

Accountant's passion for swimming is now big business

Carolyn Sharpe (38) swam competitively as a teenager but after pursuing a career as an accountant she never thought she would find herself in the pool again, for any reason other than to keep fit. Now however, Carolyn owns the franchise for Puddle Ducks North East, a baby and child swim school that teaches over 1,400 young children per week to share in her passion for the water.



After giving birth to her first child, Carolyn decided that she wanted to leave her successful corporate career to find a better work/life balance. She soon decided that a franchise offering plenty of support and plenty of flexibility was the way to go. This is a familiar path, shared by many Puddle Ducks franchisees. During maternity leave Carolyn began taking her son to swimming lessons and a seed was planted.

"I did lots of research," said Carolyn, "I loved the idea of a franchise and even more-so of a franchise that allowed me to share my love of swimming with babies and children; taking my son to Puddle Ducks lessons and watching him develop in the water was such a joy but I wanted to be smart about my decision. To leave a good job I needed a robust business opportunity. Puddle Ducks stood out head and shoulders above every other franchise I considered.

"I was particularly interested in franchising as it means that you have an established quality product and support when it comes to issues such as safety, insurance and the technical aspects of running classes – something which I felt that I couldn't do on my own."

The Puddle Ducks award winning Teachers are trained by Head Teacher and Technical Director Ali Beckman and her team of Super Teachers and are accredited by the Swimming Teacher's Association. With a background in competitive swimming, as well as a qualification and experience working as a lifeguard, Carolyn fitted in right away.

Carolyn went on to win Puddle Ducks Franchisee of the year in 2014. She held onto that title in 2015, as well as being awarded the British Franchise Association's top title of Female Franchisee of the Year. She now has a dedicated and passionate team working with her building the business. The business now has an annual turnover in six figures, proving that you don't need to compromise on income to strike the perfect balance between work and family life.