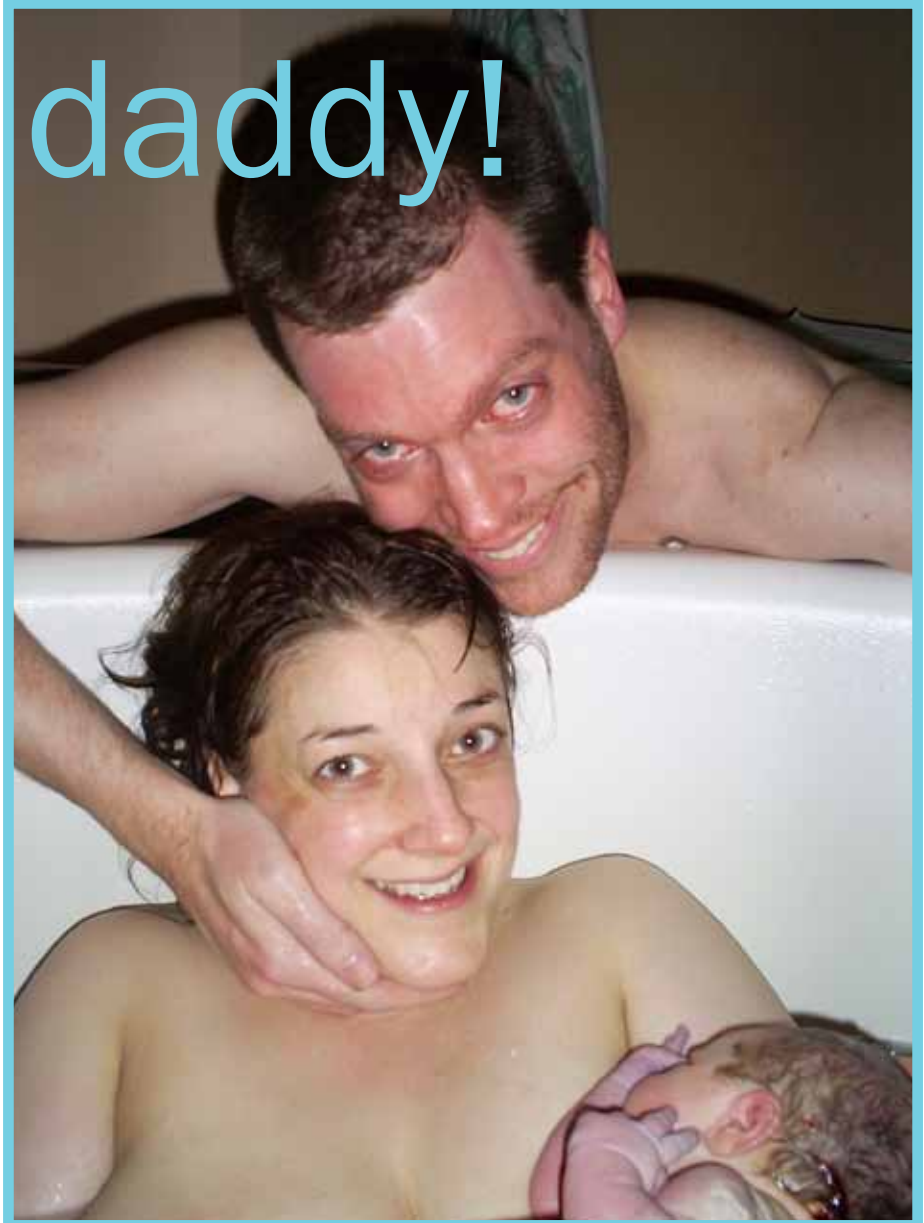


# I am a daddy!

After just 12 days, [Iain Hingston](#) reflects on the birth of his daughter Lottie from the perspective of a first-time father.

I am a daddy! After only 12 days, it is still a very strange thing. It's life-changing, obviously, but more than that it is something magical, something which brings you closer to your partner and which finally allows you to understand what your parents (hopefully) did for you all your life. And, if there's a better place for life to start than Montrose, I can't imagine it.

