AIMS For a better birth...

March for Independent Midwifery

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With an early start through rush hour traffic, scampering back to the car to retrieve an extra pair of gloves for Milo (whose fascination with cold wet puddles was becoming a little wearing), a brisk car-seat swap in the drop-off point, a broken ticket machine, a stubborn toddler who would not be carried ... I started to wonder if this hassle was going to worth the reward – would anyone listen to us? The responses to my letters seemed to suggest a lack of comprehension of the problem, let alone any evidence of a solution. The wind was bitterly cold on the platform and the train was busy.

I was seated behind a group of four women sharing bad birth stories with varying amounts of regret, disappointment, fear and gore. At first I assumed they were on their way to the march, then I saw them all pick up their briefcases and get off around Luton, phones already clamped to their ears and heels clicking down the platform. Milo nursed and dozed in my arms and I was alone with my thoughts. How universal birth is. It can unite and divide us. It moves us and resonates down the generations. It is a language allparents speak and bonds the very essence of the human race together. Just like the women on the train, I too am a completely normal woman with my own bad birth story. My mother (who took time off work to support me by looking after my eldest son) has hers. We are lucky and grateful that our bad births were then followed by good ones. Hers was facilitated by a group of committed underground midwives in America and mine by the awesome independent midwives Jane Buckler and Valerie Gommon, who ensured that every moment of my pregnancy, labour and birth was mine and mine alone. I am very proud of my (slightly crazy) VBAC story, as it does not include the words ‘routine’, ‘they wouldn't let’ and ‘they had to’ at all.

Choice. That’s what makes a good birth. That’s what we marched for. Choice in screening, choice of birth place, choice of midwife and yes, choice to opt for non-NHS maternity care. We are grown adults. We can think for ourselves. It took hundreds of supporters travelling to London to get a simple meeting between IMUK and DOH’s Dan Poulter, but it was joyous. It raised our profile and helped keep the light alive for all of us who will not let independent midwifery be stamped out on our watch.

Sign and circulate the petition: epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/44382 and support IMUK’s monthly Choose Your Midwife campaign,
details at www.independentmidwives.org.uk

Carly Ramsay-Wilson



