

I wanted a **HYPNOBIRTH**

Claire Williamson, 30, a buyer, is married to Jason, 40, a musician. The couple live in Nottingham with three-month-old Flora.

CLAIRE'S BIRTH PLAN

- To have a hypnobirth in a pool at Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham.
- No pain relief.

Claire says "Hypnobirthing is a way of focusing so you stay relaxed and your body responds naturally. People love to tell horror stories of endless labours, but I wanted to approach it as a positive experience, so took a one-day hypnotherapy course with Mindful Mamma. We practised techniques, like belly massages and listening to relaxing music, to help me stay calm."

THE REALITY "I started having 'surges' (contractions) at 2am on October 11. I rested as much as I could, but kept being sick, so at midday I went to hospital. I had paracetamol and codeine, and an injection, then got into the pool.

Jason dimmed the lights, turned on my music and gave me a massage. Our midwife knew we wanted it to be as peaceful as possible, so when she was in the room, she only whispered.

I felt so relaxed and in tune with my body. After 16 hours, the baby's head had been delivered, but Flora's shoulders got stuck. Someone pressed the alarm and five midwives rushed in, switched the lights on and I was moved to a bed, as our baby girl Flora, who weighed 8lb 2oz, was born.

I'm so glad I was able to stick to my plan and, thanks to hypnobirthing, I enjoyed most of the labour."



Claire with baby Flora



Jennifer, husband Dave and baby Elliot

An HOUR after the birth, **I was in MY OWN BED**

Jennifer Kelly, 31, a solicitor, is married to Dave, 31, a performance manager. They live in Manchester with their sons, Austin, two, and Elliot, three months.

JENNIFER'S BIRTH PLAN

- To have a water birth at home.
 - Gas and air only for pain relief.
- Jennifer says** "My first child, Austin, was born in hospital, but I found the experience very clinical and impersonal, which is why I wanted to have my second baby at home in a birth pool.

My husband Dave was worried it wouldn't be safe, but the midwife reassured him it should be fine as my first birth went well and I didn't have high blood pressure.

During a practice run, we discovered the pool had a puncture – we patched it up with a repair kit from Halfords!"

The MIDWIFE never made it to THE BIRTH

Bernice Steeples, 30, is a student midwife and lives with husband, Roy, 30, in Buckinghamshire. They have four children, Blayde, 13, Phoenix, seven, Tiger, five and Ryo three months.

BERNICE'S BIRTH PLAN

- To give birth at home.
 - No pain relief.
 - Roy to cut the cord.
- Bernice says** "My previous three births have been quick – the last one ended in our bathroom – so this time, I planned to have the baby at home.

As a trainee midwife, I'm aware that birth plans can easily go out the window, but it also gave me the confidence to know I could give birth at home with very few problems, too."

THE REALITY "I went into labour at 3.30am on October 8, my midwife's wedding day and eight days before my

THE REALITY "My labour started on October 11, four days after my due date, and at 3.30am I called my midwife, Mel, who told us to get the birth pool ready.

I then phoned my mum, Linda, who took Austin to his childminder, so he wouldn't be there during the birth.

It was chaotic getting everything organised and moving furniture around to fit the pool in, but eventually it was inflated and filled with warm water using a hose attached to the kitchen tap.

The midwife arrived around 5am and I was gagging for gas – my contractions were strong. After a few puffs, I felt giddy.

At 9am, I got into the lovely warm pool on my knees with my arms over the side. Dave stayed with me – but not in the pool – while Mel left us to it until I was ready to push down 50 minutes later. Then, with a few hard pushes, Elliot Brendan was born, all 6lb 13oz of him.

Looking back, I'm surprised how quick it was, and I'm so grateful I was able to have Elliot at home. I'm also glad I was able to manage the pain, although I certainly still wouldn't say it was easy.

Even so, an hour after the birth, Austin returned home and we were all in bed having a cuddle with some tea and toast. I couldn't have planned it better!"

due date! Then, when I called my birth centre in High Wycombe, they told me I'd have to come in as the other midwife had been called out.

I worried about getting there before the baby arrived, but I knew I had to do whatever was best for my child. Roy's mum, Janet, 59, came to look after the children.

When I arrived at the birth centre, I was 7cm dilated so got straight into the birth pool. I was in more pain than my previous births, though the water helped. After a five-hour (drug-free) labour, our son Ryo was born at 8.28am, weighing 7lb 2oz.

Looking back, the birth was a lot messier than expected so I'm happy it took place in hospital not at home!" **f**

● *Planning your birth? Visit Mindful mamma.co.uk*



Bernice and baby Ryo