

"I had an extreme premature baby in 2000. Born at 27 weeks gestation she weighed 2lb 4oz. I talk freely about how small she was, how stressful it was for myself and my partner to go through caring for her and how wonderful it is that she grew up to be such a fine young woman that we are so, so proud of. It was easy to talk about the nice stuff, the milestones she reached, her amazing personality, the fact that she suffered no long term disability.

What's harder to talk about is the effect her birth had on him and myself. What I don't speak about is the trauma we went through at the time of her birth, and how the 8th Amendment put my life at risk.

We were delighted to be pregnant. The congratulations and preparations were the complete opposite to my previous pregnancy. Six years previously I was a lone parent on welfare and living in a shitty two roomed flat. This time, I had the support of an amazing man. This pregnancy was full of hope of a future with a mum, a dad and 2 kids. Perfection.

At about 24 weeks I had a bleed. Panicked, I rang him and he came to collect me. We walked the short distance to the hospital but my doctor was away. Another doctor checked me out, baby's heart beat was strong. "Go home, you'll probably miscarry". We got a taxi home and didn't even speak. If we didn't say the words than maybe it wouldn't happen.

My next appointment was the following week. No bleeding! I was hopeful. Everything was going to be OK.

At the next week's appointment, the doctor checked my files and was surprised to see I had been in with a bleed. "We'll get you a scan". The diagnosis was Grade 4 Placenta Previa. I had never heard of it. I wasn't allowed home and was admitted straight away. Two weeks of lying on my back, missing my son terribly and desperately wanting to go home. I'd had no bleeding, no pain, I wanted to go home. Against the doctor's advice I packed my bags and returned home.

Three days later at 7.15pm I went to the bathroom. I will never forget the blood. Quickly, a friend ushered me into his car and we made the hospital in minutes. I had been warned that if this was to happen I had 15 minutes to get medical help, or else.

Arriving at the hospital was the start of the nightmare. Standing at reception my partner desperately tried to explain the situation to the receptionist. I was numb, I just stood there. A woman in the waiting room jumped up and ran over. She started to yell at the receptionist to get help. I didn't realise how much I was hemorrhaging. Still no pain, nothing.

The next 13 hours were the worst of my life. I was admitted onto a ward and left to slowly bleed to death. But the baby's heart beat was strong. I went into labour at 11.30pm. I received some pain relief but they ignored my requests for a doctor. A nurse called Ann, the kindest person I have ever met, stayed with me all night. She held my hand and pleaded with the Matron to get help. The Matron lost the rag with her. Threatened her with disciplinary action if she didn't leave me and get back to work. And told me to stop crying as I was upsetting the other women. Ann never left my side. She held my hand all night. I knew it was bad when I saw tears streaming down her face.

At 8am my doctor arrived. He sat at the edge of the bed. "Unfortunately we have to take the baby out".

As they wheeled me down to theatre, I felt my life ebbing away. I didn't think of the baby. Does that sound awful? All I could think about was my beautiful little boy at home and how he would cope without having a mother. It was breaking my heart. He was my last thought before the anaesthetic knocked me out.

What I didn't know until years later, because we didn't talk about it, was what

the doctor said to my partner outside the theatre that morning. " We don't know if she'll make it, it's 20% but the baby is 50/50.

Although it all worked out in the end, the effects of being told that the woman you love only has a 20% chance of survival has had devastating long term affects. You don't just get over it. He had to be strong. He had to be the man that cares for his partner and children, keeps working, and be strong. The trauma I went through, feeling the life leave me, being so close to death that I could taste it.

The 8th Amendment meant that the doctor had to wait until my life was "at serious risk" before he could intervene. My life was not as important to them as the life of a baby. I was a mother, a partner, a sister, a daughter and a friend. I had people in my life that loved me. What would their lives have been like if I had died?

Who was there defending my right to life? Who was there defending the rights of my son to have a mother? Who was there defending the rights of my partner to have the woman he loved survive?

I was 12 in 1983 and did not have a vote in my future. My daughter will be three months away from her 18th birthday on May 25th. She does not have a vote in her future.

We all need to take responsibility now for the pain and suffering the 8th Amendment has had on thousands of women's lives over the last 35 years. We must never forget Mother B, The X Case, Savita."