



## PRESS RELEASE

**CONTACT** Nikki Wilson, CEO

**COMPANY** Make Birth Better

**PHONE** +44 7845316673

**EMAIL** [nikki@makebirthbetter.org](mailto:nikki@makebirthbetter.org)

**WEB** <https://www.makebirthbetter.org/>

**INSTAGRAM** [@birthbetter](https://www.instagram.com/birthbetter)

## PREGNANT WOMEN HIT HARD BY COVID-19: MENTAL HEALTH AT RISK

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LONDON – ‘How are Covid-19 restrictions impacting you?’ This is what Make Birth Better<sup>1</sup> asked parents(-to-be) over the last few months. **458** shared their story:

- They feel: **‘Devastated’**. **‘Frightened’**. **‘Powerless’**. **‘Helpless’**. **‘Shocked’**.
- Over **90% of mothers** report their maternity **choices have changed**
- Over **51% of women** say they had to **change their birth plan**
- Information is often **unclear** and **not easy** to find, causing **stress and anxiety** for many
- **Half of women** who rely on mental health support said **help stopped**

Restrictions to prevent coronavirus from spreading were understandably put into place. But with that, being pregnant meant that you might have to give birth without your partner of choice, going to scans on your own or have less access to some pain relief and elective C-sections. We launched [our study](#) to understand better the changes pregnant women had experienced to their maternity care, and the impact of that. They have reported increased feelings of stress, anxiety and loneliness and are undoubtedly affected psychologically. Many parents are reaching out to us because they are struggling\*:

*“My little boy was in neonatal for 6 days. I was apart from him and couldn’t see anyone, there were no visitors allowed. It was torture. My husband couldn’t visit him because they only permitted one parent a day: that had to be me as I was breastfeeding.” – Beth*

*“I’ve been going to all appointments alone. The 20 weeks scan was so scary. What if I got bad news? I have days I am so upset by how it is. It just doesn’t seem fair. I am very worried about having to deliver our baby by myself.” – Vicks*

(\*these women are happy to share their stories publicly)

The thing is, the status quo was already bad. [Statistics from before the pandemic](#) were already telling us that **1 in 4 mums** find some aspect of their birth **traumatic**<sup>2</sup>. And [professionals](#) feel overstretched, overworked and exhausted, causing them to be unable to support women in the way they’d wish. And putting them at risk of suffering from [vicarious trauma](#)<sup>3</sup>.

This is why we launched [our campaign #thinktraumanow](#) back in April. To urge NHS leaders and policy makers to think about trauma prevention and treatment in the light of Covid-19. The results from [our current study](#) show that, fast forward 5 months, our voice needs to be even louder.

<sup>1</sup> Make Birth Better was founded in 2018 by Clinical Psychologist [Dr. Emma Svanberg \(@mumologist\)](#) and Perinatal Psychiatrist [Dr. Rebecca Moore \(@drebeccamoore\)](#). A collective of experts who bring together lived experience and extensive professional knowledge of birth trauma and vicarious trauma.

<sup>2</sup> Birth trauma describes symptoms of mental or physical trauma which may be related to the birth itself or circumstances around the birth.

<sup>3</sup> Vicarious trauma is the indirect trauma that healthcare professionals suffer from when they witness a difficult or fatal birth, mistreatment or other things at work that deeply affect them.