

Birth Story- The Birth of Joshua

It was the August bank holiday weekend and the weather was miserable. This worked in my favour as it meant I had an excuse to set up camp on the sofa, watch loads of TV and snack all day. After spending the Sunday indoors due to the rain, my partner Steve got a little cabin fever and so on the bank holiday Monday we ventured into town and Steve treated himself to a Virtual Reality headset. Naturally I wanted a go, so there I am 38 + 6 days pregnant at home, in my PJ's, experiencing a virtual shark attack and shooting on a range like I'm in a cop film. I was completely relaxed and at ease, as was Steve, and we were just having fun at home.

By that point, I had been experiencing period-type cramps for about a week but they were very mild and not at all uncomfortable. I just assumed it was baby engaging but to be on the safe side I had put a towel down on my bed 'just in case my waters went'.

That night, I woke up with a bit of backache. I sat up and Steve rubbed my back for a minute then I was fine and went straight back to sleep. Again, this was nothing uncomfortable and I assumed it was because I had slept in an odd position as I only experienced it once. In the early hours of Tuesday morning, at 2.40am I heard a little pop and felt fluid in between my legs. When it felt a little more slippery, I knew it wasn't just a wee.

I gathered up the towel and Steve stirred as I hobbled around the bed to the bathroom. He asked if everything was ok. 'I think my waters have gone', I said smiling and getting excited. Upon closer examination in the light, I could see it was definitely my waters and the 'plug' had come away too.

I called Huddersfield Birth Centre and they advised we go in so they could check the fluid. We took our hospital bag and the car seat, although we thought we would be home again in an hour or two and not be back at the hospital for another day. On the way to the birth centre I had a few period pain type cramps. We arrived at the birth centre and walking from the car I had a few more that were more comfortable if I stood still. Again however, they were not painful and perfectly manageable.

As we arrived the staff were very welcoming, all was well with my waters and they gave us the option of either going home or staying for an hour or so to see how things progressed. We decided to wait and it's just as well we did. We arrived at the birth centre at about 3.30am and by 4.30 / 5am I was having 3 surges in 10 minutes that were lasting at least 40 seconds each. I stayed upright and walked around the room and in between each surge you really do just feel completely normal. Steve was there rubbing my back during each surge and we were both very relaxed, knowing from our hypnobirthing course what to expect, and that everything I was experiencing was gearing up to us meeting our baby boy.

It was quite amazing! I laid on my back so that the midwife could listen to baby's heart rate. She took her hands away and said 'you are having a contraction'. A few seconds later I could feel the surge starting. It was amazing how she could see my body doing its thing, before I even felt anything. I have to say at this point, I had two surges laying down on my back whilst the midwife listened to baby and they were the most uncomfortable, so from that point on, I was on my feet. Although the midwife did check to make sure my cervix was dilating (at my request) she could not tell me how far dilated I was as she didn't want to risk infection at this early stage. Knowing my cervix was dilating however, was enough for me.

Now the surges were coming more frequently and stronger, I found myself leaning over the bed and birth pool so staying mostly upright. This was the most comfortable position for me and whilst I tried bouncing on the ball, I felt sitting on it was almost blocking baby. The midwife said to let her know if I wanted any pain relief. I thought things would get more intense so wanted to hold off even gas and air until I felt I would benefit from it most.

By about 6.30am (I guess as by this point things were getting a little more serious and I lost all concept of time) I found myself on all fours on the bed and 'in the zone'. The surges were coming pretty consistently now and I could really feel things happening. The midwife was telling me to listen to my body, and it was incredible how I really felt my body doing all the work. The only thing I needed to do was breathe and every now and then, ever so gently push to aid baby's head crowning. But this was the smallest of pushes and my body really did just take over. I realised at this point that I wasn't moving from that position and this was confirmed when I asked the midwife to run the water for the birthing pool and she said 'I can my dear, but it takes 20 minutes', inferring that baby was going to be out in that time. I felt the crowning more in my bottom and not at all in the front to the point that at one point I was sure he was coming out the 'wrong hole' but they assured me he wasn't!

