

## Suzanne Campbell

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The proportion of people working at the University whose relatives live far away is probably much larger than the proportion that has family living close by. Between some employees and their wider family there is an ocean, others have only the Channel to cross, others again have to travel to the opposite end of the UK. In all cases, it becomes difficult to balance caring responsibilities with work. Suzanne's mother lives in Aberdeen. Although she does not have to care for her on a daily basis, she had to provide care after multiple operations.

The original plan was for Suzanne to take two periods when she would reduce her hours and work remotely. This was to take care of her mother before and after she had two knee replacement surgeries. However, as her mother went to the hospital for her first operation, the doctors discovered that she needed heart surgery before any other operation could be attempted. The knee surgery was cancelled. For this first appointment, Suzanne had taken the whole July off, but it was no longer necessary to stay for the whole time. After her mother had completed various tests, Suzanne came back to Cambridge but continued to work remotely since a cover at work had been arranged for her. Three more periods of flexible working followed that year and the year after, during which she worked remotely and reduced hours. The first was to accommodate her mother's heart surgery and had to be longer than planned because her mother's recovery was complicated due to infection. It was followed by two more months the following year for the respective knee surgeries.

While being in Aberdeen for the first and second time, Suzanne worked 10% only. During those times she was provided with a laptop that was set up for remote access. She learned that good communication is even more vital when working remotely. It was easy for her to keep in touch with everything that went on in her absence because she checked her emails daily and communicated regularly with the Institute's administrator and the rest of her team. This way it was also not very difficult to re-adjust once she was back on full-time. During her third and fourth absence she worked between 21% and 50% of full-time and also took part of her annual leave.

Considering the variety of working hours and sudden changes within the arrangement, it becomes obvious that a considerable amount of planning was involved and that people in Suzanne's team had to increase their work-load to cover some of her duties. "They were all extremely supportive, for which I am very grateful," she says. In her absence, a temporary employee was able to gain more experience, a part-time member of the team increased to full-time and another member did some extra hours. In conclusion, Suzanne comments, "I am eternally grateful for being able to work flexibly during this period and do appreciate the fact that the Administrator at the Institute [...] offered this option when I said that I would have to resign. I am also grateful to all the members of the Admin team who inevitably had some extra work because of this."