

# Childbirth conspiracy left me traumatised, says magazine editor

**Kat Lay** Health Correspondent

Natasha Pearlman, the editor of *Grazia* magazine, writes in *The Times Magazine* today that she is still traumatised three and a half years after the birth of her daughter.

Midwives "assumed" that she would want to give birth naturally and she said that antenatal classes were biased against interventions such as epidurals and caesarean sections, leaving her uninformed and suffering from lasting damage.

After midwives insisted that she wait for hours in a side room without a bed, she was forced to beg a doctor for pain relief on her knees in a corridor, she said, before the eventual delivery of her daughter, Rose, using forceps. "I tore. I was cut. I was stitched up. I couldn't sit down without a rubber ring supporting me (so utterly humiliating) for at least four weeks. I had haemorrhoids. I bled. I hurt for months. Physically and emotionally. I wasn't depressed. I was in shock," she said. "I felt, I suppose, like a failure. I also felt I had been failed."

Six weeks of National Childbirth Trust (NCT) classes, at a cost of £300, were so biased in favour of

**Natasha Pearlman attacks bias in National Childbirth Trust antenatal classes**

natural childbirth that despite initially believing she wanted an epidural, Pearlman "left fearing all intervention". Describing NCT courses as "fundamentally no longer fit for purpose", she said: "I should have been more inquiring. I wasn't. I made my decision to go 'natural' in part because of fear."

Last month *The Times* revealed that the Royal College of Midwives had dropped its decade-long campaign for "normal birth", saying that it made women feel like failures if they needed medical intervention.

Referring to the day of the birth, Pearlman, 35, said: "It seemed as if they had made the decision, without consulting me, to push me to the absolute limit to deliver the baby naturally." Sarah McMullen, head of knowledge at the NCT, said: "It's not acceptable that someone should leave an antenatal class feeling uninformed and fearful of birth, and our practitioners would never intend for this to happen."

She said most of the 50,000 parents surveyed last year had rated classes highly, but added: "We know we don't always get it right ... We always welcome feedback and encourage Natasha to get in touch." **Nightmare in the delivery room, Times Magazine**



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