

# Raising kids and objections

**I find myself beginning an article on flexible working late on a Tuesday night, from home, logged in remotely to my DLA Piper desktop. The aptness is not lost on me.**

Oliver, 5, and Archer, 2, are asleep. My wife Charlotte is pregnant with our third, and just about to turn out the light.

I'm 27, a third year solicitor working full-time in commercial dispute resolution and professional indemnity insurance in DLA Piper's litigation and regulatory practice. I'm fairly busy most of the time and crazy-busy some of the time. Working in a large commercial law firm, there are, of course, challenging performance and budgetary pressures, and clients with high expectations. But I enjoy the work, the clients are good, I get on very well with the people I work with and have great

professional and personal relationships with my supervisors.

I'm a father of two, soon to be three boys and live more than an hour from the CBD by train. Charlotte works on Saturdays, and Sunday is usually a mix of chores and playing with the kids. Like everyone, my time is precious and there is never quite enough. Suffice to say that work/life balance is hard to achieve, and I would be lying if I said I achieved it all of the time.

What makes balance easier to achieve is flexible working. I often find myself working from home during business hours. Weekdays are primetime for the various medical, social and school appointments. I don't make it to all of these appointments, but can when I need to.

I attended many weekly appointments for Oliver earlier this year by logging in remotely early in the morning, going to the appointment, and then going into the office and working late. I can leave the office at 3pm if need be, knowing I can log back on later that night and make up the time. I work from home while still being completely contactable by internal and external clients, by phone, email and our internal chat software.

Sometimes I work from home just to cut out 2½ hours travel and to be able to eat with the family at their normal tea time of 5pm. In the longer term, when Charlotte has the demand and desire to ramp up her career, I am confident my supervisors and the firm generally would support me to work part-time.

My arrangement evolved naturally. I found myself checking with my supervisors that it was okay to work flexibly for ad hoc family commitments, and being encouraged to do so. As those commitments increased with Oliver starting school, so did my flexible working. At the start of the year, my commercial litigation partner suggested I work from home one day a week – I don't yet, but when the time is right, I will. I've had no issues asking for flexible working as a dad rather than a mum.

None of this can happen without appropriate IT infrastructure, a trusting relationship with my supervisors, a supportive team and a supportive family. I am lucky to have all of those things, and I'm not the only one – around me I see practitioners from solicitors to partners utilising flexible working. Although I can't work from home for a face-to-face meeting or court date, any other potential problem has been solved by having an organised office, by planning before I work from home and with the help of technology and my accommodating and very capable assistant, Lisa.

I encourage anyone who wants to (and can), to consider taking up flexible working if it is offered or to take a thought-out proposal to your firm if it isn't. While it isn't a complete solution to achieving work/life balance it certainly helps me get that little bit closer. ■

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A FLEXIBLE WORKING DAD EXPLAINS HOW BALANCE CAN BE ACHIEVED BETWEEN WORK AND HOME LIFE.

