Working, Learning, Living: Share your story
This booklet profiles a number of Warwick staff who have shared their daily work/life balance responsibilities and how they make use of the flexible working options available at Warwick.

The booklet was inspired by the Royal Society of Chemistry’s ‘Parent | Carer | Scientist’ project, featuring Professor Dave Haddleton from the Chemistry Department. The Diversity and Inclusion team thought it would be great to replicate the format of the booklet for Warwick, and subsequently encouraged staff to submit their stories of how they combine their work and home commitments. We hope that staff, students and visitors to campus, enjoy reading the collection of stories and note the wide range of experiences of Warwick staff.

The University of Warwick is an institution that supports flexible working and has a number of schemes to support those who do have commitments outside work. We often don’t see what others are living with outside their work hours: whether that be a disability, caring responsibilities, children or other family commitments, it isn’t always possible to leave that life at the door when coming to work.
Staff Profile:
Aurélie Almeida (Tranter)
Internal Communications Officer

What are your personal interests?

“Horse riding. Prior to having the boys my career was in sports and I was very sporty (marathons, triathlons, equestrian competitions, open water swims etc.) I broke my back and pelvis in pregnancy and since then it’s mostly been about the rehab!”

Tell us about your career/work life balance

“It’s a juggling act. I like to get to work very early, before 8am, so rely on my husband to take the boys and sometimes a baby sister to nursery on my work days, and I pick them up after work. Sometimes it feels like I have a split personality. It works perfectly as long as everyone is healthy and after the occasional undisturbed night sleep (which is rare) I feel wonderful! I love being back at work and Warwick in particular is such a great place to work. Also my job is varied and interesting so it’s always a pleasure to go to work with great colleagues. I am very lucky that I’m able to do both: always being there when my children are little while working part time in a rewarding job.”

Do you have any caring responsibilities?

“Twin toddler boys. No family nearby as they live in France, and a husband whose offices are in London and works away/abroad during the week.”

“Life is really simple, but we insist on making it complicated.”

- Confucius
Staff Profile:
Ann Dixon
Associate Professor Biological Chemistry

“Currently, I would have to say attending children’s birthday parties, play dates, and days at the park as all of my spare time is spent with my family. We all love the outdoors, and we are gearing up for some cycling and camping this summer. With so much family in the USA, we also spend a lot of time visiting our American family and hosting them when they come to visit.”

“Tell us about your career/work life balance”

“My husband works a 4 day week and I work full-time but am quite flexible in my schedule. Most of the time, I can fit my teaching around doctors’ appointments, visits to the dentist and the school run with no problem. I see this flexibility as one of the perks of working in academia, and I value it very highly.”

“Do you have any caring responsibilities?”

“My top priority, above all else, is being a good mum to my daughter. Taking care of her is a joy and a privilege that I was not sure I would have earlier in my life. Luckily, I have a very supportive husband that encourages me to be ambitious in my career as well - it can be difficult to fit everything in, but we take things one day at a time.”

“Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.”

Oscar Wilde
Staff Profile:

Claire Algar
Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator

What are your personal interests?

“Horse riding, cycling and swimming.”

Do you have any caring responsibilities?

“My two dogs: Lola and Scrumpy.”

Tell us about your career/work life balance

“Having worked outdoors in the Equestrian environment for many years, starting in the Chemistry Department was a very daunting experience, lacking in confidence I very nearly didn’t turn up for the interview. December 2013, I left my abusive alcoholic husband and moved out of the family home with my two daughters. Confidence being at rock bottom and trying to find my way, the last thing I wanted was any more change. However, my then Head of Department and other colleagues encouraged me to apply for the Equality and Diversity role which I never thought I could do... Now nearly 3 years on I have increased by 3 grades, I love my job, and with the amazing support of my manager have started a Gateway to Social Studies part-time degree.”

