

## **Maternity services: Sharon's story**

This is the story of a woman called Sharon who lives in Chorley, and has been using Bolton's maternity services since 2012.

'When I first fell pregnant, I decided that I wanted to give birth at the Royal Bolton Hospital even though I live in Chorley. This was mainly because I have family who live in Bolton, but I also know where Bolton hospital is and just felt more comfortable going there.

I gave birth to my little girl in 2012 at Bolton Hospital. The pregnancy was very smooth but a couple of times when my bump was measured it seemed to be going smaller. As a result I was sent to Bolton for scans which all came back fine. The care I had from all of the staff was really good.

When I gave birth, I had been up all night and during the day as I was in labour, and I was then discharged at 8pm the following night. I think I was given the choice of whether to stay or not, but when you are a new mum, you are vulnerable and not sure what you are doing and a bit scared. I remember thinking that because I felt I was on my own, I wanted to go home. I got home and then had a funny turn and ended up with memory loss. My husband had to ring an ambulance while changing the nappy of our baby, and they brought me back to the maternity unit. I couldn't remember giving birth, my wedding day, when my birthday was etc. I was re-admitted about midnight and stayed in for a couple of days.

I will never criticise the staff as everyone involved were lovely and amazing with both my husband and I, but with hindsight, maybe if they had given more reassurance and advised me to stay the night so they could help and support me, I may have avoided having that memory loss. I still can't remember parts of the birth, getting home or the time in the ambulance.

About two years ago I had a miscarriage when I was 12 weeks pregnant, and again the nursing staff were amazing. I had to take a tablet to bring on the miscarriage as the scan had revealed that the baby had died two weeks before. Obviously this was very difficult for us, but all the staff was lovely and emphasised.

In February 2016, I gave birth to my little boy again at Royal Bolton Hospital. This was another easy pregnancy and I had my routine 12 week and 20 week scans at Bolton and they were all fine. The staff were again lovely and helpful.

Towards the end of the pregnancy, a Chorley midwife came to check me and wanted to do a sweep as I was a week overdue. I mentioned during the visit that I felt a bit more damp than usual, so the midwife suspected my waters had broken. I didn't think they had, but the midwife said that she couldn't check and do the sweep as if she did and my waters had gone, then that could lead to an infection. She said I would have to go to Bolton as Chorley midwives do not carry a speculum. She rang Bolton maternity unit and Bolton asked Chorley to do the check there and then. Chorley refused stating they couldn't as they do not carry this speculum, but Bolton said they couldn't understand this as all Bolton midwives carry a speculum. The

midwife told Bolton she was unhappy to do any check or sweep, so she was sending me to them. I asked if I could go to Chorley hospital instead for this check, but I wasn't told I couldn't and had to go to Bolton. As a result, I had to take my daughter to my mum's and drive over to Bolton. When I got there, the staff were lovely to me but you could see they were agitated. My waters hadn't broken and I was in and out within 20 minutes. I wished I hadn't mentioned anything about being damp, due to what it caused, but I understand that the Chorley midwives have to be cautious and want to make sure me and the baby are ok. It just didn't seem joined up, and strange how one area would do something and another wouldn't.

At 38 weeks, I was measured and my bump had gone down by 1cm. The Chorley midwife said that what they normally did in this scenario was to send the patient to see a consultant for a scan. She rang Bolton and they said I could come down a week on Tuesday. However, I've now got it in my head about the baby not being well and what if something was wrong. I couldn't wait a whole week as I was panicking, so I rang Bolton's maternity unit and explained what I had just been told and that I was worried. They were lovely and told me to come down straight away. By the time I got there, the anti-natal unit was about to close but I was sent to triage and checked my blood pressure, examined me etc. They then told me that there were no scan appointments available for 6 weeks. Obviously I told them I couldn't wait as I would have been 44 weeks pregnant by then which isn't possible. If you need a scan you need a scan!

I told them that the Chorley midwife had booked me an appointment for the following week, and they said I needed to speak to a doctor. I was sat there for about 3 hours worrying about everything but I understand the delay. If there are emergencies they must deal with them first. The doctor saw me and advised me to keep the appointment for the following week, but that I would need to come in twice a week to have bands put around my bump to monitor everything was ok since there were no scans available.

I kept the appointment that had been made for me and met a lovely doctor. I told her everything and how worried I was and just needed that reassurance of the scan. I told her I was more than happy to wait at the hospital for as long as I needed too. The doctor was amazing and sat down and really listened to me. She really took on board everything I had to say. The doctor said she would see what she could do and try to get me an appointment that day. She came back quickly and told me to hand a form in at the Scan reception and they would be able to fit me in. I had the scan about 10 minutes after this and everything came back absolutely fine. After everything there was nothing to be worried about!

This time it was a quick labour and everything went well. Again the nurses and doctors were amazing. However, towards the end of the labour I tore and ended up in theatre as the midwife struggled to stitch me up, and I ended up losing a lot of blood. One of the nurses was with me the whole time though while I was in theatre holding my hand.

I cannot stress how thankful I am to all the staff involved – they were all amazing and tried their very best for me and my children.'

Points of learning –

- Further communication and agreed processes between Bolton's maternity unit and nearby maternity units and teams.
- More availability of scans quickly for any patients midwives have concerns about.