

## Wanda's Story

I came across your site in Bella magazine at the end of an article entitled "Getting over a Bad Birth" and it stopped me in my tracks. I know I have never got over the birth of my youngest child.

I have four children and although the first three births were not particularly satisfying events for differing reasons, the birth of my daughter Hannah at 27 weeks was, to me, awful.

I started bleeding at 21 weeks and was admitted to hospital until the bleeding stopped. As my baby was not viable at that time no treatment could be given. I understand that but nothing else was given either, no advice, no friendly face, no-one I could talk to. Looking back I know I was suffering from post natal depression (my son was 14 months old). Had I been my normal self I may have asked for help and advice, but it would have been nice if someone had offered.

Back to my daughter, I was admitted a further 4 times as I continued to bleed. I had scans and a doppler scan but no-one could tell where the bleed was. I was admitted to hospital and this time the bleeding didn't stop. A bed was found for me on the post natal ward. I was with mothers and their babies and I didn't know whether I was going to lose mine. That was unbearable. Eventually I was put in a room on my own. I'm not sure whether that wasn't worse. It was like I'd been shut away. Apart from my husband and family visiting I very rarely saw anyone. I was still bleeding and in pain. I never saw my consultant, apparently the staff phoned him and they were to put me on the observation ward.

On Monday 21st April I was in great pain and told the staff I was definitely in labour. They wouldn't examine me 'in case it made the bleeding worse' and assured me that I wasn't in labour. How can you argue? Having already had 3 babies I thought I had a pretty good idea what labour felt like but obviously they knew better. For most of that day I was left sitting on my own in a delivery room with strict instructions not to move about. I could go to the toilet but that was about it. Looking back now I can't even remember them bringing me anything to eat or drink!

My consultant was phoned again and he advised them to move me to the observation ward and keep an eye on me. My husband came to visit that evening after work and while he was there I felt a very strange 'popping' sensation. He called the midwife in, she had a quick look and said I needed to change my pad. She helped me to stand up and it was then I noticed I had blood running down my legs. She helped clean me up, remade the bed and left me to it. My husband went to speak to someone and was told it was nothing to be alarmed about and there was no way the baby was coming. He had to get back home to our son and left at 8.30. Twenty minutes after he had gone I felt a very mild urge to push. I put my hand down and felt my baby coming out. I shouted to one of the other patients to ring the bell please. By the time a midwife arrived my baby was nearly out. She was breech and there was only her head left to be born. The staff obviously believed the line that I wasn't in labour but now then were running around getting the necessary equipment. As soon as Hannah had been whisked away to NNICU, I was plonked in a wheelchair and some kind soul gave me a cup of tea. Ten

minutes after arriving home my husband received a phone call telling him I had had the baby. No mention of whether she or I were alright. He came rushing back to the hospital and he told me later that all the way there he was scared our daughter was dead. He didn't know what state I would be in or whether I would kill him for not being there. He went to ask what was going on and was told we'd have to wait an hour or so while the doctors worked on her in NNICU. When we were allowed to see her not a lot was said, just that they would do all they could. And they did.

Hannah is now 8 years old and apart from an operation for a squint, is healthy. My experience of some of the staff on NNICU was also not good, but that's another story. It took a few months after Hannah's birth for me to recognise I had a problem and my doctor treated me for severe post natal depression. I had to take Hannah to the hospital regularly for check-ups for the first year of her life and towards the end of that year one of the nurses came up to me and said "you look a lot better, we were really worried about you". I suppose I should have said "why didn't you do something for me then?" but by then all I wanted to do was get out of there.

The whole experience was horrible. The majority of staff seemed uncaring and if Hannah had been my first baby she would have been my last. Thank you for listening. Sharing my story with people who've 'been there' has made me feel better.