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Trying to find childcare when you've got a million other things to do can be time-consuming and hard work. Make your life that much easier by logging onto thenannysharers.co.uk, says Julia Rebaudo

Setting up your own business is something we all dream about at one stage or another, sitting over a few glasses of wine with friends. And what would be better than setting up your own business, with a great friend, and which is actually of great use to yourself as well?

This is just what Alex Dalton did when she set up her website www.thenannysharers.co.uk with City girl and mum Theresa. "I was looking for childcare and someone suggested a nanny share. I looked everywhere, and eventually I found Theresa. We got on really well and our children got on fantastically. But the whole process took me about two months," says Alex.

Both working full-time, Alex as a journalist with the BBC and Theresa in the City, they began meeting up as friends, "It was funny because I had all my antenatal friends who were stay-at-home mums and my work friends who tended not to have children. Theresa was the first person I could have a whinge with about the practicalities of working and having children."

It wasn't long before they were putting their heads together about what they could do to give themselves a more flexible working life, so they could get the most out of their families and careers. "We ended up having that conversation which people always end up having, usually by the second glass of wine, saying 'There must be something we can do.' We realised there was a gap in the market for something to facilitate nanny shares. Friends would say to me, 'I just can't be bothered to look around to find one.' So we started from that," explains Alex.

After going on holiday together to have a proper brainstorm, they decided to give it a go. "Neither of us gave up our jobs, but we still managed to get it going. We both wanted to have more time with the children and do something for ourselves and dictate our own hours," says Alex. "Eventually we want to be able to give up our jobs altogether."



The first move was to find a website designer and an accountant, “It was lovely because we were doing it all for ourselves,” says Alex. “Then after Christmas things really kicked off with our launch planned for February.” Getting their heads around website design and accounting wasn’t all, Alex and Theresa had to get to grips with doing their own PR. “All of sudden we had to become experts in PR! We had to learn how to write a press release, send it out to the papers, we had photo shoots with the local paper and got on the BBC news and were featured in The Times.” says Alex. “And all the hard work paid off. Doing PR for your own business is different from doing it for someone else. You are really passionate about it. I really surprised myself. I’d be working until one in the morning on my computer. Starting a business is one of the most fulfilling things I’ve ever done.”

After the launch in February this year, news of the website started circulating at a rapid pace, “The number of registrations picked up really quickly. And we had lots of lovely messages of support. On the first day we sent an email to all our friends saying we’d just launched. By the end of the day the email was getting passed around and friends came back saying they’d received it from other people! It’d gone full circle,” laughs Alex.

A nation-wide community website, once you register with thenannysharers.co.uk, you can search by postcode and find families in your area with kids of the same age. “We make sure we reply to everyone’s emails. We don’t want people to feel there’s no one behind the site – we’re very careful to give it a personal touch. And,” adds Alex, “it shows how a global network really enables the local community.”

Log on to www.thenannysharers.co.uk to find a nanny to share, babysitter, au pair and maternity nurse, and childcare. Alex and Theresa will happily answer any queries you may have.