My wife Anne was always interested in a water birth. We found out that Aberdeen only has 1 pool and, obviously, with 400-odd births a month, the chances of finding it free may be slim. We found out about Montrose, called, spoke to a very friendly person and organised a visit. It was fantastic to see the place in advance – we were so reassured, by the staff (it was Iona we spoke to) and also by the relaxed and 'non-hospitaly' atmosphere. The 2 delivery rooms are peaceful and pretty spacious, and we loved the fact that they wanted to strive to make each birth as natural and straightforward as possible. We knew, barring complications, that this



was where we wanted to go when the time came.

So, at 4am on Monday 8th November, when Anne woke me and said she thought "something might be happening", we were straight on the phone. Anne spoke to Cheryl who was brilliant, suggesting having a bath and keeping an eye on the contractions. Me, being gadgety, got to use my iPhone contractions app – unnecessary

but fun, and a welcome distraction too! After a while, it became clear that things may indeed be happening, and we drove to Montrose.

When we arrived, Anne was examined and we decided to go back home for a bit as there could have been hours to go. It was great to see Anne so excited, and it was a great relief for me to know we were in safe hands, and that she should be able to

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have her water birth. As it turns out, going home was a great idea as, in fact, nothing much then happened for ages! When there had been not much change in the frequency, but an increase in the intensity of the contractions by about 5pm, we decided to go back in.

From this point onwards, things got a bit crazy. Having been through it now, I can say that the whole process can be pretty tough for a dad-to-be too (especially if it's the first and you don't know what to expect, or how long it may last). Anne struggled to sleep but eventually managed, with the help of some diamorphine, and I stayed with her. At Montrose you are (if you want) pretty much left to your own devices at this stage, although you know that someone is close by if you want help. Having access to a little kitchen is brilliant, and the tea and toast kept me going through the night.

In the morning, it's fair to say that both Anne and I were a bit fed up. She had been contracting for about 28 hours by the time Lorraine popped in to say hello for the first time. Like all the staff, she was amazing, and perked both of us up, constantly reassuring us that "we'd have this baby out today". It's easy to believe that when said confidently, and we both felt a renewed sense of energy.

Throughout this process, Anne had been in and out of the pool a few times. We were lucky to have the room with the view, which was again an excellent distraction. Obviously I can't comment on how Anne felt in the pool, but I could see that she was much more relaxed and comfortable in it, something which became important later on.

As the day (Tuesday 9th) progressed, things didn't seem to be moving along much. However, we were advised that the baby had to turn a bit to be in the right position, and that most of the

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contractions to date were most likely related to that.

On the advice of the staff, we went for a walk at lunchtime. Although it was cold, we're pretty convinced it was that which started the second stage. Having popped to Tesco, it seems true that "Every little helps"!

By about 4pm, things were getting more active, and Anne was contracting strongly and regularly in earnest. It's pretty difficult to watch this as a partner, particularly for the first time. Anne looked to be in so much pain, I didn't know if she (or even I) could get through it. However, I was so grateful to Lorraine initially, then Iona, for their skill and care at this time. They were so encouraging, particularly when Anne felt she couldn't push any more, that the goal was always kept in sight. Here, the amazing water and room ambience (dimmed lights, music of choice on the iPod – in this case, Country!) made such a difference. At one point, Anne came out to be examined and to try a change of position. Although she was tired and having trouble expressing herself, it was obvious to me she had been happier in the water. As soon as she was back in, once again she was more relaxed and focused.

Dads, if you haven't done this bit before, it's tricky as you are pretty much helpless. However, I loved being able to gently lap Anne with water and look into her eyes. You just have to reassure

yourself that her pain won't last for too long and that she's doing the most amazing thing – again, all made easier by Lorraine (and now Iona), both of whom never forgot about me and helped me to help Anne.

And then, after another change in position, we could see baby's head! That spurred Anne onto the home straight and at 19.59, Lottie Violet was born, weighing 7lb. It was the most incredible thing to witness, and to have Anne holding her within seconds of birth was unbelievable. Emotions were running pretty high (a combination of relief and joy) so don't be surprised if your photo on the site looks like mine!

We knew at the time, and it has only been reinforced since, just how lucky we were to find out about Montrose and then be able to give birth there. Lottie was so tranquil when she came out of the water and, 11 days in, she remains that way. I'm not daft enough to think that will last, rather we are just so happy to have given Lottie this start.

Thank you ALL, you are a shining example of the NHS at its absolute best. And, when we decide Lottie needs a brother or sister, we'll be back – that's the best recommendation we can give. ■

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