



Client Testimonial and Birth Story

Arwen talks about her planned/unplanned homebirth and how she didn't know until the moment she went in to labour where she was going to give birth!

I had Izella at home in water and months later, I'm still stunned by how wonderfully dreamlike and surreal it was.

My previous birth was quite drawn out and mentally traumatic. I ended up in theatre having forceps after a twelve hour active phase. I thought I had moved on from this (partly with thanks to Terri and her trauma birth rewind hypnotherapy) but it was clear that I was holding onto a lot of fear.

I was strongly advised by my consultant to have a monitored birth in delivery suite due to previous fibroid surgery and risk of uterine rupture, as well as my 'advanced maternal age'. I would only be suitable for birth centre up to 40+2. This was the opposite of what I wanted, which was a natural birth with no unnecessary intervention. I didn't want to be pushed into an induction and I definitely wanted water as I knew from last time the relief it gave.

I did a lot of preparation and refreshing of my knowledge, guided by Terri. I was so fed up of being medicalised that I told my midwife I was considering a homebirth. She was really supportive. Terri accompanied me to see my consultant and when we arrived, the head of midwifery was also present. They listened to my preferences and made a plan for a hospital that was as gentle as they were able, within medical guidelines. We negotiated that I could attend birth centre and use water at any stage as their preference to home birth and that no one would suggest induction unless I requested it.

Up until birth started I still hadn't made a decision between birth centre and home. There is an ambulance crisis at the moment and deciding to step away from instant medical support and resuscitation seemed a monumental decision that could have huge repercussions if things went wrong. I knew that by stepping into hospital the likelihood of intervention increases at every step. I really wanted to trust my body but being a nurse who has seen all the bad things, I didn't know what to do and decided to go with my instincts on the day.

I had a birth pool at home (provided by Terri as part of her doula service) and I set everything up for home and also packed a bag for birth centre. I assumed that even if I started at home I would probably end up in hospital.

On the day (40+2 ironically) I was sore and grumpy and trying to carry on. I had a bath in the evening as I had back ache as usual and when I got out I thought I had become incontinent! I bathed my toddler and was getting him ready for bed when I realised, and felt stupid for not immediately thinking, that this could be baby coming. After some indecision I decided to send him to my sisters just in case and started packing his bag, and scurrying around following the list of things to do to get everything set up, with my husband.

At 9pm Indy went off and I was intermittently surging on my hands and knees and trying to carry on in-between. My husband offered to set the pool up but I snapped at him not to as I thought I would have hours in my living room and wanted the space. By 930pm I could no longer get up and was in the kitchen on my knees with my arms on a chair, having a surge every couple of minutes. My husband wisely moved me to the bathroom, leaning on the toilet (I had a clary sage and rosemary candle lit which was lovely) and he called Terri and started blowing up the enormous pool.

I clearly remember thinking "I'm not moving now unless I'm carried out to an ambulance" and so the decision to stay just happened.

So I was leaning on the toilet, surging away, waters leaking all over the place, boiling hot, having a million thoughts but pretty much unable to communicate anything but the most basic necessities. Terri and was unobtrusively there for me and helping with the pool. The midwives had been called at some point and appeared around 11pm (two, plus a student). I said I didn't want any vaginal exams but had a doppler check of baby's heartrate, which was good. The pool was taking a long time to fill and I finally got in around 1150 I think.

The relief from the water was amazing, but my thighs were aching from being on my knees so long, so I floated on my back like a big white seal, which was really weird as I was continually surging and felt I had no control over my body. I remember telling Terri I was scared and I couldn't do it, and her telling me 'you are doing it'. We had frankincense in the diffuser and very low lighting and the midwives were sitting quietly in the room.

I remember starting to feel different and asking Rob to get in the pool. I'm not sure what he was doing but I remember someone telling him he needed to get in NOW. When she started to make an appearance I felt like it was more than I could take. No one had ever told me that the head goes in and out! I didn't push or bear down or really think about my breathing, I just let my body do its thing. After a couple of waves in and out she came out into the water and Rob brought her up into my arms. It was like waking up for me, the pain immediately stopped and I came blinking out of my weird little birth fog.

I said hello to the team at this point, we waited until the cord stopped pulsing and Rob cut the cord with one of the midwives. I stayed waiting for the placenta but the water was quite hot and nothing was happening so Terri suggested sitting on the toilet to let gravity help. I'm not sure how long I was there but I was close to having the injection when she suggested giving it a little tug, which worked. The midwife checked me out on the bathroom floor and I just had a tiny tear that didn't need suturing, so that felt like a massive win too.

We went to our own bed at around 430am and I didn't really sleep but it was the most calm, peaceful few hours. It was amazing to be in my own clean sheets as a beautiful sunny day came filtering through my curtains, just feeling blown away by the night and the new little person in my arms. Izella just appeared into our life with minimal fuss and has been the easiest, most chilled baby amidst the chaos of toddler life!

I couldn't have had this birth experience without Terri supporting me as a doula. I knew that she would look after me and that between her and Rob I could just go inside my head and let it happen without worrying about external things. I was pretty terrified but I had done so much preparation that I think subconsciously my body knew I could do it, and my environment was set up to allow it. Having a solid backup plan took away my fear of being denied access to birth centre which also helped. The community team were respectful and I have nothing but positive memories of the whole wonderful experience.

I would encourage every pregnant woman to contact Terri and do some form of birth preparation with her. Knowing your rights and the system you are in gives you the power to deal with whatever happens in an informed way, and the confidence to get in your zone and birth your baby despite any trepidation you may feel.

Thank you Terri, you are amazing and will always be a special person in my family's life!