“Be kind – because everyone you meet may be facing a battle you know nothing about.”
Staff Profile:
Anna Preston
Senior Careers Consultant

What are your personal interests?
“I love knitting and crochet as well as rambling and art.”

Do you have any caring responsibilities?
“I have caring responsibilities for our daughter who is now a recovering anorexic and managing her depression and for my Father who is disabled following his stroke.”

Tell us about your career/work life balance
“Warwick has supported me throughout my career here by allowing part time working and flexibility in my hours when required. There has also been a tremendous acceptance of my role as a carer from managers and colleagues which has enabled me to continue to work through some very challenging times.”

“Life is not about waiting for the storm to pass it’s about learning to dance in the rain.”
**Tell us about your career/work life balance**

“I’d worked in the UK industry for 6 years when my three children were born in 1992. At the time the company policy was for up to three days paternity leave. My manager granted me two days. With three children in intensive care and Maxine in hospital, I wondered what you would have to do to be eligible for three days! In addition in order to progress I had to be totally flexible, and my next job could have been a plant manager in Siberia I opted to move to the University of Warwick as a Lecturer, which I have never regretted. Our choice of house was dictated by being able to get home in five minutes with a garden for our children. I worked every day from 8:30 to 5:30, being home well before 6pm each day. My ex-students still tell me how they chased me down the corridor telling me about their breakthroughs as I was intent on getting home for bath time.”

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**What are your research/professional?**

“My work involves the design and synthesis of polymers with specific properties for targeted applications. Current applications range from viscosity modifiers for automotive, to personal care products and improving pharmaceuticals.”

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“Working at Warwick gave us the flexibility to put the family first without seemingly to have to compromise at work.”
Staff Profile:

Emma Melia
Senior Assistant Registrar,
Strategic Programme Delivery

Tell us about your career/work life balance

“Family and balance of the priorities in my life is something that I frequently revisit as circumstances are always changing. Working full time in demanding Professional Services roles has sometimes meant that I needed to put in place some deliberate boundaries around my time and head space. Access to the University nursery has been a huge advantage; I can drop off and be at my desk 5 mins later. When my son started school, my husband was able to reduce his hours to do the school run two days a week and family is a key filter through which I consider any career opportunities.”

What are your personal interests?

“Members of New Horizons Church in Coventry. This includes leading children’s classes and supporting admin and finance, as well as career development support for members. Part of the UK leadership team for Global Leadership Interlink (a global network of professionals and university students committed to transformation in society through the development of values-based leaders). Running (when I get time).”

“Balance changes all the time - it takes regular deliberate consideration and flexibility so that what works now is never set in stone.”

Do you have any caring responsibilities?

“Two children.”
What are your personal interests?

“Cooking, swimming, dancing, gardening, dogs and chickens.”

Tell us about your career/work life balance

“When our children were born legislation was just changing, but no option to return to work part time! Creative thinking, and a will to continue to work (albeit for very little reward after childcare costs for 2 children) led to a portfolio career for 10 years – combining part time roles, consultancy, and developing academically with an MBA. As legislation changed and I discovered the joys of working at Warwick, I found good childcare, a supportive family, a range of local friends and helpers, and someone to do the ironing were vital in enabling me to develop my career, whilst still playing an active role in family life. Luckily cooking is a hobby as well as a necessity!”

Do you have any caring responsibilities?

“As many people have – ageing parents and family illnesses balanced with hospital visits, end of life care and support for remaining relatives.”

“You are your children’s role models, leave them a legacy of a balanced life.”
Tell us about your career/work life balance

“Work life balance has always been incredibly important to me – it’s great to work for an organisation that is so supportive and flexible. Being at Warwick has enabled me to study for my degree, given me great career progression and most importantly has made it possible for me to fulfil my role as a foster carer. I have been able to study during the working day and make adjustments to my hours to fit around school runs, meetings, emergencies and medical appointments for the foster children in our care. Don’t get me wrong it’s hard work and tiring at times but I wouldn’t change a thing. I love being able to support my family, foster children, and students here at Warwick.”

