women who have previously had traumatic experiences of labour and birth. Women talk of feeling “robbed” of a birth experience and have been left with feelings of guilt, anger and deep sadness. I believe these feelings are similar to those suffered when experiencing any loss or bereavement. So often, women are left feeling guilty as they are told “you have a healthy baby, what more matters?” I equate this with being told in a restaurant where you have been sitting by a stinking toilet, fed rubbish, been treated with disdain and contempt by the waiters and waitresses and then being told “you have a full stomach, what more did you want”? Of course it matters how our babies enter the world! And I don’t mean a normal vaginal birth at all costs either. What really matters is that YOU are in control and making the decisions. I have known women who have ended up having a repeat caesarean and have felt empowered by their experience and I have known of women who have had what caregivers would categorise as a “normal vaginal delivery” but have been left feeling deeply traumatised and out of control.

It is so important to feel in control and empowered by our experiences however our babies come out of our bodies. To be treated with kindness and respect is something that women have a right to receive but is often something that is lacking. The Independent Midwives Association is proposing that a new model of NHS care is taken up whereby the woman chooses her midwife and the NHS pays the midwife a set fee per woman. (See www.independentmidwives.org.uk for more details). I believe that this would be an excellent step forward as the one most important issue for women that comes up time and time again is “knowing” their midwife.

I am so pleased that sites, like this one that the BTA has set up, exist. It serves to remind that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is reality for many women and also their partners after birth.