



International **Men's** Day

Q&A Spotlight on SCRA's male employees - **Staying Well**

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SCOTTISH
CHILDREN'S REPORTER
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What's it like working for SCRA?

I've been a Reporter in Glasgow for four years now. Before I joined SCRA I was a social worker. I enjoy sitting on the other side as a Reporter. It feels like you're progressing things in a very definite way for families in a way I didn't feel I could always do as a social worker. I enjoy the court side of the Reporter's job – I like the adversarial aspect and doing what's best for the child – it's a real challenge and gives you a bit of an adrenaline rush and can be very rewarding.

I've worked in a number of local authorities and the experience of working for SCRA is very different. It's nice working for a smaller organisation like SCRA as it's really nice knowing who your bosses are and being able to talk to the folk who run the organisation. I've worked for some small local authorities and I've never had that experience before.

I've found SCRA to be a really supportive organisation to work for and I feel included by middle and senior management. We get regular communications from senior management and I've found it to be open and honest. You don't always get that in other organisations. It was particularly good during lockdown when we were all at home as it made me feel connected and still part of the organisation. SCRA feels like working for one big team and I've found everyone to be inclusive and supportive – the people really are great.

What do you do to stay well?

The things I do to stay well – emotionally and physically – are mostly outdoor physical pursuits. Being outdoors is a big focus for me and it helps to be connected to the world. I love cycling and it is my main way of staying healthy – my world revolves around bikes! Before COVID – and in the days I'm in the office now – I commute by bike and this makes all the difference after a hard day at work. It really clears the head so it doesn't just make me physically healthier, but emotionally too. Throughout lockdown I always made sure to get in a cycle and this was even more important during winter when the days were shorter.

There's a group of guys in SCRA that used to get together with once a year for a cycle – we'd all take a day off and head off on the bikes together and we might talk a little about work, but mostly it was just a social activity with colleagues.

I'm a keen diver and, pre-COVID, would travel around the world diving. Diving is incredibly mindful – you can't really think about anything else apart from what you're doing so it's a great way to clear the mind. It totally clears your head – there's not a problem out there that won't be forgotten whilst you're diving. It doesn't matter where your mind is at before you go for a dive, during and immediately after it you'll be completely clear headed. I also enjoy kayaking – there's definitely a real benefit of the water in keeping me mentally well; the water is peaceful and gives you a completely different perspective of places.

I have a good relationship with my line manager and I think that's really important for staying well. I can always pop in to the office for a chat or a coffee and that continued throughout our time home working and I could always just Teams call for a chat if I needed it. Regular contact and support from your line manager at work is a massive part of staying well at work and avoiding work stress from becoming unmanageable. SCRA and my line manager were great at supporting me during the pandemic by being understanding of the fact that getting out for a cycle was really important to my well-being. The flexibility I had in being able to structure my days in a way that kept me well was really important. Fundamentally, having a manager you can talk to – about the good and the bad – is really important to staying well at work. We can't just focus on how we stay well personally without thinking about how we stay well professionally too.

I make sure that I have a good work/life balance. I am one of the people who enjoys going into the office and having that divide between work and home and it was a real challenge during lockdown when this line was blurred. In fact I really struggled with this as I enjoy the commute to and from work and use this as a way to divide my time at home from my time at work. To combat that, I was very structured in how I approached work and how I divided my time – I worked from 8am until 4pm and was quite rigid with that. It meant I had to be quite disciplined in logging off the laptop and putting it away each night so work

didn't encroach on my home life. It was a real challenge for me and I much prefer going into the office and being around colleagues.

For me, part of staying well is being able to talk to people when I need to. I talk to my wife and I also talk to my colleagues and manager and all of that helps me keep things in perspective and resolve issues I might be having which means that I don't get overwhelmed. Talking is a great coping mechanism.

What advice would you give?

One of the things I've really noticed since the pandemic is the number of people who're out exercising – and in all weathers too. There are far more people out walking in all weathers than there was before and it's been really great to see people harness the outdoors as a way to stay healthy. It's nice to see people enjoy what's on their doorstep and there's definitely a sense of a more connected community.

I think it's really important that people proactively look after their well-being. Work/life balance is really important to staying well and we need to all make sure we find a structure that works for us. Burn out can sneak up on you and can be very sudden, but if we look after ourselves all the time we should be able to avoid the worst of it.

Even small things like keeping your laptop out of sight when you're working from home and structuring your time to make sure you take regular breaks and making sure you take your flexi and annual leave. They may seem small things but using the Flexible Working Policy and making sure you take proper and regular breaks – whether that be during the day or longer breaks throughout the year are fundamental to ensuring work doesn't become all consuming.

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