

get to sleep on their own but, in more recent times, people have opposed this, saying it causes distress to both babies and parents. Wolfe says there are now quite a few theories involving controlled crying, but she offers a solution, which she calls “controlled soothing”.

She agrees that the key to calm nights is in teaching the baby to get to sleep on its own, but says parents can soothe them and reassure them while this is happening. The job of a sleep coach is to examine the sleep pattern of the baby and the behaviour of the parents and devise a plan, which will suit the family. “All babies and families are different, and there is no one plan which will suit all.”

Wolfe says that the success of sleep coaching isn't just down to the technique used, and that a large part is also due to bringing in a trained professional who can view the situation objectively and make recommendations.

“Parents who are sleep deprived aren't in any shape to make decisions – they are mostly too tired to read books and get the information they need. Often they will try a lot of different things to get a baby to sleep and they won't be consistent – but the key to success is consistency.”

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both the baby's routine and also the behaviour of the parents. Wolfe says she can guarantee that a routine she devises will succeed if the parents stick to the plan. And if the parents need help in sticking to the programme, she says they can get continued support from her.

An auctioneer for 17 years, Wolfe decided, when looking for a new post-building boom career, to put her expertise as a mother of four to good use. “When my oldest child, (now nine) was a baby, he didn't sleep and I read every book I could find on sleep routines for babies.”

Over the years, she became something of a sleep guru for friends and family with babies. But when Wolfe decided to put her

expertise to commercial use, she realised that she would need also some professional qualifications.

Researching the sleep-coaching industry in the US, she found the Gentle Sleep programme, which had been set up by Kim West, a family therapist.

Wolfe launched her new Sleepmatters.ie website in August this year. Taking it to a commercial level has been quite different to helping friends and family, but so far she's very encouraged by the level of interest. Most of her clients have been in Cork but she's also done a consultation with a set of parents in Kildare on the internet.

“I haven't had any failures. One family had a 12-month-old boy who had previously had reflux and vomiting and was waking around 15 times a night. At first I didn't think I could help him, but by altering his schedule and adding naps during the day and cutting out night feeds, he started sleeping for 12 hours a night.”

Being a pioneer in a totally new field is both difficult and challenging, but Wolfe feels she is making good headway.

“Next year I will be giving talks on sleep coaching to trainee nurses at UCC – and because it's a new field, this type of recognition is very significant.”

■ [sleepmatters.ie](http://sleepmatters.ie)

**Sleep coach  
Lucy Wolf with  
11-month-old Harry  
Burke. Photographs:  
Patrick Hogan/  
Provision**

