

# Women in childbirth still being denied their human rights

19 June 2013



New research shows despite more than 50 years of campaigning, too many mothers are still being denied their human rights in childbirth.

In 'Choice, Policy and Practice in Maternity Care since 1948', a new History & Policy paper by Dr Angela Davis, Department of History at the University of Warwick, claims women's choices about how and where they give birth are still being widely ignored by healthcare providers.

Dr Davis carried out 160 interviews with women of all ages and from all backgrounds to explore their experiences of [childbirth](#) and motherhood. She also looked at current data and literature on maternity care.

She said: "Women are primarily critical of a lack of information, lack of choice in their care and dissatisfaction with their caregivers, rather than the procedures themselves. For decades there has been a struggle between those arguing for maternity services to prioritise mothers' wishes, and those who believe that a healthy baby is the only way to measure a successful outcome."

Dr Davis added that home births have declined and medical intervention in pregnancy and

childbirth significantly increased. NHS budgetary pressures had also now added an economic dimension to the issue, with debates over how to deliver choice and safety as cheaply as possible.

She said: "It seems that not much has changed, in January this year a new group called Birthrights launched to promote [human rights](#) in pregnancy and childbirth.

"[Maternity care](#) remains a contested policy area. While chiefly framed as a debate about reconciling women's choice over how and where to give birth on the one hand, with the fate of their babies on the other, this more often comes down to cost and control. Women's choice is characterised as an expensive, and possibly dangerous, luxury."

Dr Davis has also written an opinion piece called '["Something should be done": campaigns for choice and human rights in childbirth](#)'

#### More information:

[www.historyandpolicy.org/paper...olicy-paper-146.html](http://www.historyandpolicy.org/paper...olicy-paper-146.html)

Provided by University of Warwick

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