
The Story of *Luna*

‘Turning *pain* into *power* through *positivity* and *purpose*.’

Raising awareness and breaking the baby loss taboo

29/11/2017 – Present

Home Birth

- Luna Valentina Conroy, our first born daughter, made her entrance into the world on Wednesday 29th November 2017 at 40 weeks + 1 day
- After a **low risk** and very healthy pregnancy, we chose to deliver her from the comfort of our home via a water birth – Something I had my heart and mind set on for many years
- I envisioned the warmth of the fairy lights, the dulcet tones of my **hypnobirthing** music and for her to be born under her Christmas tree – This had been up since the beginning of November in her anticipation!
- I am still truly **grateful** that I had the labour I dreamt of
- This was only possible thanks to our **NHS midwives**

THANK YOU!



Luna's Entrance

- I laboured for **12 hours** with help from my husband Ryan and plenty of Entonox!

"I looked up to see Ryan with his top off waiting to 'catch' our daughter in the pool. I heard, 'Last one Aimee as soon as you get it push and she will be here, push, push, push, Ryan look at all of her hair.'"

- Heartbreakingly, during the very final pushing stage of labour, Luna's umbilical cord **ruptured** and her blood was lost in the birthing pool

"I was passed Luna for all of a split second and even then I tried to push her away to see her face as she felt like a jelly baby. This was not the feeling of euphoria I was expecting, why isn't she crying, what's going on."

- Thankfully for us, her arrival at 9:19am meant we had **4 incredible midwives** in our home for no other reason than fate and a very well timed hand over

"Here I was surrounded by these angels, I thanked heaven above for sending me 4 midwives for the birth of my daughter. It confirmed my reasons for wanting a home birth all over again as the level of care was phenomenal and Luna couldn't have timed her arrival any better."

Positive Experiences

- When I mentioned 4 midwives were present at the birth, 1 of them was actually a **student** midwife
- She was *that* **amazing**, I had no idea she was a student, she was such a natural

“The student midwife was just incredible. Her first time in such a distressing, real life (not text book) situation and she absolutely thrived. She phoned the ambulance within seconds without even being prompted. She knew exactly what to say and where for them to arrive. She explained the situation, what the midwives were doing to Luna and within minutes the ambulances had arrived.”

- I think this **speaks volumes** regarding the training programme and selection process for midwives
- For this midwife in particular, her natural ability, fast thinking and **dedication** meant the situation was handled professionally and efficiently to try and get the best outcome

Positive Experiences

- The **speed, resources** and **care** of the paramedics and ambulance crew were genuinely second to none

“Luna was rushed into her own ambulance and that was all we knew. I remember thinking, she’s such a little princess having one all to herself.”

“I looked out of the little window as I lay strapped to the ambulance bed towards the sunshine. With rays on my face, I closed my eyes and hoped I would see the light.”

- This sums up just how low, desperate, broken and distraught I was – This is the **reality of baby loss** and the severity of such a **traumatic** experience
- I recall only being spoken to and treated with **compassion, kindness, care, respect** and **dignity**. This helped me more than anyone will ever know and it is a huge factor as to why we are so keen to spread only **love** and **kindness** through our charity
- The paramedic helped me gently into the ambulance and held my hand, they spoke to me so softly and their **manner** was just impeccable – I will **never** forget it

“I just pulled a towel over my head and prayed. I prayed repeatedly for her to breathe. Getting to the hospital I have never felt such shame, embarrassment or guilt in all my life. I couldn’t bring a live baby into the world. What is wrong with me?”

Meeting our angel

*“The midwife entered the room. She perched on the left side of the hospital bed with Ryan at my head and she **held our hands**, The second she held our hands our fate was revealed. She need not say those dreaded words. Her eyes filled up and she said, ‘I’m sorry, they have tried everything they can.’”*

*“Then came the most amazing moment of my whole life. I never knew I would be able to see her! Then I panicked, I didn’t know what to do or say, I didn’t know how she would look or be, we had no clothes or blankets, what if she is harmed or... and there she was. Swaddled to perfection with a little pink hat on. Our little **sleeping beauty**.”*



Going above and beyond

- Something I'm sure all NHS staff do on a **daily basis** without a second thought
- The **actions** and **choices** of the midwives on the two days we were in hospital meant we now have lifelong memories and keepsakes – Something we will never be able to express our **gratitude** for
- How the midwife **treated** Luna, spoke to her as if she were a 'normal' baby and how she involved us in the process was incredible and brings tears to my eyes
- She asked Ryan to **join in** at every opportunity and gave us the **control** we were severely lacking
- She showed him 'normal' **first time dad** things and I know these are precious memories he still has to this day

THANK YOU!



