

Girl power linking Harpenden community

From making life easier for busy mums to connecting homeworkers, creating a pop-up night club and getting back in time for the babysitter, women in Harpenden are creating social and business links that are improving life for thousands in the town. Julie Lucas reports



A lawyer, IT specialist, marketing expert and music teacher seem an unlikely business partnership, but when these four women met at a children's music class they came up with an idea to make life easier for busy mums like themselves.

Katie Fenner, Angela Woodhead, Alison Fox and Carol Rule founded the Mum's Guide to Harpenden website two years ago.

'It all started when my husband was asked to work in San Francisco for six months,' Katie explains. 'The other girls gave me a book on the area written by mums – it proved to be a godsend.'

The book sparked the idea for creating an online version with current news on events and services.

'Over several cups of tea and a lot of

biscuits we decided to see if this new concept of having all the information for families in one place online might actually work. We had spent our fair share of time scouring the internet to find details of local facilities and realised we had all had the same experience – the information can be difficult to find.'

The four women spent five months researching and gathering information to create a free comprehensive online resource that people would use regularly. The *mumsguideto.co.uk* site offers mums with children from bumps to teens a one-stop shop on a wide range of services from clubs and children's activities to pampering for parents and eating out. Since its launch in June 2012, the founders have been thrilled to see unique visits grow to around 6,500 a month,

while the site also generates money through advertising.

'The feedback has been incredibly positive' Katie says. 'We particularly love stories such as the family that relocated from Hong Kong to Harpenden and needed information about local schools and activity classes for the children so life could continue as quickly as possible when they arrived. Previously you would have had to spend hours trawling the internet to get all the information you wanted.'

'We have learnt that there is an awful lot going on in this small town. For instance, there are more than 250 activities and clubs for under-18s. We love to promote family events and local charities for free because we know as mums how isolating it can be if you don't know what's going on in your area.'