traditional massage. She is also on a counselling course and hopes to combine this with her therapy.

She says there are downsides to her new life, namely how much time she has to devote to admin – accounts, bookkeeping, delivering leaflets and so on.

She also feels uneasy that her treatments are only available to those who can afford them, and is exploring ways of changing this while still making a decent living.

But there are plenty of upsides. "I have a lot more time for myself and can arrange my work time. On a sunny day for example if I am not with clients I can go for a walk in the park."

She doesn't feel under pressure with sales targets as she used to. "Now when I see a customer, it is meaningful to me, it is a one on one encounter. My job has real meaning now."

For more information contact Tracey on 07506 736 842 or visit www.jet-therapy.co.uk

Christina Richards used to be a teacher – now she runs her own stage school

Christina Richards loved her job as a drama teacher and was passionate about education through the arts. "The self-confidence, social skills, interaction, expression, acceptance, communication and awareness skills it can afford children in addition to the actual subject itself are invaluable," says the 28-year-old from Cardiff.

However, while staging a school production of Les Miserables it struck her that she hadn't fulfilled her own performance career. She soon left her teaching job and pursued work as a singer and actress.

However, she missed the education side. A chance conversation with a friend, Tim Riley, a composer and musical director, lead the two to set up their own children's performing arts school, The Stage Centre, which opened last September.

Based at The Cathedral School in Llandaff, Cardiff, it offers training in dance, drama and singing to four to six year olds, and seven to 15 year olds on Saturdays. Students have already been given professional performing opportunities, and plans are afoot for an advanced group offering GCSE drama and a Stage Tots morning session for pre-school children. July sees a two-week High School Musical summer camp where children will learn, rehearse and star in a stage performance of the popular film.

Christina and Tim bring different skills to the business, and working together means that both can still pursue their performance careers, knowing the school is in safe hands during their absences.

Christina is about to star in Trivial Pursuit, a play by popular Welsh comedy writer Frank Vickery, and as Helena in A Midsummer Night's Dream. "The children appear to have an appreciation of the fact that I don't just teach performing arts, but work and live it, giving them the chance to learn often from those invited colleagues of mine who give them further insight into the profession," she says.

"It has been hard, very hard at times," she says, "and I have worked hard to get where I am. Being self-employed sometimes feels like you never get away from the office, never switch off from work. But now with a successful performance career and a thriving stage school operating hand in hand my only answer to the question "has it been worth it?" is "yes".

For more information see www.thestagecentre.co.uk LF

Thinking of setting up your own business?

Careers coach Ros Toynbee has these seven golden rules

1. **Make your business something you are passionate about.** Starting a business is a real roller coaster ride and your passion will see you through it.
2. **Try it part time first.** Start selling your services while you've got the safety of your full time job to help pay for things such as setting up a website, doing your books. Set yourself a goal – "If I earn £x for x consecutive months, that's when I will pursue my business full time".
3. **Surround yourself with positive people who champion you and believe in what you are doing.** This will be a good antidote to the naysayers who constantly tell you of the risks.
4. **Diversify.** Having several strings to your self-employed bow can give you more security than one full-time job. If you have a business selling handbags on eBay, then make jewellery also and maybe take in a lodger as well, for example. This way you will have different sources of income and if one dries up, then you will still have the others.
5. **Budget.** Reduce your outgoings as much as you can. Be frugal. Call in favours from your friends – if you know a good bookkeeper offer them your services in exchange for theirs.
6. **Network.** Tap into local business networks and attend lunches or breakfasts. In the early days, don't worry so much about getting business, just get used to telling people what you do.
7. **Find other self-employed people in your area.** If you work from home, you might miss the social elements of an office workplace. When I first set up my business, I established regular lunches for freelancers. These were not for networking, it was strictly there to replace those water-cooler moments, the banal talk.

Ros Toynbee runs regular one day workshops "Starting A Business" and "How to Ride the Feast and Famine of Freelance Life". For events in your area, or personal coaching opportunities, call 020 7383 0174 or visit www.thecareercoach.co.uk