AIMS For a better birth...

Feedback from a positive birth facilitator

AIMS Journal 2014 Vol 26 No 4

My name is Elle and I have been running the Manchester Positive Birth Group from around the time the PBM (Positive Birth Movement) began.

Ours is a lovely group, held in the cafe of a community centre. The meeting is family-friendly, as is the cafe. We tend to eat lunch at the same time, the children play – it's ver y informal.

Other groups have different settings and outlines, but that's what works for us. We get a mixture of pregnant mothers, women with babies and toddlers, and midwives. Even a dad came along once!

I am a doula, but I facilitate as a peer. That's something I love about the meetings, that ever yone's voices are equal. Women sharing their experiences is always a powerful thing, and there's something really special about women seeking information and finding it from each other. We used to pass on knowledge and advice in this way, amongst our own community, and I'm glad that hasn't been lost.

After introducing ourselves and saying a little about what brings us to the meeting, I explain what the month's topic of discussion is and that we don't have to stick to it. Sometimes the expectant women have questions, and it's important that they don't leave with them! But it can be really helpful to have the topic to return to. The themes are intentionally broad, so I like to leave them open to the interpretation of the women in attendance. I am fascinated by the perspectives presented at ourmeetings, and always take away something to think on.

There is no one way to achieve a positive birth, and the group isn't there to recommend any particular type of birth. After all, there is no guarantee that any setting or method will provide a satisfying experience. But a group of women sharing what has ser ved them well is an antidote to the fear-tension-pain cycle that so many mothers perpetuate, sometimes without even realising. The meetings are a space where women can safely explore their options, minus the scare stories, and with absolutely no judgement.

Feeling empowered comes from within, and sometimes all it takes is a spark. Hearing how someone refused a routine procedure, or insisted on something that was important to them, inspires the listener to think about what they would really like for themselves, and how they might go about getting it. We all gain wisdom when we give birth, and PositiveBirth Groups, where mothers meet from many walks of life, are the perfect place to share it.

Elle James