

HOT PROPERTY

She's not married, she works non-stop and she's technology mad... Kirstie Allsopp is far less conventional than you might think

She may be a skilled homemaker, but there's nothing of the dowdy housewife about Kirstie, 44. In fact, the property guru and self-proclaimed feminist is savvy, sassy and isn't shy of ruffling a few feathers. She sparked debate earlier this year after suggesting young women should postpone university to have children – and she stood by her opinion. Quite rightly, too – after all, she's been raising four boys for years. She has two sons – Bay, 9, and Oscar, 7 – with partner, property developer Ben Andersen, and two stepsons – Hal, 13, and Orion, 11 – from Ben's previous marriage to an old schoolfriend of Kirstie's (who introduced the pair back in 2004). Despite being together over ten years, the couple have never married, but they're about as solid a family unit as you'll ever find – thanks to Kirstie's modern mum skills of juggling a manic work schedule with her very full-on home life.

My social life revolves around the kids. Someone once said you can have a career, children and a social life – but not all three at the same time. They were so right. When I'm not working, I'm with my children. I work because I love it, which means I can't justify going away for

a spa break or going off and doing things that are just for me – work is for me.

Ben is a hands-on dad. He'll take the kids to school, but he has no idea what happens early in the morning. The other day I got up, went for a quick run, took Bay to choir, came back, had a quick bath, then went to the supermarket. In the meantime, Ben got up, wallowed in the bath like a small hippo, read the paper on his iPad, then swanned down, oblivious to everything that had gone on.

Being a step-parent is the most important thing I've ever done. When you're a parent it's amazing, but being a step-parent is different. It's not about you, it's about the children. There was a wonderful

story recently about a wedding where the father grabbed his daughter's stepdad and said 'come with me, we'll walk down the aisle the three of us'. It was such a wonderful thing to do. Ben's ex-wife, Ben, me, Orion and Hal all have the same diary app, so we can keep track of everyone's plans. It's a team effort.

I feel a bit outnumbered by the boys – mostly because they don't understand about cushions! They sit on them and it drives me mad. It's supposed to be behind



Kirstie finds herself surrounded by boys at home... and at work!

your back – it's not a booster seat! I should embroider that on a cushion. The other thing I'd like to embroider is: 'Wanted: Indians, chiefs need not apply' because there's too many in our house already!

I believe in allowing children time to be children. The boys are at the age where they're completely grown up one minute, then suddenly, they need you again. The other day, I came in and they were all lying on my bed watching *Thomas and Friends*. They were enjoying it so much, I didn't say a word.

I'm so excited to have all of the boys for Christmas and New Year. Christmas is all about family but it's a tricky time for us because my father-in-law died in December two years ago and my mother died in January last year. This year, we're going to have a big dinner before Christmas with my family and Ben's family. My sister lives in Edinburgh and

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Thoroughly modern mum, Kirstie, manages family life with apps!

I've got two new nieces and a nephew who's three. We'll exchange presents and see all the babies, then whatever happens on Christmas Day, it's fine, because we'll have seen each other already.

This Christmas, the boys all want mini Segways. I'm going to do a big shop for them all then ask my brother and sister to send me cash on my new KiTTi App. It's like WhatsApp for money, so you can have different groups with your friends to pay for nights out or school mums to pay for kids' presents. It means we can share the cost of things easily. Life is so busy, I swear by apps and technology to keep me going.

I've not got anything new planned in 2016. I need time to do what is currently on the slate. We've just started shooting a second series of *Love It or List It* and we're filming three new Christmas shows in Moscow, Bratislava, and Vienna. It's just constant, one day no one will want to employ me, but for now it's all go.

* Kirstie is the ambassador for Santander's KiTTi app, available from iTunes

MY BIG LOVES

- ♥ **DRESSES** They're all I wear – it's just one item and that's it.
- ♥ **MODERN TECHNOLOGY** I swear by WhatsApp and emails on my phone to keep me going!
- ♥ **TWITTER** I set up an account for Phil Spencer and tweeted as Pip off the TV for about

two months. When he found out what I'd done, he was fuming!

- ♥ **SCOOTERS** Ben and I love them for whizzing round London – the boys have rollerblades.
- ♥ **THOUGHTFUL PRESENTS** If a friend sees something they thought you'd like and waits until Christmas to give it to you, that's very special. But my best, most special gifts have always been from Ben.