

### Survey Report

**AIMS Ireland ran the following survey on our website from February to May 2007:**

#### **“What Matters To You?”**

“AIMS Ireland is interested in finding out what matters most to pregnant women & their families. How were you affected by previous experience? What improvements would you like to see? This will help us gain a better understanding of what is most important to women with regard to their care during and after pregnancy and what improvements most women would like to see. This particular survey is aimed at women who have had a baby in Ireland in the last 5 years.”

**This survey was closed after 326 women responded. The survey was well balanced between the types of service women chose. 39.3% of respondents chose Public care, 21.2% Semi-Private care and 39.6% Private care. Below is a summary of what these results have told us.**

**The main thing that stands out in the survey results is that during pregnancy, the majority of women were happy with the levels of care and information they received with 44.8% indicating ‘Excellent’ care and 39.3% indicating ‘Good’ care. However, the women became increasingly unhappy as they moved to labour, birth and post natal care. The most negative feedback we received was in relation to post-natal care, support and information.**

**Q. How would you rate the information given to you regarding choices of care available to you?** (Combined care, private / sp / public services, midwife-led care, homebirth etc)  
326 responses. The majority, **37.4% of women answered “Poor”**

**Q. What type of care would you like to have had available to you that wasn't?** (Tick all that apply)  
427 responses. The majority, **41.9% of women were happy with their choice of care. 21.8% answered that they would like to have had Local Midwife-led care** (e.g.: in a local Health Centre)  
**16.9% answered that they would like to have had Midwife-led hospital care**

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**When asked “What type of care / support would you like to have had that you did not have?”**

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**Lack of feeding support came up over and over, a basic skill any mother needs in order to nurture a healthy newborn:**

**Q. If you breastfed your baby, how would you rate the breastfeeding support you received?**

258 responses. The majority, **29.5% answered “Poor”**

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*“Proper Breastfeeding support. Every nurse had a different opinion which was very confusing.”*

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**It concerned us that a lot of first-time mothers left the hospital without being shown basic skills to care for their newborn and with unanswered questions relating to their own well-being. There were also issues raised with mothers whose babies were in special care. They felt they were excluded from receiving any information or support as they were on the ward without their newborn.**

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**Lack of post-natal care is a serious issue. Lack of emotional support can lead to undiagnosed Post Natal Depression. Lack of physical support for mothers who are ill or recovering from surgery has a huge impact on the safety of the baby that they are left to care for. Busy, over-crowded hospitals and lack of staff are the main factors. There also seems to be inconsistency in the amount of care (if any) a woman gets from a local PHN.**

*“I found it very difficult to come to terms with my second emergency section. I was extremely upset that in Ireland such a situation means that there is very little chance I will ever get to experience a natural delivery. I was extremely traumatised by the circumstances of the birth and I feel it would be hugely beneficial to women to have some sort of counselling for all women who have a difficult birth.”*

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*“I would have liked more help with breastfeeding, information on PND and how to cope and some emotional support, the first 6 weeks were extremely difficult and I felt that the public health nurses were not interested in discussing mental health at all, and I am a nurse myself so I would have expected some support.”*

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*“I would have liked better help in coping with post natal depression”*

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**Also highlighted was the lack of local information and support when the woman returns home. This is a critical time in the development of the health and well-being of the mother and baby and an area in which services clearly need to be given a serious overhaul.**

**What especially concerned us was the lack of physical and emotional support provided to mothers who had had a difficult birth and / or a surgical birth. The dangers involved in a mother being left unattended to care for her newborn baby while she is physically unable to do so must be addressed.**

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**Another issue that this survey raised was lack of choice, lack of information and more worryingly, sometimes even lack of consent for certain procedures. Informed consent and informed refusal is not always taken into consideration in our busy hospitals. Often “procedure” and “routine” outweigh what a woman and her baby actually wants and/or need, sometimes infringing on their basic human rights.**

*“Most women do not have any choices in birth in this country...most women, especially women like me in rural Ireland, have no access to midwife led care or homebirth. In this day and age that is not acceptable”*

*“I would've liked to have had... more information offered to me by my Ob... not to have routine internals forced upon me during labour, not to have formula constantly pushed on me when I was BF (breastfeeding) my baby”*

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*“I felt like a trouble maker as I did not want any intervention. It was a traumatic and soul destroying experience”*

*“During my labour I was told that if the baby wasn't born within an hour that they would have to use forceps etc. I was only in the delivery room 4 hours and neither I nor my baby were in distress. I found it very upsetting to be told this and the midwife told me it was hospital policy to have stage 3 completed within 2 hours. I think that once mother & baby are doing ok that things should be left to progress naturally.”*

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*“there is still this notion of getting info on a 'need to know basis'.”*