Do you have any caring responsibilities?

“Our eldest foster child has recently moved out of home into independent living. My Mother-in-law has just moved to residential care after living with us for eight years, we visit her regularly and she comes home for visits too. Our youngest suffers from Cerebral Palsy and Autism so can be a handful at times. We now have 2 spare rooms and we are waiting to extend our family and welcome some more children into our home. We also have 2 dogs - a great dane and a westie!”

What are your personal interests?

“Photography, avid Lego Collector, lifelong Coventry City football fan and massive Christmas fanatic!”

If you grit your teeth, and show real determination, you always have a chance!”

Charlie Brown
What are your personal interests?

“Sleep! If I can get any...is that an interest? Ha ha. I am certainly interested in getting some more of it. I have a wide and mixed circle of friends scattered around the country and the kids have active social lives so most of my ‘spare’ time is taken up seeing friends, going on day trips, going to restaurants etc. We love the local parks and spend a lot of time in Allesley Park. I also have a large role in Teddy’s school PTA which I enjoy. The other week I was a SpongeBob Mascot at our school fayre. Lots of fun, Oh, and of course, given my degree – I enjoy following politics – but have been known to get a little too emotionally invested.”

Tell us about your career/work life balance

“Teddy who is 6 years old and about to start Year 2. He is mad on animals, Lego, football and being very loud and energetic - ALL THE TIME - so a normal 6 year old in my experience. Tabby - who is 2 and a half and putting us all through hell during her ‘terrible twos’. But the rest of the time is a cute, lively little girl with a lot of energy. Lucky enough to have all healthy Grandparents, with maternal Grandparents in Coventry and often helping us care for the kids.”

Do you have any caring responsibilities?

“We get up very early (not by choice!), and this allows us to get things done in the mornings. I work 50% FTE and this helps me to stay involved in the kids’ lives and be there for them as much as possible. I view work as stimulating for my brain and the rest of my body! Alice is a fab manager and is supportive that I need flexibility, for instance I attended a sports day yesterday and will make up the hours tomorrow. This helps me keep a nice balance.”

“Happy parents have happy children, if you like to work, stay at home or do both – as long as you’re happy and not stressed out all the time then your kids will do just fine.”
Tell us about your career/work life balance

“My maternity leave was not particularly straightforward – I had Post-Natal Depression for starters and then my mum was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease the week before I was due back at work. The 15 months after that are a bit of a blur to be honest but I couldn’t have managed without my colleagues who were unfailingly brilliant. They visited to keep my spirits up, cooked meals for us, and stepped in and looked after admin tasks when I needed help. My Head of Department was very understanding and reduced my teaching load so that I could better juggle work and my responsibilities as a carer. Mum was able to die at home, which is what she desperately wanted, but that wouldn’t have been possible without the generosity of my colleagues here at Warwick and I’m extremely grateful to them all.

Do you have any caring responsibilities?

“Primary carer for my mother from her diagnosis with Motor Neurone Disease at the end of my maternity leave in June 2009 until her death in November 2010.”

“Live your life so that you have no regrets.”
Kimberley Harris
Internships Development Manager

What are your personal interests?

“Cooking, baking, reading/watching sci-fi, various music/TV/arts fandoms, general geekery.”

Tell us about your career/work life balance

“I changed career after five years as a drug worker so it felt important to establish myself as an HE administrative manager before taking any risks. Chris also made a move from Environmental Consultancy to Geotechnical Engineering, before moving into project management – we both feel these were important milestones to achieve before starting a family. We held off conceiving while my contracts future was uncertain (a two-year period), but our commitment to Guide Dogs ensures that my office hours have to be regular and fixed, so hopefully we’ve got into good habits already!”

Do you have any caring responsibilities?

“We can only plan so far – the important thing is to make the most of the options we do have, and be ready to act on the new ones when they eventually make their appearance.”

