

Parent professionals are shaping their own family friendly business

Suzanne and Gary Horton enjoyed their careers as legal professionals until, following the birth of their second child, they discovered that their traditional roles didn't leave enough time for family life. So, in 2011, they bought the Puddle Ducks baby and child swim school franchise for Greater Manchester. The business now teaches swimming to over 1,000 customers every week from six local pools, including their very own family swim centre Aqua Nurture. The couple sit at the helm of a thriving business that has family life at its heart.



Back in 2010, with two young children, Suzanne knew she would love to leave her career as a senior associate solicitor and go into business for herself. It was her subsequent discovery of the Puddle Ducks franchise that allowed her to do just that, the following year.

“I’d read about women setting up their own businesses. Being my own boss and having the flexibility to balance work and family life seemed like a very attractive option. However, I had no bright spark of my own, plus setting up your own business can be risky. When I heard about Puddle Ducks, with its proven business model and support structure I was excited but still nervous. It was speaking to other franchisees that sold me on the idea. I realised that other sensible, professional business-women had made a huge success of this, so I knew that I could do the same.”

Puddle Ducks Greater Manchester was soon thriving, so much so that Gary was able to take the plunge too; having always been involved in an advisory capacity, he left his job and officially joined the family business.

In 2016 the Hortons expanded the vision of what a Puddle Ducks franchise could be by opening their own family swim centre. Aqua Nurture in Hyde was the first Puddle Ducks franchisee-owned pool. The site, which was previously a watering hole of a different kind, was converted from a pub into a wonderful community resource. The building now houses a hydrotherapy pool and other facilities including treatment rooms and a café.

They both bring a different perspective to decisions and play to their own individual strengths. Suzanne focuses on the operational and financial side and Gary tends to work on marketing and the long-term vision, a vision which has seen them recently expand the business with the purchase of a new Puddle Ducks territory for Worcestershire. Their own experience as parents has allowed them to develop a successful business that perfectly meets the needs of other local families and imparts an important life skill for young children, supported by the award-winning team at Puddle Ducks HQ.