AIMS For a better birth...

Book Reviews

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Employment Rights: The Guide for Lone Parents

One Parent Families, 2004

Reviewed by Beverley Lawrence Beech

One of the more common questions to our helpline comes from parents seeking information about their employment rights, so this little booklet is an answer to a maiden's prayer.

It sets out, in a clear format and language, detailed information and advice on working rights and entitlements, paternity leave and paternity pay, adoption leave and adoption pay, maternity rights at work and the new measures introduced by the Employment Act 2002.
A free copy of this 43-page booklet can be obtained by phoning the Lone Parent Helpline on 0800 018 5026.

Hello Baby, by Jenni Overend and Julie Vivas

ABC Books, 1999;
ISBN 073330685 3 (hardback),
ISBN 073330786 9 (paperback)

Reviewed by Suzanna Nock

Find this book on Amazon

Hello Baby is an illustrated children's book written from the point of view of a boy witnessing the home birth of a new sibling. The illustrations by Julie Vivas are rich and colourful without being garish, and set the scene for the story.

It begins with Mum having "pains in her tummy", and the family making a big bed by the fire and getting the clothes ready. Mum goes for a long walk in the woods to "help the baby along". When the midwife Anna arrives, all the equipment she brings "in case the baby needs it" are shown, including a pinnard! When Mum returns, she is shown leaning on Dad during a contraction. Auntie Meg arrives, and the boy is shown nervously talking about seeing a baby being born, as Mum has explained that she might make a lot of noise, but not to worry.

As the labour progresses, Mum walks less, yells more and has a hot-water bottle on her back. Finally, the baby is born -with Mum upright, leaning on Dad, and Anna on the floor behind. It's a boy! The parents are smiling and crying.

The placenta arrives (not sure about cord traction, but as I wasn't there...) and Dad cuts the cord well after the arrival of the placenta (caught in a bowl, examined and pronounced "beautiful"). The baby is dressed and cuddles up with Mum. The rest of the family eats toast and soup, then lies down in sleeping bags around the big bed. The boy is jealous of the baby being between his parents, so hops in next to Dad and is cuddled in.

The story is simple and straightforward, and addresses issues such as noise, jealousy, emotions in adults and fear. The clear and warm illustrations complement and enhance the story, and provide opportunities to discuss a wide variety of topics, such as where the baby comes out and what the placenta looks like. They are not clinically graphic.

This book offers very good preparation for the arrival of a sibling, and it's hard to find books that don't assume a hospital birth and which show a birth actually happening. It allows exploration of issues at a level to suit the age of the child reading it-about 2-8 years. It became a regular bedtime favourite in our house.

As for labour and birth, the midwife took a very hands-off approach, with Mum staying active and upright throughout. This is the kind of birth we would all like-unless, of course, we wanted a water birth. Can anyone recommend a children's book on that?