My waters had broken at 2.40am and Joshua Steven was born 4.5 hours later at 7.24am at 39 weeks weighing 6lb 7oz without any pain relief. Josh had the cord wrapped around his neck and a knot in the placenta and he came out a little blue. But with the constant monitoring of his heart rate and the midwives' amazing support, Josh was delivered safely and soundly and was having a little cry in no time.

I then went on to deliver the placenta naturally by sitting on the toilet with a paper bowl in the pan, and had stitches following a second stage tear inside (I had gas and air for this as I was very sensitive down there at this point and didn't have the drive of getting a baby to aid me through).

After some tea and toast and Josh's final checks, we went home that evening to start our new adventure as a little family.

I really think that hypnobirthing played a huge role in my quick labour. Not only did the course provide us with an in-depth understanding and awareness of birth (what to expect, our choices, the options and the different routes birth can take), but it taught us to be comfortable, calm and trusting of my body, making it an amazing and wonderful experience.

Victoria and Steve



Birth Story- The Birth of Elsie

Losing the plot a little a few days before the birth (being 9 days over), I wrote a birth story as if I could choose one myself. It's amazing how close this turned out to the real thing. I put this down to staying calm and focused with the help of my hypnobirthing,

I started with low-level early surges at 3am on the morning of the 14th April at home and set up the day ahead as a relaxed and chilled out one. Reece was working at home that day so we lit the log fire and whilst he worked, I watched some TV and sat bouncing on my ball. His parents came round with the biggest bar of galaxy chocolate I'd ever seen and I tucked into this and had a nice relaxing day!

By evening the surges had gotten stronger and closer together but I was determined to stay in my peaceful haven as long as possible before heading to the hospital where I'd chosen to birth my baby. At around midnight we called the hospital and headed down. They told me I was 4cm dilated so I was happy with this starting point in the hospital and we stayed. This was the only examination I had and then I left Mother Nature to her business.

From here we had a labour room and managed to control surges in here with the help of affirmations and staying calm and focussed before being moved to the pool room. Getting into the water was a revelation. The heat and cosiness provided great relief and helped me to continue to stay calm as labour progressed. The nurses and Reece were amazed how far I'd gotten with no pain relief.

Six hours later, and throughout the night, I birthed my baby Elsie in the pool taking a little gas and air towards the end to assist with the overwhelming and powerful feelings of bringing her into the world.

I truly couldn't have done this without my hypnobirthing practice. I was incredibly fearful of labour and all it entailed beforehand and yet the course guided me through the fact I had choices and some control to labour in a way I felt comfortable with. I turned down stretch and sweeps to get me started, examinations when they were requested and relied on my body to see me through in the end. My partner Reece went into the process also with great knowledge and confidence it could go as we wanted. And it did!!

Katie and Reece



Birth Story- The Birth of Agnes

The week before Agnes arrived, I had been experiencing some lower back aches and pelvic tightening. Eating dates and drinking raspberry leaf tea daily might have had something to do with this! Despite this being our first baby and unsure of exactly what these signs meant, my instincts told me that something might happen before long.

On Wednesday 26th September I had some bump photos taken at home which made me feel very close to the baby. I then drove into Manchester to have lunch with my husband at my favourite pizzeria, followed by an afternoon of shopping. By the time I got home I was exhausted but had had the most wonderful day doing things I love. All in all, I'd had a pretty big dose of oxytocin that day!

That same night at 1.30am, my waters broke in my sleep; I woke up thinking I'd wet the bed! I woke my husband up to tell him things had started. Initially we were very keen to go straight to the birth centre, however at this point, I'd only had some aches that were few and far between. My husband Alex suggested we "BRAIN" the decision to go to birth centre. At this point, having listened to my body and considered the timings of my surges that Alex had noted down, we decided it was better to stay put and get some rest until I had progressed further. So we had some food and went back to bed. I managed to rest with my husband, but by 6am my surges were starting to get a little stronger. I ran a bath, lit some candles and listened to a hypnobirthing MP3. I then woke Alex up at 7am to let him know that my surges were strengthening, so he made us some more food, continued to monitor the timings of my surges, and we made our way to the birth centre.