Going above and beyond

- She continued to go **above** and **beyond** to ensure we had everything we needed prior to leaving
- She came back to see us on her **day off** the following day, along with 2 of our birth midwives to see how we were
- She had even pulled a few strings with a different department to give us the most **beautiful gift** in the world
- Who knew that a phone call to a friend and a mould could produce such a **priceless keepsake** that we will treasure forever
- We can hold it and put our finger in her hand at any time. This is only possible thanks to the **ingenuity** of our midwife for those 2 days



Going above & beyond

- I wanted to thank the amazing midwives and staff for allowing (and inviting us) back to the hospital some time after our experience
- It was a surreal moment, revisiting the room that was so prominent and chaotic in our minds, looking so clean, quiet and untouched
- It was the **closure** I needed and I would love to see this as an option for other women and their partners to access – I may have only been there for 15 minutes but it made the world of difference in my personal **recovery**
- My birth midwife also invited me back when I was in the latter stages of my rainbow pregnancy with Luna's brother Story 2 years later
- Having opted for a c-section I was really anxious regarding the surgery, operation, recovery and the guarantee he would be born alive
- I was able to **visit** the delivery suite, the recovery room and truly **visualise** what our labour experience would be like
- This **empowered** me when the day finally came and I felt at ease and **prepared** – Thank you for giving me a form of control again and for safely delivering our son!

Negative Experiences

- When we arrived at the hospital I kept a jacket over my head, petrified of seeing someone I knew in the corridor and genuinely feeling so **embarrassed** and **ashamed**
*“As I unveiled my face to the room, I was greeted with the broken and distraught faces of our families. I felt absolutely **mortified**. It was all my fault.”*
- When I removed the jacket from my head once inside the room, I honestly believed I would be on a totally different ward or in a **separate area** to women giving birth
- Hearing their birthing groans and their **babies first cry** (and many cries thereafter) was truly the hardest part of all
- Unfortunately, we were placed in an adjoining room to a woman giving birth herself. The Snowdrop Suite was taken by another family and rooms further down the corridor were being used for storage.
- This is where it all started to go downhill very quickly – The euphoria of seeing Luna was soon outweighed by the constant screams and groans and their babies crying
- I felt **trapped**, **tortured** and **suffocated** but I had zero energy to do anything about it

Negative Experiences

- Soon after meeting Luna we were abruptly **interrupted** numerous times by what felt like hundreds of professionals **bombarding** us with questions, suggestions and information that we were not ready to process
- The deterioration of a baby is so fast that **within an hour** of meeting Luna her lips had already begun to change colour and reduce in size, and the colouring of her neck and body began to deteriorate which was extremely **distressing** not only to us, but to our families
- Luna was so cold, and with the addition of the cold cot it was truly **unbearable** as a mother to not be able to instinctively protect her or keep her warm in my arms
- We cannot stress enough just how **important** those first few hours are for the family to **bond** with their baby and take precious photos and videos – Time stands still in these moments
- Bathing, dressing, singing, cuddling, weighing, hand and footprints – This is **crucial**
- Post mortems, interruptions, information, even food choices are **not crucial** and should not be discussed so soon
- Please **respect** and **protect** this family time – Please be their **voice** and their **bodyguard**

Negative Experiences

*“The night in the hospital was the **scariest** night of my life. I was petrified Ryan would die in his sleep of shock, sadness, a broken heart, anything. I honestly thought I would too. I was so scared that he would go off the rails, leave me, fall out of love with me. My mind played tricks with me all night.”*

- This was how I felt in that moment, our families had left, Luna was in a cold cot in the corner of the room and my husband was propped up on a camp bed about 20cm from the floor. I felt **alone** in the world.
- A positive solution would be for a **double bed** or another bed to be placed in the room at the same height as my hospital bed so we could have fallen asleep together holding hands, and having a cuddle, giving me the **reassurance** I so desperately craved
- Throughout the night we heard the jokes and laughs from the midwives down the corridor – This was the last thing we wanted to hear – Please ensure the double doors in this corridor are closed to act as **soundproofing**
- Upon discharging ourselves the following day we were escorted out of the **back door** fire exit
- We understand that some women may want to choose this option but it felt like we were hushed out the back door so no one would see us because we were **failures** in all honesty

Room Inspiration

Bereavement Suite

- Home from home feel
- **Double bed** for parents
- For the dad or the second mum to feel **equal** to their labouring partner
- Low lighting, **relaxing**, forgetting you are in a hospital
- Beautiful scenes to watch as they try and fall asleep – **Escapism** from intrusive thoughts

Luna's Fund – The idea

'Turning thoughts into things'

"Our first night at home was also scary. We laid there discussing what if this happened to someone on their own, a single mum? Or someone who didn't have any family? Or a couple who weren't as strong? Or to a family who already have children and have to explain why bump has turned into a sleeping baby?"

This was the moment Luna's Fund evolved without us even knowing it."