*“I had my waters forcibly broken , was bullied into an epidural, stirrups, labour slowed and baby distressed, "routine" episiotomy, ventouse machine "broke", and two minutes before the decided deadline for a c section my baby was yanked out with forceps. His apgar score was low and spent time in an incubator. I was only introduced to him 8 hours later and was then bullied into giving him formula. Once I escaped from hospital we established successful breastfeeding.”*

*“midwives were very pushy and wouldn't listen to me kept fobbing me off regarding getting the epidural felt some of my choices were not heard and were ignored.”*

*“I had a sad and stressful time trying to organise a homebirth...My dealings with (the hospital) and the local clinic I found very upsetting. I think the hostility towards homebirth on the East Coast is appalling and tragic”*

*“I feel that all women should have the right to the type of birth they want and should be treated with dignity and respect... it is a sad fact that Irish hospitals practice defensive medicine so we as women have no choice but to practice defensive birthing”*

*“At last AN app doctor frightened us into being induced when 11 days OD (overdue) when I wanted to let nature take its course. Baby was NOT ready and resulted in a cascade of medical interventions finishing with ecs (Emergency C-Section) and minor complications for mother. Very bitter about this!”*

*“During induction no methods of pain relief were discussed, midwives tried ARM when I asked them not to, they LIED when I asked them about monitoring baby.”*

*“This was my 3rd baby and opting for a homebirth was my personal option. My GP said she could no longer see me if that was the way I wanted to go. I had to tell lies to the hospital just to get my bloods checked”*

*“I didn't want an epidural but Midwife insisted they needed to speed me up and I didn't want to be sped up unless I had pain relief. I gave birth only 1 ½ hours after this without being sped up and so was angry I'd had an epidural as I felt I could have coped without. Ended up being cut!”*

*“(My Obstetrician) was an old school doctor who wouldn't listen to any of my concerns and on several occasions he belittled me”*

*“in labour it seemed as if the midwife really did not want me to have an epidural. when I asked for it I was told it was to early... after 30mins asking I insisted she examine me to be told oh it's to late now. My baby was born 7mins later. Not for the first time I got the feeling that I wasn't being listened to”*

*“They insisted on inducing and told me horror stories of what could happen to my baby if I didn't induce.”*

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*“I felt the midwife was very eager for me to have an epidural, I would have liked to have other options available like a birthing pool or a mobile epidural”*

*“I wanted a homebirth, and was denied it for no good reason. I wanted a natural birth on baby3, but because of being breech, was sectioned immediately, and wanted a vbac on baby4 - also denied. If I were to have another baby, I'd do anything to deliver vaginally - but that's completely against 'the rules' following 2 sections in this country.”*

*“there is still this notion of getting info on a 'need to know basis'.”*

*“I had my waters forcibly broken , was bullied into an epidural, stirrups, labour slowed and baby distressed, "routine" episiotomy, ventouse machine "broke", and two minutes before the decided deadline for a c section my baby was yanked out with forceps. His apgar score was low and spent time in an incubator. I was only introduced to him 8 hours later and was then bullied into giving him formula. Once I escaped from hospital we established successful breastfeeding.”*

*“midwives were very pushy and wouldn't listen to me kept fobbing me off regarding getting the epidural felt some of my choices were not heard and were ignored.”*

*“I had a sad and stressful time trying to organise a homebirth...My dealings with (the hospital) and the local clinic I found very upsetting. I think the hostility towards homebirth on the East Coast is appalling and tragic”*

*“I feel that all women should have the right to the type of birth they want and should be treated with dignity and respect... it is a sad fact that Irish hospitals practice defensive medicine so we as women have no choice but to practice defensive birthing”*

*“At last AN app doctor frightened us into being induced when 11 days OD (overdue) when I wanted to let nature take its course. Baby was NOT ready and resulted in a cascade of medical interventions finishing with ecs (Emergency C-Section) and minor complications for mother. Very bitter about this!”*

*“During induction no methods of pain relief were discussed, midwives tried ARM when I asked them not to, they LIED when I asked them about monitoring baby.”*

*“This was my 3rd baby and opting for a homebirth was my personal option. My GP said she could no longer see me if that was the way I wanted to go. I had to tell lies to the hospital just to get my bloods checked”*

*“I didn't want an epidural but Midwife insisted they needed to speed me up and I didn't want to be sped up unless I had pain relief. I gave birth only 1 ½ hours after this without being sped up and so was angry I'd had an epidural as I felt I could have coped without. Ended up being cut!”*

*“(My Obstetrician) was an old school doctor who wouldn't listen to any of my concerns and on several occasions he belittled me”*

*“in labour it seemed as if the midwife really did not want me to have an epidural. when I asked for it I was told it was to early... after 30mins asking I insisted she examine me to be told oh it's to late now. My baby was born 7mins later. Not for the first time I got the feeling that I wasn't being listened to”*

*“They insisted on inducing and told me horror stories of what could happen to my baby if I didn't induce.”*

**We would like to thank all the women who took part in this survey and openly shared their experiences.**