When we arrived, the midwife asked me a few questions, but as I was able to talk through my surges and wasn't exhibiting any signs of stress or strain, she didn't believe I was very far along and suggested we go home. Instead, I decided to listen to my body as I could tell that things were progressing at a good pace and that I should stay. The midwife therefore recommended I get in the birthing pool to see whether this would either slow down or accelerate the pace of the birth. I was very happy to do this, so we went into the room I'd hoped to give birth in and Alex set about making it homelier.

We had a birth playlist on, lavender scent diffused in the room, and the sun was beaming through the windows. As soon as I was in the pool, I felt really relaxed and Alex gave me clary sage to smell on a damp flannel throughout my surges. He was by my side constantly feeding me water, encouraging me and mopping my brow. After about 2 hours in the pool, I could feel the surges building and Alex noted that I had reached the '3 in 10' point. I asked him to update the midwife, so she came back to check on me and asked if I'd like an examination. I had previously thought I wouldn't want one, but knew I was making good progress (plus part of me wanted to prove to myself that my instinct to stay at the birth centre was right). It turned out that I was already 4cm dilated, which was a delight to hear!

I then bounced on the birthing ball for a short time, ate some dark chocolate and got back into the pool. From then on, the birth really sped up. I was fully dilated within 30 minutes; this first stage had been very, very quick. The midwife then started getting things ready in the room and I began to really focus on my breathing and visualised relaxing scenes, coached by my wonderful husband Alex. In one of my most powerful surges, he encouraged me to think about a balloon ride

we had taken on holiday in Burma, which helped me through it enormously. Towards the end of the transition phase, I asked for some gas and air to help me along. I started to feel the urge to push and steadily changed my breathing and technique to get the baby moving, coached along constantly by Alex and the midwife. Gradually however, I felt the gas and air was actually making me feel spaced-out, drowsy, and was slowing the birth down as a result. So I stopped taking it and instead just focused on my breathing. I felt very animalistic at this point as I breathed and made noises through each surge. The midwife and my husband were hugely supportive and helped me keep things moving; advising me on when and how to breathe and push. Not long after this point (only 45 minutes after I was fully dilated), Agnes was born in the water at 12:56pm. The midwife guided Agnes between my legs towards me and I scooped her out of the water. I held her close to me on my chest until the cord stopped pulsating, and my husband cut it. I then handed her to Alex for some skin to skin, while I got out of the pool and delivered the placenta naturally in one push over the toilet. Alex handed Agnes back to me for a feed and she latched on properly right away; it was almost like she had done this before! It was a joy to watch her little mouth feeding so intently. I was checked over and was delighted that I had no tearing and required no stitches.

The birth was the most perfect experience that I could have wished for. I had written down my birth in the past tense the week before, and what actually happened was the same almost word for word. I felt hugely empowered by the hypnobirthing course we did; the main thing I took away was to trust my instincts and do what I felt was right for my baby and my body. My husband Alex was the best birth partner in the world – he kept me calm, hydrated and even made me laugh throughout – I couldn't have done it without him. We now have a beautiful baby girl, who is the most amazing creature I have ever seen, and who entered this world in an extremely calm and relaxed way.

Sarah and Alex



Birth Story- The Birth of Alistair

Our appointment at Pinderfields Hospital on the Wednesday could not have gone better and was quite different to what I'd imagined it would be, in a very positive way. We spoke to a lovely midwife, in length, about what all the different methods of induction would mean: how going with them may change things from our intended birthing preferences, how the hospital environment could be different from what we had prepared for at the birthing centre, and how we may be able to work to keep things as close as possible to what we wanted. The midwife could not have had more time for us and answered all our many questions and was very reassuring and able to pick up on what was important to us. Thanks to what we had learned in our sessions with you, and referring to the BRAIN questioning method, we were also able to be confident in asking as many questions as we felt we needed to know answers to, in order to feel decisions we were making were fully informed and we were in control.