- We established very early on there was a void in the baby loss world for **bereavement aftercare** to support families after being discharged from the hospital
- Using our own **experience**, we constructed the foundation of the charity and what we thought families would benefit from

1) Nursery Redecoration

- To support parents **financially** and **practically** by redecorating or restoring their baby's nursery into a space they can utilise once more if they find this room is too painful for them. Parents have **12 months** to choose this service from their baby's date of birth.



2) Relaxing Getaways

- Offering parents **respite** through a relaxing getaway in a log cabin or hotel in Cornwall or a destination the trustees see fit dependant on the individuals criteria. We hope they can utilise this peaceful time to process the trauma of losing their baby whilst resting after the birth or baby's funeral. An **immediate** lifeline which we encourage parents to use within the first **6 months**.

Log Cabin – Deerpark



Scarlet Hotel



4) The 'Story Raine' Project

- Pregnancy after loss support – To positively aid and improve the **mental health** of bereaved parents through the complex journey of pregnancy after loss
- We offer up to **3 private antenatal scans** for pregnant women and their partners who have previously experienced a stillbirth which they can flexibly access in between their NHS scans to feel reassured
- We have partnered with Ultrasound Direct South West (Babybond) in Plymouth & Exeter to bring our services to life



Story Raine Project

Supporting Through Our Rainbow Years



5) Counselling Skills Support/ Groups/Mentoring

- Confidential messaging service which allows families to reach out to us in an **accessible** manner, day or night. Reaching out is usually the hardest part. We aim to reply to all messages **within 48 hours** – “We hear you. We are here for you.”
- Access to our closed **online support group** for families to connect together and share their experiences, ask for advice and seek support from other who ‘get it’ – This is open to parents and grandparents and features ‘topic of the week’ discussions
- Our monthly challenge group which is open for **anyone** to join allows supporters, donors and families to take on challenges and activities in memory of their baby or relative – Examples; Random Acts of Kindness, Walks, Pebble Painting, Beach Cleans
- **‘Mentor Me’** is a new initiative we will be introducing whereby I will be opening diary slots with families to virtually ‘check’ in with them on a weekly, fortnightly and monthly basis



6) The 'Grey' Area

- Playing on the grey haired era, this project is to support **grandparents**
- Just as grey is in between black and white, so is their loss. Although it hasn't happened directly to them, they have suffered a **double loss** by often losing a piece of their child in the process of losing their grandchild
- They often hold the family together whilst falling apart
- They are the grey between **grieving** themselves and supporting the needs of their son/daughter
- They often help orchestrate planning their grandchild's funeral or running errands with little clarity or time to process their own grief
- They usually experience **conflicting feelings** of feeling helpful and helpless
- We aim to **empower** grandparents by giving them a safe space to use their voice



Our criteria

- We support women and their partners who endure a loss between **24 weeks gestation and 28 days neonatal death**
 - The Trustees will determine on a **case by case** basis whether we can support families who fall slightly outside of this criteria such as 23 weeks gestation or 32 days neonate
 - We support families in **Plymouth and surrounding areas** such as Ivybridge, Liskeard, Looe, Torpoint, Saltash, Callington etc...
 - We currently support families who give birth in **Derriford** or who's baby has been transferred to Derriford Hospital for specialist care but later pass away in this hospital
 - Each family who falls within our criteria will be offered the choice to **access** one of our services
 - They will always be supported through 1-2-1 support, our closed online support group and **signposted** to other services and charities such as counselling if required or requested
-



Our process



- Derriford Hospital hold a small stock of our 'Love Luna' scented candles
- We designed a **tangible** item based on our experience of a 'leaflet overload'
- They are enclosed in an **informative box** which contains information about our services and how to contact us
- Midwives will then explain a bit of background about our charity when distributing the candles to the parents
- At a time when midwives can feel so helpless, we hope they can offer a **glimmer of hope** and positivity to the family through our candles
- The families will **reach out** to us in their own time



Our goals

- Our long term goal is to own 'Luna's Lodge' – Offering respite for families at our very own safe haven
 - We aim to utilise our lodge for our 'Story Raine' project – Offering **babymoon breaks** mid pregnancy
 - Our short term goal is to **expand** our services into the Royal Cornwall Hospital or the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital
 - We would like to offer our services to the whole of the **South West!**
-

Question Time

Thank you for listening. Please feel free to ask any questions!

If you would like to know more about us please visit:

Website - www.lunasfund.com

Social Media - **Luna's Fund** / @lunasfund

Whatsapp Messaging Service - **07498 599 888**

Monthly Challenge group - Search '**Luna's Fund Monthly Challenge group**'

Families only support group - Search '**Luna's Fund Support**'

- All of our accounting information and compliance can be found on the **Charity Commission** website <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/>
 - Registered Charity in England & Wales - **1184371 since 11th July 2019**
-