



## Toddler Sense Case Study

**Jill Toogood established her Toddler Sense Franchise in Stockport, Cheshire in December 2015, and is a high performing franchisee. We are delighted to share her WOW story so far.**

### What was your background prior to establishing your Toddler Sense franchise?

My background was originally in Retail - I worked part time whilst at university studying Business Studies and after I graduated, I became the youngest female manager to go through the fast-track programme into in-store Management. There I worked up the management chain until taking a sidestep out into the field as a Regional Trainer. I worked as a trainer for 2 years before the role was made redundant during the small recession in 2009. From here, rather than going back into retail store management, I took a complete change of focus and began working as a Childminder's Assistant; my sister was running as a Childminder, and I worked alongside her. I learnt a lot about young children's learning and development during this time; planning and running activities for the children in a home environment linked to the EYFS framework and the 6 main areas of learning for young children up to school age.

### Why Toddler Sense?

I felt I had a stronger affiliation with children of toddler age as opposed to babies after all I had lots of experience in learning through play and genuinely enjoyed sharing the joy and excitement experienced by the children as they learn. I went to watch a class and thought, I could this!! Also, I knew my franchisor Natalie before launching Toddler Sense so she had mentioned it to me initially and asked if I would be interested. Natalie also runs Baby Sensory so we were able to talk about numbers of babies in the area and work out how they could convert to Toddlers at Toddler Sense. I did some forward forecasting and was able to set some clear goals around number of classes/toddlers to drive the business into a profitable position.

### What do you enjoy most about running Toddler Sense?

I LOVE running classes, but what I enjoy the most is being able to offer families support and understanding during their little one's early years. Just by being relatable and knowledgeable of my local area for example the local nurseries and schools, I find I have a lot of common ground with the families who attend my classes. A depth in knowledge of young children's developmental milestones is very useful as I can reassure parents if needed, talk confidently about stages of play, and their social and emotional development. I truly believe in the programme so can deliver it with confidence, I can see how every single activity aids the children's development. I also love watching the children learn and grow - and sharing/celebrating this with parents in class!

### What challenges have you faced in your business and how did you overcome them?

My situation was probably different to many as unfortunately my Dad passed away the year before I launched my business – this, however did enable me to have much less financial pressure that most new business owners. Aside from finances though I would say a major challenge for anyone launching Toddler Sense would be the time factor. Between my partner and I (and a childminder after school some days) we split childcare duties throughout the week so on my class running days I can leave early to set up and come home late if needed. That has meant I am able to focus fully on my business during those days without the stress of rushing off for a school run. I like to think of it as having my on 'work hat' between Monday and Wednesday and my 'Mum hat' on Thursday and Friday. I have also managed my time by having a separate work phone separate to my own personal one, so I can separate my work from home life without feeling guilty. It may sound trivial, but this has really helped me.

### How has working with your Franchisor and the wider WOW network helped you in your business?

I do believe that working closely with the rest of the team is highly beneficial, Natalie my franchisor does make a lot of effort to bring everyone together not just physically but via quarterly zooms, an active positive WhatsApp group. I feel I could pick up the phone to any of the other franchisees in the team at any time which I think this is a HUGE part of keeping motivated, bouncing ideas, sharing stories, challenges, and solutions. Also just being able to share kit every now and again is helpful too. Natalie is also always available, she's willing and able to listen if we need any help and offer suggestions real time; I think this is crucial as we all work very hard so to have that constant support is very much appreciated and makes us feel appreciated too!

### What skills and characteristics are important to be a successful Toddler Sense Franchisee?

From a class leader perspective, you are only as good as your last class. You must always give 110%. I would also say good stamina, a positive 'can do' attitude with a friendly and warm character, and resilience when dealing with complaints or tricky issues. I think it's important to have a good depth of knowledge of toddlers such as how they behave and what motivates them, a good depth of knowledge of developmental milestones, and confidence (or at least to be able to put on your 'show face' and come across as confident!), along with a supportive family/friend network.

### What are your future plans?

For now, having just launched my own permanent venue last year, I plan to remain focused on delivering a very high standard of classes, to support my new class leader throughout her probationary period, and to focus on driving more business through parties as my previous class leader is taking on a full party leader role. Exciting times ahead!



## Finally, what advice would you give to someone interested in establishing their own Toddler Sense Franchise?

At first it can be tough, LOTS of hours to be put in for classes, kit prep, planning, rehearsing, communicating with customers, organising your 'office' but if you hit the ground running the numbers will come.

Believe in the programme - the programme is AMAZING - so you can deliver every single lesson plan with the confidence that everything you do is beneficial to every child in your classes.

Ask for help - there are lots of franchisees around, plus your franchisor. If you are struggling with something you can be sure someone else has had that same struggle too. Finally...have fun - I know I do in every single class!

*Jill Toogood, Toddler Sense Stockport*