Happily, after talking us through everything, the heartbeat monitoring showed baby was well and checks on my tummy showed baby was already sitting very low. We were offered the choice of stretch and sweep with Propess pessary induction as an outpatient. This meant she could do this for us at the appointment but could allow us to return home to see if things progressed into active labour, rather than be admitted and have to wait in the hospital ward. This also gave us the opportunity to still carry out baby's birth at the birthing centre (although this would need to be Wakefield rather than Dewsbury) if labour started within the 24 hours.

This really appealed to us, as it allowed us the chance to keep close to our birthing preferences if everything worked in our favour with the induction. It was pleasing to us that the midwife we were speaking to had picked up on this. Happily, we agreed to go ahead with the induction on this basis. The stretch and sweep examination showed I was already slightly dilated before the induction even went ahead, and I could feel the induction had already started to work as we drove home from the appointment in the car. I really believe that being able to stay focused on positives and stay calm and relaxed, as well as in a home environment helped in the labour progressing quickly.

Rob returned to work in the afternoon and by the time he returned in the evening my aches and tenseness which I had felt on the way home from the appointment had already separated into clear surges which had seemed regular and consistent for a couple of hours. Rob timed these for me when he got home and confirmed to me that we were already almost within the time frame of regularity when they ask you to call in. We had tea and watched some comedy while our labour continued to progress and by 8.15pm that evening, Rob made the call to the birth centre to let them know we had regular surges and would likely be coming in that evening. As everything was still very bearable, calm and under control we chose to continue at home for a few more hours. As the surges got stronger and more defined I used the calm breathing and visualisations to stay calm and later also a TENS machine. The tip of also having a cooling face cloth to hand proved to be of great benefit as well! At 9.45 we left home for Wakefield birth centre.

As we arrived at Pinderfields I had started to get a little confused, having felt I may have started to push a couple of times and also feeling my waters may have broken as we arrived in the car. This meant I found it difficult to concentrate on questions I was asked on being admitted to the birthing centre, in regards to examinations to check if my waters had broken and what it would mean if I did or did not want to have these. Rob knew at this point however to step in and help in answering for us, to prevent any further confusion from myself and ensure I did not start to get stressed that I was not fully understanding. Checks showed I was fully dilated and my waters were about to break so we were taken to a room in the birthing centre where there were two midwives waiting to help bring our baby into the world.

Having a copy of our birthing preferences I think really helped the midwives to quickly understand the type of birth we were hoping for, and they were very calm and supportive, allowing me to follow my body's natural urges to push and never trying to instruct me. I was still in a bit of confusion as we entered the birthing room but again, Rob was able to confidently take control and explain we had wanted a water birth, allowing the midwives to start filling the pool for us. Once he had put on the calming music we had chosen for birth and used while practising breathing and relaxation to in the lead up to the birth, I was soon calm and focused again. The breathing and visualisation techniques were so well practised they came as second nature and I drew on happy memories from one of our holidays to help me through the strongest contractions. Baby Alistair was born naturally (without pain relief) in the birthing pool at 00.17am on the Thursday morning. 1 week and 4 days later we are all still doing well and enjoying learning from each other and establishing our routines as a new little family.

I have to say that the trainee midwife who tended to us during the birth congratulated us on how well we had done and what a calm and focused birth it had been, thanking us for allowing her to experience it with us!! This I feel is a testament to how useful your sessions were to us and how well the techniques of hypnobirthing aided the birth of our son.

We would like to thank you for all your support and advice throughout our pregnancy. Rob and I really enjoyed attending your sessions and the principals and techniques are definitely something we will continue to draw on and refer to in everyday situations.

Louise and Rob



Birth Story- The Birth of Darcey

So we went into hospital for a quick scan on Friday 15th December (my predicted due date was 8th Jan). As I was classed as high risk, this was an extra 36 week scan and I'd been fairly unwell all December so I suggested to Mathew that he came along to this one to be on the safe side as I suspected things weren't going too well.

Darcey's abdomen was measuring on the small side, and after one or two other issues the doctor advised that we induce her at 37 weeks as she was better out than in. A lot of questions by myself and Mathew to make sure, we agreed that it was absolutely the right thing to do for our baby.

We had the weekend to prepare and I was mainly in the bath listening to the hypnobirthing tracks on repeat for the full two days. Mathew also booked me in for a head and shoulder massage on the Sunday afternoon which was marvellous.

