

EWIF  
members

CHARLOTTE FOXLEY

diddi dance franchisee  
makes dance classes  
accessible for all

*diddi dance has provided a way for one mum, who has a child with a rare genetic disorder, to create a career she work around her family. Her personal experience has provided a way for her to adapt the business to meet the needs of children in her local community.*

Charlotte Foxley, like most mums, has always wanted to put her family first. Married with two boys she always knew she wanted to run her own business. This was especially crucial for her, as her eldest son has a rare genetic disorder, STXBP1. He has a significant learning disability coupled with Autism, so attends a special needs school, giving Charlotte time to think about her career, secure in the knowledge he receives the expert care and support he needs.

Looking into a number of franchise options, and thinking about what she would like to do, it was whilst looking for an activity to try with her youngest son, then age 2, Charlotte came across diddi dance. "The business looked fantastic! It doesn't feel like work!" she says, "I really didn't realise just how much fun it would be, from the dancing to the serious business side. I love people; I can work with all ages: From toddlers right up to the grandparents who come along to watch their grandchildren. It is hard work, but it fits with my life."



### **Personal inspiration improves her new business**

Charlotte now owns and runs diddi dance North Essex & South Suffolk, funky pre-school dance for boys & girls aged from 18mths to 4.5 years. She also runs classes for children aged up to 14, with additional needs or disabilities. It was Charlotte's son who inspired her to open diddi dance for special needs children, and make dance more accessible to all children, especially those with disabilities. She has experienced, first-hand, how difficult it is to find activities for disabled children which allows siblings to join in with, too. "I wanted the focus to be on what the children need, for the parents to be relaxed and not stressed out at the worry of what might happen in our classes."

### **Adapting diddi dance to attain her business goal**

Charlotte wanted to be totally flexible in the diddi dance approach. To create a lesson plan, as the children like routine and familiarity, but to use it very loosely and lead the class in a responsive way. So using all our diddi dance music, simple routines, exercises and props, Charlotte adapted her sessions to bring out the best in the children who attend, offering alternative options for different moves so the children can do as much as they feel able. She has just completed her Para Inclusive Dance Instructor training, so now includes this within her SEND sessions. "We take our time, we repeat and we don't rush. Some classes are very sensory based, and we use many props, others we can learn a simple routine. We always finish with cool down time and bubbles then we take a diddi dance bow! I want the children to be themselves and for the parents to be as relaxed as they can."

### **An award-winning franchisee**

Since starting her business, Charlotte has received accreditations through the Exercise Movement Dance Partnership and the Silver level with Children's Activity Association – demonstrating all her policies, health & safety and procedures are in place, to deliver a safe environment for parents to bring their children along to. At her first diddi dance annual conference in 2016, she was awarded the "diddi Debutante" award, which recognises the fastest growing franchisee who launched within the previous year. She also won the "Mum and working" award for Franchisee of the Year 2018. And was also a finalist in the New Woman franchisee category at the EWIF Awards\* – an honour Charlotte is proud to have reached – but one she will attempt to further.

