



## Client Testimonial and Birth Story

I am delighted to share with you the wonderful birth journey of baby Frankie. Her parents Charlie and Sam were part of my most recent group Hypnobirthing course at Penrice Birth Centre (St Austell, Cornwall), and unbeknown to them at the time, they would be birthing in the middle of a global pandemic. Read below how they navigated the changing maternity system and, although plan A wasn't able to happen, how they went on to have an incredible, empowered birthing experience. As always, a huge congratulations and immense gratitude to Charlie and Sam for allowing me to share their experience.

"Leading up to the birth of our first baby, Sam and I were delighted to find Terri and her hypnobirthing classes. Whilst I am a scientist and had some concerns that the content may not align with my need for evidence-based facts, I actually found it to be quite the opposite. The classes were empowering, providing us with a tool kit to manage my labour and birthing experience and understand how to take control and determine the birth that we would like, free of drugs!

Frankie was born in the middle of the Coronavirus pandemic and 13 days after her estimated due date. My midwife suggested I have a sweep at 40 weeks which I kindly declined. Sam and I had made the decision in advance that we would like her birth to be as natural as possible, avoiding medical intervention as far as we could. At 41 weeks, I was booked in for an induction at 41+5 and on this occasion, I did accept a sweep, where I was told I was 2cms and my cervix has already thinned by half. Over the next few days I tried many of the natural techniques to bring on labour; hot curries, walks, raspberry leaf tea etc etc to no avail. As my induction date approached, matters were complicated by the Corona virus – news reached me that Sam would only be able to be with me during active labour i.e. if I go for an induction, Sam would need to leave me and return only when I was in active labour. At this point, the situation was changing rapidly across the country with some health boards taking the decision not to allow birthing partners at all. I was wracked with fear that Treliske may follow suit at any moment and I would need to face the birth alone.

At this point, with conflicting thoughts on whether to go ahead with an induction, against my birth plan, out of fear that the regulations may change, I contacted Terri. She was utterly amazing and helped me to

re-centre, reminding me that first-time mums go over their estimated due date by 10 days on average and helping me see I was making this decision out of fear. The RCOG had released a statement stating they were against the banning of birth partners and it was decided the regulations were unlikely to change, certainly not over the weekend (it was Friday evening by this point). Terri offered to perform a release hypnotherapy session over the phone to see if this could move things along naturally for us. She called me half an hour later and spent 40 minutes with me. I felt so much calmer by the end and like I had regained some control over the situation.

The next morning I had made my decision to ask for a second sweep rather than go ahead with the induction. At Treliske, we were hooked up to machines to check on Frankie and I was delighted to see my uterus was contracting mildly and I was now 3cms. In the car on the way back to Launceston, to my delight, my surges began. I was over to moon!!

Once home, my surges started coming fast and strong with barely any pause in between. I put the calm breathing and surge breathing to the test. After about 3 hours of surges, my waters broke and they were filled with meconium. At this point, I began to lose control of the situation as concern for Frankie took over (I didn't realise meconium is quite normal with babies that exceed 41 weeks). We got back in the car and journeyed back to the hospital. This was the hardest car journey of my life and only made possible by Sam, calmly and clearly practicing the depthometer with me as my surges took hold. This was a routine we had practiced a lot in the lead up to labour and a lifesaver at this stage.

Sadly due to the meconium, I was no longer low risk and suitable for the birth centre however, we had planned for this eventuality with a birth plan suitable for the labour suite supported in the most by the midwives on duty.

Using the calm breathing, surge breathing and J breath we managed to avoid pain relief, despite Frankie being a whopping 9lb 6oz, fulfilling my key aim of seeking out hypnobirthing. Sam continued to help me relax with the depthometer and nearing the end of labour rainbow relaxation was on a constant loop. Whilst Frankie's birth didn't go quite as we planned, I am still extremely grateful to Terri for her lessons and additional support in the lead up to labour. In this incredibly weird and stressful environment birthing in amongst a pandemic, hypnobirthing allowed us to gain back some control and achieve our ultimate goal – a drug free birth!!

Thank you so much Terri for your support and invaluable lessons – I would thoroughly recommend this course to everyone!"