I was in hospital for a few days on a shared ward (definitely take earplugs and headphones to block out as much noise as possible), with two pessaries over Monday and Tuesday. By Wednesday I was dilated enough for my waters breaking. Immediately after this great news was bad news that there wasn't enough room for us on the ward we needed to be on. This was my only wobble.

A lot of calming down later (mainly due to Mathew being amazing), I was back on the ball bouncing away practising my breathing. During this time the only sleep I managed was after listening to the hypnobirthing tracks! It really was a godsend having them to listen to on a shared ward.

Mathew went home at around 9pm on the Wednesday evening (as is standard when mum needs to stay in hospital), and at 11:30 pm I was awoken to the news that I could go round to delivery. Mat arrived shortly after and I was taken to a large very clinical, cold room. The midwife who was with me constantly was amazing, as was Mat who even though I wasn't easily accessible for massages, made sure he was there stroking and constantly reassuring me. I had my waters broken and was hooked up to the monitor and hormone drip to get things started.

We got the lights turned down as much as possible and I was able to cope with the surges that came strong and steady and breathe through them all nicely.

I was then checked at around 6am and was only 3cm dilated. At this point I was finding it really difficult to relax... the room, the cannula going in took a few goes, the machines everywhere....my waters were still coming and I was shivering with adrenaline. I knew this was bad news and was in for the long haul so I asked for an epidural. By 7:30am I had one and I'm not sure if it was the act of sitting up for it or just relaxing knowing I was going to be ok after this but the surges very quickly felt different and they were pushing down.

The midwife then checked to see how dilated I was but her head was showing and a short while later with some pushing she arrived with me in a relaxed state talking and happily working through it once the epidural kicked in.

I'm convinced calming down after the epidural just progressed things very quickly as I was able to use the techniques straight away again and without it I would have been in there much longer.

Birth Story- The Birth of Libby

I called the labour ward on the early hours of Sunday morning as I was worried that my show was an unusual colour. They asked us to come in straight away and we headed to the hospital thinking we would be back home in time for breakfast and that we were just being overly cautious: we had no idea we'd be holding our daughter in a matter of hours!

When we got to the hospital we had the shock of our lives to find out the baby was breech and that I was already 2cm dilated. We'd been told since week 36 she was head down and engaged and I'd had 4 stretch and sweeps by 3 different midwives all of whom had said they'd "tickled her head" and she was head down.

The doctor informed us we had two choices: a c-section or to try and turn baby. The latter had a 50/50 success rate but if it didn't work, baby didn't like it and her heart rate went up (and she had a history of getting distressed with a high heart rate), this would end up in an emergency c-section. I felt like all roads led to a c-section, but I used my birth affirmations to focus on the positives and that we would be seeing our baby that day; although my tranquil water birth was no longer an option, having a healthy baby was the main thing.

I spoke with the surgeon and explained that I would like a hypnobirthing led c-section with my own music playing, minimal talking from the staff in the room, skin to skin contact straight away and delayed cord clamping. The staff were amazing, talking us through all our options and respecting our wants and needs and I felt that I had control over what I could control.

Walking into theatre I have honestly never been so scared in all my life and I was shaking like a leaf. Once the anaesthetic was delivered and I laid on the bed, Brett put on my chosen track and I focused on my breathing. There were a few complications before the surgery started (I have a severe latex allergy and some of the staff didn't realise so bits of equipment had to be removed and the process started again), so there was a long gap before the surgery started which I was aware of as I could hear but I was so relaxed and calm focusing on my breathing I just let them get on with their jobs and the nerves and worries I'd had walking in melted away.

The actual surgery felt so quick to me as I was focused on my breathing and I was holding Libby in no time!

After Libby was born the anaesthetist remarked on how calm I was throughout the whole process. He asked if I was meditating as he'd never had anyone's heart rate go down during surgery before. This was all down to focusing on my breathing and the techniques you taught me.

