

The happiest moment!

Angela describes how a long latent phase of labour was followed by a speedy dilatation in the birthing pool and the happiest moment of her life as she held baby Keir for the first time...

I gave birth to my son Keir at the unit on the 6th of February 2011. I had visited the unit beforehand and felt it had a lovely calm atmosphere which I knew would be important in keeping me calm during labour. I also really liked the unit ethos that labour is a natural process and there should be as little intervention as possible.

When my waters broke at 02.00 on the 4th of February, I called the unit to let them know and ask for advice. I was told to try to go back to sleep and to come in at 14.00 to be monitored if nothing further had happened. My husband Ross went into work for a half day and came home in time to take me to the hospital. I spent the morning doing housework and getting organised. I was getting mild contractions all morning but they were very irregular. At the unit they monitored Keir's heartbeat and my contractions. As I was still in early labour I was sent home and told to keep in touch as my labour progressed.

I had worsening contractions through Friday night and used the TENS machine, the birthing ball and hot baths to help. Ross lay in bed with me and went through my contractions reminding me to breathe, as I kept making my contractions worse by holding my breath. I called Montrose in the middle of Friday night and asked for some advice as my contractions were quite bad, but still irregular. I

was told to come in again at 10.00 on Saturday morning. On Saturday morning we saw a really nice midwife who monitored Keir's heartbeat and my contractions and sent me home with an instruction to come in again at 22.00.

All day Saturday was much the same with strong painful contractions coming in an irregular pattern. At the unit on Saturday night I was again monitored and sent home with the midwife saying she expected to see us back before morning to give birth to my baby.

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Early on Sunday morning I told Ross I had to go in again as, even though my contractions were still not coming in a regular pattern, I wanted access to the gas and air and the midwives. When we arrived at 10.00 I was examined by Julie, a midwife at the unit, and Lauren, a student midwife on placement in the unit. Julie told me I was 3cm dilated and went to fill the pool for me. The hot water of the pool along with the gas and air gave me my first relief from pain for days and it was bliss. By

11.30 I was at 10cm and ready to start pushing.

I didn't ever experience a great need to push so whenever a contraction came I just pushed as hard as I could, for as long as I could. I don't remember much of this part, just pain, feeling like it was never going to end and that I wasn't going to be able to do it. Julie and Lauren were fantastic and really kept me going. Julie was so calm and in control, I really trusted her and couldn't have done it without the midwives encouraging me, telling me I could do it and getting me into lots of different positions to find what worked best for me. I asked for morphine and Julie managed to convince me to wait for 30 minutes as I was very near to giving birth, after which I forgot about it. I'm so glad Julie did this and as a result I managed to have a natural labour.

Holding Keir for the first time was the happiest moment of my life. The midwives got me tidied up, brought me some tea and toast, dimmed the lights and left the three of us lying on the bed beside the pool to spend our first couple of hours together as a family which was wonderful. The night I spent at the unit was fantastic. Lorraine looked after us and gave me lots of help with breast feeding. All the midwives were lovely and I felt a real bond with the unit and the staff. Thank you for a lovely experience, I'll be back for my next baby.

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