“Trainee Guide Dog (six months per dog) – includes a school run every day plus programme of socialisation and training.”
Staff Profile:
Lynne Horsler
Administrative Officer, IER

What are your professional interests?
“Having worked in educational administration for 18 years I am now working towards a change of career to move into counselling.”

Tell us about your career/work life balance
“Warwick has given me the opportunity to continue my professional career without having to compromise on being a mum - from giving me a fixed-term contract in the second-half of pregnancy to flexible part-time employment throughout my son’s nursery and primary school years with excellent on-site nursery provision, working hours within the school day and flexibility to change hours in school holidays. Even on my secondment to another department the hours were adjusted to suit my needs. I am currently enrolled in the part-time Foundation Degree in Counselling at Warwick alongside my work and child-care responsibilities subsidised by WLA.”

Do you have any caring responsibilities?
“One son, born August 2006.”

“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

John 10:10 Holy Bible, New International Version®
Manuela Tosin
Associate Professor Organic Chemistry

What are your personal interests?
“Music, reading, cooking, travelling and languages.”

What are your research/professional interests?
“Chemical biology, natural products, glycosyltransferases in health and disease.”

Tell us about your career/work life balance
“My daughter and I shared a long work commute since she was 6 months old and came to attend the University nursery. To ease the commute, we made use of on campus accommodation facilities for a few nights a week. At first I was quite apprehensive about this, however she quickly got used to staying on campus as a special time: Radcliffe became the small castle and Scarman House the big castle, where she was treated like a princess by everybody. I am very grateful to Warwick conferences and the nursery staff for making our time easier and enjoyable.”

Do you have any caring responsibilities?
“Caring of my daughter.”

“Everything happens for a reason”
**Staff Profile:**

**Victoria Strudwick**
Global Partnerships Manager

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**What are your personal interests?**

“Music (singing in a choir), running and reading (when I can!)”

**What are your research/professional interests?**

“Languages, other cultures, diplomacy, international relations, study abroad, globalisation.”

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**Tell us about your career/work life balance**

I’ve come to the conclusion that there isn’t a perfect, catch-all solution to balancing work with parenting responsibilities as the nature of both are constantly changing, and that flexibility is the real key to the juggling act. I have really appreciated the willingness of colleagues to operate on a ‘give and take’ basis, on the understanding that I am as flexible as I can be in accommodating out-of-hours work and travel commitments but that I can offset the additional hours I’ve worked to meet occasional daytime parenting responsibilities like school assemblies and sports day.”

**Do you have any caring responsibilities?**

“Three children (currently aged 6 and 4 years).”

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“Be kind to yourself. You are doing the best you can.”
Here are some of the services Warwick provides its staff...

Reduced Hours
Staggered Hours
Flexitime
Job-sharing
Home working
Career break

The University Nursery provides childcare for staff with children aged between 3 months to 5 years
Rated OFSTED ‘Outstanding’ in all categories: effectiveness of leadership and management; quality of teaching, learning and assessment; personal development, and behaviour and welfare; and outcomes for children

The Disability Framework provides guidance to assist managers in supporting employees who may require reasonable adjustments due to a declared disability or illness

Time off for Dependents Policy

Diversity & Inclusion hold events and raise awareness to promote equal opportunities in the workplace
WLA Vouchers can be used to pay towards part-time degrees, short courses, CLL courses, language classes, Arts Centre Masterclasses and sports courses through the University.

Warwick Staff Networks:
- Carers
- Disability
- Working Parents
- BME
- LGBT

Counselling provide face-to-face and email counselling for staff, as well as workshops and therapy groups.

If you wish to know more about these services or find out what else may be available to you, contact the service directly or speak to your HR adviser.
This booklet was created by the University of Warwick’s Diversity and Inclusion team.

If you would like to submit your story for future editions of this booklet, please submit your story at: warwick.ac.uk/shareyourstory