Ellen and Brett



Birth Story- The Birth of Angus

I'd been feeling surges occasionally for about two days when I felt that they were starting to become regular just as we were getting ready for bed. An evening of snuggling up with hubby in front of the telly was obviously great for building my levels of oxytocin. After a night of surges we headed into the birth centre before the morning traffic hit the roads, where we were warmly received. We had a male midwife, David, who listened calmly to our requests and we found that this sat very well with the approach they take normally, encouraging nature to take its course. Despite this, after several hours the surges diminished, partly I think, due to the room being a bit chilly, so we made the decision to head home. I was gutted! I was ready to meet my baby!

At home I watched some nature documentaries, listened to the meditations and rested and by the early morning we had stronger and more frequent surges again. Back at the birth centre, I consented to a vaginal exam, mostly to reassure myself that things were progressing and I was 9cm dilated - joy!

At the birth centre we turned on the candles, played some soothing music and used my breathing. The surges were still powerful but after several hours progress was slow and my waters hadn't broken. After several requests, my waters were broken for me, which made me a lot more comfortable and the second stage of labour began. However, despite all the good work, time had taken its toll and I was exhausted. Supporting our wish for a natural birth, our midwife, David, suggested some more active positions to help move baby but eventually it was clear that we needed some help.

The maternity unit was in the hospital in the next town, so I needed to get an ambulance - not something I was looking forward to! Mike was brilliant and kept the music going, and made sure that the ambulance staff knew to keep their voices soft and quiet. As we set off, he told me to think about my happy place that we had practised so often. It worked and I remembered how tranquil and I happy I felt on the beach we had breakfast on during our honeymoon a few months earlier, visualising the trees we sat underneath.

When we arrived, Mike spoke to the hospital staff about keeping their voices quiet and posted the sign on the door. While it was a much harsher environment, the little touches like the relaxation music and candles (even under the harsh strip light!) helped remind me to remain calm, and I did! I had a syntocin drip and felt better very quickly, but the surges were not strong enough to move baby so after some discussion with the doctors, we prepared for forceps in theatre. Although I'd dreaded the idea of forceps, Mike and I used the "BRAIN" process to discuss our options and remain rational, which helped reassure me that this was the best option for us and we felt very much in control. Mike brought the music into theatre with us and again spoke to the staff about keeping their voices quiet, and shortly after, our baby boy Angus was born. As requested, Mike passed him to me and introduced our son to me, as I'd wanted. Despite the need for medical help, I'd had the birth I wanted. I had remained calm and did not scream or shout. We'd remained in control of the options and staff had respected our wishes at every step. And most importantly, Mike had been an integral part of the process, and he felt that he was able to help me birth our son.

Alison and Mike

Birth Story- The Birth of Kyan

My contractions started at 3.30am. I left Taj sleeping, to rest for the day ahead. I made myself comfy on the sofa, with a hot water bottle and watched back to back Keeping Up With The Kardashians (secret guilty pleasure). The surges were 5 minutes apart at this point and I breathed through them.

During the day we listened to the MP3 scripts, used the breathing and massage techniques, ate Domino's, watched some of our favourite shows and tried to remain as relaxed as possible.

The surges intensified towards the evening. We'd been in regular contact with Huddersfield Birth Centre throughout the day and were advised to come in at this point. We got there around 12am and our lovely midwife Laura had set up the birthing suite with dim lights, candles, relaxing music and the pool all ready (we'd made them aware that we were hypnobirthing). We brought along our own candles, fairy lights etc. but didn't even end up getting these out of the car!

I chose to be examined at this point, but she was unable to see how dilated I was as the babies head was quite low. I got into the pool around 1am, which eased the pain of the surges somewhat. We continued to breathe with the surges and we welcomed our little baby boy Kyan into the world a few hours later, weighing 7lb 14oz.

We managed it without any pain relief, no gas/air and luckily I also avoided any stitches, which I believe was due to us remaining calm throughout all the stages of labour and letting my body slowly do what it needed to.

Our midwife was amazing and followed all our guidance on our birth plan, she left us to it and was there when we needed her.

