

for more information about water babies please contact head office on:

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MR&Blife

From left to right: Claire, Isabella and Jowan; Gaby, Nuala and Olivia; Stephanie, Antoine and Justine

Splash happy!

These three mums took the plunge at their local Water Babies class and dived in to a very strong friendship.

'I used to be a swimming instructor, so I was keen for my children to be confident in the water from a young age. I also felt a little isolated after having my second baby and wanted to meet other mums. I looked up Water Babies on the internet and found classes in my area. So I took Antoine along and we both loved it from the first lesson.' *Stephanie Girard, 33, runs Water Babies in the Devon area and is mum to Justine, three, and Antoine, 17 months*

'Joining Water Babies was the one thing I did as a new mum that exceeded all my expectations. It's a great way to bond with your baby. Nuala's benefited so much from swimming at an early age; she's happy and strong both emotionally and physically. Joining the class was also a great way to make friends. Stephanie, Claire and I used to go out for tea and cake after each session. The children would always fall asleep after swimming, so it gave us a chance to chat and relax.' *Gaby Lixton, 32, runs Water Babies in the Berkshire area and is mum to Olivia, three, and Nuala, 17 months*

'We were all keen to work for Water Babies and wanted to take on franchises in different areas. So Gaby booked us onto an instructors' course in Devon and we got on really, really well. All our children are the same age, too, so we have

lots in common.' *Claire Southworth, 42, runs Water Babies in the Wiltshire area and is mum to Isabella, three, and Jowan, 17 months*

'I decided not to return to my old job as a human resources manager as I was keen to try something different. Water Babies gave me a list of areas in the UK where I could set up a franchise. My husband and I did lots of research and chose to set up a franchise in Berkshire. It's a great job for a mum, it's very flexible and it means that you don't have to pay for full-time nursery care, and we get the school holidays off, too. It's also lots of fun.' *Gaby*

'Moving to a new area and setting up your own business can be stressful, you need a strong character and you have to work long hours and be prepared to have lots of intense training. But our head office gives us lots of advice and we're

always emailing and phoning each other for support.' *Stephanie*

'We set up our businesses, sold our houses in Bristol and changed nurseries at the same time. It was lovely to have a connection with people who were going through the same stressful, life-changing things at the same time as me. We call ourselves The Trio.' *Gaby*

'Gaby and Stephanie are great girls. Despite having moved to different areas, we email every day and talk regularly. It's good to just pick up the phone and have a chat. We see each other at least every two months, we're such a great support to each other and our children and husbands get on so well, too.' *Claire*

'I can't see us ever losing touch as so many aspects of our lives are identical - from

our children's ages, to our interest in baby swimming and our decision to move away and set up our own businesses. It's uncanny how much we have in common and I hope we'll be friends for life.' *Stephanie*

MAKE A SPLASH

After spending nine months in the fluid of your womb, it's no surprise that your baby's a natural swimmer. Babies are born with the 'diving reflex' so when your baby's head is submerged in water he automatically holds his breath. But he loses this reflex at around 12 months, so it's a good idea to get him in the pool from an early age. Swimming is a great way to bond with your baby. You may also find that your baby eats and sleeps better after a swim. **M&B**

Written by Elin Tough. Photograph by Water Babies

ABOUT WATER BABIES

- There are 13 Water Babies franchises around the UK, teaching more than 4000 babies to swim every week. Visit waterbabies.co.uk to find your nearest class
- Babies must be under a year old when they begin the course; most start at around six weeks
- Each lesson costs between £9.50 and £10.50 and courses last between nine and 13 weeks
- For details of classes and franchise opportunities visit waterbabies.co.uk or call 01297 20757 for more information
- For details on how to set up your own franchise visit british-franchise.org

