



International **Men's** Day

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

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SCOTTISH
CHILDREN'S REPORTER
ADMINISTRATION

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What's it like working for SCRA?

I've worked for SCRA for almost twenty years in a range of different positions. I started off as a Reporter and have been an Operational Development Reporter in Head Office and held a number of locality management positions – first as an Authority Reporter and then a Locality Reporter Manager. I've worked in a number of teams, from Head Office to the Borders, Tayside/Fife and South East. I was also the operational development lead for the development of CSAS. I've been Senior Operational Manager for Central and East since August 2019, picking up the organisational lead for Business Continuity – just in time for the pandemic! It has been a real challenge because of the pandemic as a new member of the Executive Management Team as I have struggled to get out and about and meet everyone in the localities I lead. Ideally I'd have wanted more contact with the teams than what I've been able to have, but that's something that can be built on as we continue to recover.

I love being able to influence service delivery and working to improve services for children and families who come to Hearings. The key aspects of my current job that I enjoy is sharing ideas and knowledge, engaging with different people and also challenging us to do better. I am really fortunate to work with some really committed, hardworking, supportive and dynamic people – the job is easy if you have good staff and I am very lucky to have that.

The down side of my current job is how removed I am from frontline operations.

I've always had a commitment to the Children's Hearings System and the principal of delivering a welfare based system for traumatised children that is fair and child-focussed is something I feel very passionate about – justice with kindness. What we do here at SCRA aligns with my own personal values and this is really important in terms of having a professional purpose. It's very rewarding and interesting what we do at SCRA, the law is complex but navigating that and doing what's best for children is incredibly fulfilling.

What do you do to stay well?

The most important part of being healthy and staying well is connection with the people who matter – my family and friends – and maintaining relationships with them is absolutely central to my well-being. I am very lucky that I have this group of people who I have really good relationships with and who I can talk to if I need to.

I have also practiced the martial art of aikido for 26 years now. I've found it's great for keeping physically and psychologically healthy and regular training helps provide structure. It requires regular and committed training to refine your practice and it becomes habitual. Aikido provides me with regular physical activity, but has also offered me an opportunity to network with people from all over the world who I wouldn't have otherwise met and a

sense of connection with likeminded people is really good for holistic health. Maintaining my practice during the pandemic was really tricky as it isn't the same doing a martial art over Zoom, that sense of connection was missing. I've also recently taken on a teaching role and helping others develop and refine their practice is rewarding, but it's a real challenge to build back a club with ongoing physical restrictions.

In terms of physical exercise, I'm a big fan of walking and being outdoors. I make a point of going out for a walk every day before work and am quite strict about making sure I get outdoors. During the height of the pandemic when we were in really strict restrictions I did some indoor fitness classes with some success, although that's been more difficult to maintain as restrictions eased.

I have also recently learned how to ride a motorbike and I've found having that focus during lockdown has really helped me – learning a new skill has really challenged my mind and given me a different kind of focus. Motorcycling is a skill that needs to be continually developed and honed and focusses my mind on something very different to what else is going on at work and in the world. The flip side of that is that before the motorbike I was a keen cyclist and that's suffered somewhat since I learned to ride the motorbike. But I've connected my road bike to an indoor trainer in the last few weeks so I can use it in the house over winter and just need to get peddling more!

Variation is important in life and I like the feeling of challenging myself. I enjoy cooking too – seeing a new recipe and trying something new gives me a sense of accomplishment (when it works out!). There are lots of other things I'd like to explore in future – I'd like to read more, maybe do something creative and I've also toyed with doing voluntary support work to connect back to the frontline again.

What advice would you give?

I think personal connections and networks is incredibly important to our well-being. Falling back on social contact and social support is a fundamental coping mechanism when things are challenging. Human connection is a fundamental pillar of being well – for everyone – we've seen the cost of social isolation throughout the pandemic and lockdown. Talking really puts things into perspective – we should approach our personal lives in the way we do workload management – not everything we've got on our plates need to be dealt with at once, some things can be deferred or shared. We need to prioritise these needs to stay psychologically well.

Everyone needs a physical outlet, even if it's just a walk. It doesn't have to be anything overly exertive, it's amazing the impact of going outdoors for a walk can have on how you feel. Fresh air is very important and really helps clear the head.

We can learn from the pandemic and recognise that life has its troughs and peaks. There are periods of crisis (or opportunities) that we might need to focus our energies on but we need to be able to flex and pace ourselves to maintaining our health – whether that’s physical or mental – and be proactive in how we look after ourselves. That will make the crisis points that much more manageable. We also need to remember that we can’t go backwards – the past is the past, it’s gone. All we can do is move forward – yes, we can learn from the past – but we must have forward momentum and that’s as valid in our personal lives as it is in our work lives. Change is inevitable and can be challenging, but if we approach it with an open mind and from a position of learning it will seem much less daunting.

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