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# Mums IN BUSINESS



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▲ **Caz Dolby**  
Mum to Rebekah (19),  
Jasmine (16) and Ciaran (10)

Caz owns Wildcats Academy, a performing arts school for children and young people with classes in musical theatre, acting, singing, music theory, gymnastics and much more.

▶ **Kelly Combes** Mum to Wren (3) and Cecil (1)

Kelly owns The Stamford Delicatessen, serving freshly prepared sandwiches, coffee, cake and pastries and selling food cupboard items such as olive oil, jams, preserves and chutneys.



**M**ore and more mums are taking the plunge and starting their own businesses. And many more are thinking about it. Meet seven Stamford mums who all successfully run their own business and juggle childcare. *Concept* finds out how they do it.

A recent report by the Family and Childcare Trust puts the cost of two children in full-time childcare at a staggering £11,700 per year. So it's no wonder that the number of mums starting their own business is on the increase. The Office of National Statistics shows that the number of female entrepreneurs is rising at the three times the rate of men. Over the past two years the number of self-employed women has grown by 9.6% compared to 3.3% of men.

We chatted with seven mums about why they've gone into business, challenges, juggling childcare and what tips they would give any mums thinking of going into business.



▲ **Katie Mundell** Mum to Thomas (3) and Sebastian (6 mths)

Katie runs mum2mum market for Stamford and Peterborough, which are nearly new sales where mums sell their kids outgrown stuff to other mums.

**Why did you decide to start your own business?**

*Sam:* I was made redundant at the end of last summer, but no jobs I was offered fitted with my family needs as a single mum. While I was explaining to my children that Christmas would have to be a very quiet, downsized affair their response was 'we don't mind mum, you'll be home.' That struck me harder than any monetary issues we'd faced! I woke up at that point, and realised that I have worked full time from when they were both babies and missed so much. It was that comment that made me rethink my priorities.

*Jo:* I was commuting two hours each way to a job in south London that I really loved but wanted something closer to home that would work around the kids and allow me to spend time with them. I have always wanted to run my own business. My business partner Aimee and I saw massive potential in an existing business in Stamford and wanted to put our own twist on it.

**How did you come up with your business idea?**

*Kelly:* Every since we were at University, my partner Mark and I have had favourite eateries or delis. We mostly love back street restaurants or cafés and love the authentic and rustic charm of a 'no frills' approach to food. We wanted something that was small and unique, that wouldn't turn into a cafe or a mini supermarket. The Stamford Delicatessen was a product of years of loving and experiencing food. We stock the shelves with things we like and from people we like.

*Rachel:* Watching the silversmiths at work in the Far East I was fascinated. I started creating designs for them to make up and moved on to creating my own designs and one thing led to another. So often in life there's no master plan - when you look back you can see the route you took, but at the time it was more a matter of 'let's have a go.'

**What was the greatest challenge to starting your business and how did you overcome this?**

*Caz:* The transition between leaving full time employment to becoming self-employed was

challenging, especially with three children. The need for a guaranteed income initially felt more important especially with childcare to pay for. However with support from friends and family this was made easier.

**How has it been juggling work and childcare - is it easier or harder now that you run your own business?**

*Katie M:* Hard! I am often found at the computer at odd times of night trying to fit bits in. Luckily mum2mum markets is a business that can fit around children - a lot of the organising and marketing can be done online, social media being key so that can be done anytime.

*Kelly:* So much easier, I feel we have a better balance between work and family. If my children are sick I can run around the corner to get them as I am no longer a two hour commute away and having to juggle meetings and manage client expectations. My parents help out with childcare as well as my brother-in-law's family, we have reliable cover for the shop if needed.

**What's the best thing about running your own business?**

*Sam:* The freedom it gives me to be there for my children no matter what. They enjoy helping out at my classes when they are on school holidays, they can come along to festivals with me and experience lots of things they wouldn't normally have done if I were working for an employer.

*Katie W:* Being able to be at home with my children.

**What advice would you give to a mum interested in starting a business?**

*Katie M:* Go for it! Life is too short not to have a go.

*Katie W:* Make sure you understand the hours that it can take to run your own business. If you are doing it to spend more time with your children it will likely take over a lot of your life when they are asleep or otherwise engaged.

*Rachel:* Be prepared to work very, very hard! That idea that you're sold of you working on your dream while your children play contentedly at your feet is a myth! You're more likely to be locked in the toilet making a sales call while your youngsters pound toy cars at it yelling 'Mummy!' at the tops of their voices.

**What was the best bit of advice you were given?**

*Katie M:* Don't be afraid to try something. If it goes wrong, you can correct it or learn from it.

*Jo:* You don't have to do everything at once - develop your business gradually. Aimee and I want to do what we do well and so although we have big plans we want to fine tune what we are already doing before moving on to anything else.

**What plans have you got for the rest of the year for your business?**

*Caz:* This year we aim to develop further our Post 16 provision to include a new Higher National Diploma, giving local young people the chance to study HE locally while still benefiting from extremely experienced staff. We also will be looking at additional venues for our part-time classes, enabling children from further afield to access Wildcats classes.

*Jo:* So many plans! We hope the Yard will become a little hub for families in the area so hope to offer a range of exciting activities for parents and children. We also want to further develop our menu and continue to improve the play frame.



▲ **Rachel Parkin** Mum to Zevi (4 1/2)

Rachel owns Balagan, one of the top designed, high fashion silver jewellery designers and wholesalers in the UK.



▲ **Jo Henchy** Mum to Jude (3 1/2) and Flora (16 mths)

Jo, along with her business partner, Aimee, own The Yard, a children's soft play centre and café in Stamford.



▲ **Katie Wilkins** Mum to Annabel (3) and Ada (1)

Katie runs four business, Crafty Little Slings, making and selling slings and wraps; Stamford Tuition, providing private maths tuition; The Meeting Tree, an online calendar of things to do in the area; Sling Library, providing information and support to parents who want to carry their children in a sling/wrap.

▲ **Sam Richardson** Mum to Molly (14) and Alfie (12)

Sam runs Tatty Bumpkin for Rutland, music and movement classes for children using yoga-inspired moves through storytelling and multi-sensory props.



Thanks to Doris from the No1 Kitchen in Castle Street for providing the teas, coffees and venue for our photo shoot. And to Beaula from Stamford Photo Express for taking the photos.