

Lyn's Story

My daughter was born on Dec 30th 1979. My calculations showed she was three weeks overdue, but it was Christmas and the hospital were short of staff, so they let me hang on.

A C-section had been discussed - I am 5ft tall. Baby was face presenting. Went into hospital ready for induction, was given Prostin tablet. Went into labour straight away. Told staff of pains - they said 'don't be silly'. By this time, I was on bed panting. A change of staff at 6.00 am brought new midwife, who visibly paled and panicked when she saw me. I walked to delivery suite (a long way) on my own - no staff to be seen as they were on leave for New Year weekend. When I arrived, obstetrician was waiting. I didn't understand. After an hour, contractions stopped, baby's heartbeat showed acute distress, no epidural had been given ready for possible c-section, as there was not an available anaesthetist to administer this. Baby was still mid cavity. Major panic, very large episiotomy, and mid cavity forceps delivery.

Baby was black and blue, and so was I. Took no photos for a week, as ashamed of the bruising on baby. Congenital dislocation of hips, not told for almost a week. Various difficulties. Baby screamed for 6 months, didn't sleep all night till age 5. I was prescribed a variety of medication for postnatal depression. Lasted for 2 yrs.

Daughter now 28. Had problems with acquisition of speech, speech development not typical, reading difficulties but very bright. Problems swallowing, can't balance to ride a bike even now. She has recently (through her job as a teacher) had some testing by a senior educational psychologist. He believes she has aphasia caused by birth trauma and shortage of oxygen at birth. Apgar was 4, rising to 9 after 10 mins. No one explained what this meant.

No one EVER listened or wanted to hear my point of view. In my heart of hearts I have known all along that there was some kind of abnormality. It seems I was right.

Yes, I did have another child 3 yrs later, at a different very old fashioned maternity hospital and it was wonderful. The trauma of the first experience is with me still - I still feel acute emotional pain to think of it. I feel abused, humiliated, ignored, patronised, invisible, guilty, and somehow flawed as a mother.

The upside is that if we had known earlier that our daughter had this explanation of her difficulties, we may not have had such high expectations of her, and she may not be teaching as she is now. The psychologist is absolutely amazed that she has achieved so much despite her problems. Maybe I turned out to be an OK mum after all.