



Giving tired parents a break

TV presenter Anastasia Cooke came up with the idea for her business, Night Nannies, when she was suffering from a condition well known to new mums – sleep deprivation.

Exhausted by the demands of a baby and toddler under two, Anastasia Cooke, 32, from west London, hit on the idea for an agency providing night nannies to give tired parents a break.

‘Coping with several night feeds for my second child, Alexander, I found it increasingly difficult to stay in a sane, alert state of mind to be able to cope with one-year-old Amelia during the day,’ explains Anastasia. ‘By the time Alexander was two months old, I was on my knees with exhaustion.’

Finding nannies who could work at night was tricky – and expensive – so the idea of Night Nannies was born. The agency currently covers only Greater London, but Anastasia hopes to expand. She has 40 nannies on her books, many of them neo-natal or paediatric nurses. A £150 fee entitles a client to a night nanny as many times a week

as they need for up to three months. After that, the client pays the nanny £50 and the agency £10 per night for a single child (prices rise for twins and triplets). Nannies arrive at 9pm and leave at 7am. They’ll feed and settle the child for the night, change nappies, prepare bottles, dress the child in the morning and, if required, give advice on sleep routines. The service is aimed at parents of newborns, but Anastasia has received enquiries from mothers of older children, too.

Anastasia, who was a reporter for *BBC Breakfast News* and *Here and Now*, divides her time between her two children and Night Nannies. Before launching the business she took a short course at London’s Portobello Business Centre and suggests other women planning to set up in business do something similar – courses are often available at local business advice centres. ‘Finding the right staff was hard,’ she says, ‘but everything else has been amazingly easy.’

● Call Night Nannies on 020 7731 6168, or visit www.night-nannies.com.