Nav and Taj



Birth Story- The Birth of Henry

On Monday 21st November at about 8am, I woke up to a bit of water trickling down my legs. I rang the birth centre who said just to keep an eye on it and ring them back if I lost any more - I didn't. I went about my daily chores and we did the supermarket shopping that evening. I had an early night as I was feeling very tired with slight period pains. I'd had a bloody show that morning too; I'd rung my friend in Switzerland who's a doula and she told me to relax and not to get too excited as it can go on for a few days - just to carry on as normal.

I woke up on Tuesday 22nd November with more intense tummy cramps and I wasn't comfy laid down so I went into the lounge. I left my husband asleep so he wouldn't start panicking and getting stressed! I knew our baby was coming.

I had short, very frequent surges and I did my up calm breathing through them. One of our dogs didn't leave my side, he licked my arm through every surge, he was great. Lee woke up at 8am to find me hanging over the back of the sofa. By then my surges were getting very strong and I needed my tens machine. I had a bath first and then bounced on my ball, I then rang the home birth team to let them know things were progressing. I breathed through my surges with my tens machine on, on all fours which was the best position for me to be in.

By 11am I rang the home birth team again as they were getting more intense and I felt like I needed more help maybe with gas and air. At that point some of my waters went, and the midwives were on their way. Lee started getting the pool ready, he was getting a little stressed as the liner wouldn't go on but he had pumped it up too much! We let a bit of air out and on it went. By this time my surges just changed completely - my body wanted to push. I was trying to fight it at first because I thought it was too soon and we had no midwife here yet. I just kept thinking, 'remember what we've learnt, listen to your body, baby knows best', so I just went with it, using my birth breathing as well.

The pool was ready, but the midwife took about 40mins to get here, - she arrived with no gas and air and no emergency kit. I didn't know this until after; Lee handled it great and made sure the second midwife was fetching it. We had said no student midwives in our birth plan and two had arrived with each midwife. The first two midwives that arrived sat in the lounge observing me and Lee thought this wasn't right. He remembered what our hypnobirthing teacher had said about people watching you and he asked them to set up in the kitchen. He'd told the students that they could watch from the window in the door.

I climbed into the pool and it was amazing, such a relief. All the pressure I was feeling went - I felt so relaxed and calm. We had our piano piece playing from the hypnobirthing tracks, candles on, blinds down and Lord Of The Rings on in the background too. All of which I was oblivious to as I was in my zone. Still calm and floating around in the pool, changing positions all the time. I did have to keep standing up for the midwife to check babies heartbeat which was a bit frustrating, they didn't fetch a waterproof doppler.

Up until 3pm I was still doing my birth breathing whilst squeezing Lee's hands. I kept losing my breathing but Lee got me back on track. I snacked on jelly babies and Lucozade which did make me feel sick after a bit. By 3pm Lee had said to the midwives that he wanted me to get out of the pool. They said they could see if I need the toilet to get me out. I really didn't want to get out but Lee insisted, he did think I was too relaxed and that gravity needed to play its part too. I climbed out with Lee's help, then... that was it! I had a huge surge and bearing down weight. I just couldn't hold myself up: Lee had to take all my weight. I do remember grabbing his balls too! The midwives thought it was most amusing, I'm sure Lee didn't!

One of the midwives said 'baby's head is here', I just thought OMG! Lee kept saying, 'you're nearly there Sarah, baby's coming'. Three big surges and our baby was out - a boy. Our baby Henry. Born 3.05pm, 7lb 13oz.

I'd done it! Our first baby born at home with no pain relief. It was perfect and Henry was perfect. We had 3hrs at least of skin to skin, delayed cord clamping and Henry was latched on within minutes of being born. I cut the cord and held him tight, we couldn't believe he was here.

My placenta came out naturally in one piece on the toilet. My blood pressure had dropped, I felt sick and dizzy because I hadn't eaten anything all day or drank a lot. I had a jam sandwich and a cup of tea. The midwives were thinking about sending me to hospital but decided I didn't need to in the end. I had a second-degree tear and it took them 40 minute to stitch me which wasn't pleasant but I got more skin to skin with Henry which was perfect.

The midwives left at about 6pm and we just sat looking at Henry in our arms at home with our dogs too thinking, 'we did it, he's here, our miracle baby boy'. Just perfect!

Sarah and Lee

