

25th March 2009

My name is Sarsha Symonds. As a mother of two girls - our first daughter born by caesarean and our second daughter born at home, I am writing to you in complete support of home birthing. Admittedly I am not fully aware of all the details as I have not read the report from cover to cover. I do know though, that my heart sank and I felt queasy when I discovered potential changes to the law which may rule out homebirth as an option.

I'd like to share a comparison of a hospital caesarean experience in 2006 to a VBAC homebirth experience in 2008 for our 2 daughters. The two experiences couldn't have been more different. The hospital birth photos were of the doctor holding up our daughter spreadeagled in bright lights like a trophy before I had even touched her. The homebirth photos were of me holding our daughter to my chest in the bath as she breastfed. My husband & completely unruffled 18month daughter were embracing us. Behind the photo was my proud mum, 2 beautiful midwives and a fantastic student midwife. At the hospital birth our daughter was whisked away after the caesarean for a few hours after only a 1 minute nurse which I have very vague recollections of. There was no skin on skin contact, she was wrapped up like fish & chips and I recall feeling as though I had just placed an order at a shop for a baby. My heart still aches at not being there for her to hold her up to my chest & heartbeat so she felt safe. The whole experience and lack of empowerment completely knocked my confidence as a capable childbearing woman & mother.

At the homebirth the midwives were silent as they let me speak first so my voice was the first voice our daughter heard. She came out into the water so relaxed and in perfect health. There was no crying or even a whimper. I held her in my arms with the umbilical chord still attached for about 30 minutes.

In regards to pre-birth care...for the first birth we had 10 minute rushed appointments with the obstetrician. He would bawk at questions we had and asked at one stage to not ask questions and just leave it up to him. We were regrettably naive at this point, so the caesarean was not even discussed, just decided by him and then booked in. I was devastated. On the other hand the midwives would come to our home and answer as many questions as we had, often staying for a couple of hours so that we felt knowledgeable and empowered to make our own informed decisions and to trust the natural process.

My husband & I were both initially unsure about homebirths. We wanted a lot of information and facts so we could feel confident in our decision given I'd had a previous caesarean, so we both did a great deal of research. We were completely convinced that a homebirth would be the safest option both physically and mentally. We also felt very confident that if any issues did arise they would be monitored early and we could make well informed decisions

together about what we would do. We feel so blessed that we chose this option. It gave our family such a special and invaluable experience together and I feel that I can now pass down the true essence of childbirth to our daughters.

The private midwives we have met are absolutely wonderful people. They included our whole family in discussions and got to know our daughter so that she could feel a part of it. They were all extremely knowledgeable and very much realists, but worked with incredible passion and heart. We were absolutely gutted when we learnt of the potential changes to the law and felt sick that the women who were by our side may not be able to assist other women to keep alive giving birth the way we are naturally meant to.

We have learnt how important it is for the future generations to teach our children and each other about trusting our bodies & ourselves to do something so primal that we were born to do....without intervention.

My husband and I are willing to provide as much information as you need or be of assistance in any way we can.

Kind regards,

Sarsha & Mike Symonds

