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Book Review: The Roar Behind the Silence: Why kindness, compassion and respect matter in maternity care

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Edited by Sheena Byrom and Soo Downe

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With this paperback, Sheena Byrom and Soo Downe – both well-respected figures in the professional and academic fields of UK midwifery – aim to contribute to improving maternity services both in the UK and further afield. They seek to do this by providing 'information, inspiration and practical suggestions to support maternity care workers, policy makers, and maternity care funders across the world in their quest to deliver sensitive, compassionate and high quality maternity services'.

Across its 32 short chapters, the book certainly provides lots of useful information and thought-provoking ideas from a wide range of authors (a good mix of well-known 'celebrities' in the world of birth and some newcomers) on why kindness, compassion and respect in maternity care really matter. As such, the book should provide much comfort and moral support, as well as practical suggestions, for those professionals who might be feeling isolated – and perhaps despondent – in their efforts to introduce these ideas into their local workplace. Some of the chapters also reach out to a broader audience. For example, I found Kerstin Uvnas Moberg's contribution on how different types of care have the potential to radically alter the physiological process of birth particularly good.

AIMS Journal readers will not need convincing, of course, that many birthing women still experience far too much unnecessary distress in their encounters with the maternity services. The publication of this book demonstrates that this message is being heard. As such, the book is a very welcome addition to the broad-based campaign to raise awareness of this issue, building on the ambitions of the current Maternity Transformation Programme in England and of similar change programmes in other countries.

It is a great quick guide for birth campaigners to the many initiatives and ideas in this area, each of which holds great promise in terms of supporting improvements in our maternity services. For women and families who have recently used the maternity services, this book might also make for a great present idea for your favourite caregivers instead of the usual chocolates: the brevity of individual chapters makes it highly suitable for a highly motivational pick-me-up during a well-earned staff tea-break. Or, if you are part of your Maternity Voices Partnership (MVP), you might want to recommend it for purchase by your local staff library, so that everyone on your MVP has a chance to brief themselves on this important topic.