Gender at Work and at Home

Professional and Parental Identities in Home-based Telework

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References


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1 Whilst this text is not yet publicly available it makes a useful contribution to the discourse analysis literature. I am in a privileged position to have seen a proof of Watson's chapter and it is from this that the page numbers are determined – these are therefore subject to change when the text goes to print.


Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Work

Describe role
Career/ education background – how got into current occupation
Hours, how long spent in home vs office / on road etc. – typical day?
Satisfaction with role
Aims for future career
What kind of worker are you?
What does your career mean to you?
Do you think career has been affected by teleworking?

Family

Married / living with your partner?
How many kids, ages, etc. – any specific needs or disabilities?
How current childcare / schooling arrangements are managed
How about domestic work in the home?
What kind of parent would you say you are?
What time off did you have when child born?
Anything changed since began teleworking? – eg. time on domestic work, socialising, personal development

Telework

How long worked from home?
Who instigated? – work or self
Why decided?
Who discussed with?
Other peoples reactions – colleagues, spouse, children themselves
Was it what you expected? Better / Worse?
What were / are your opinions of others who telework – what would a typical teleworker be like?
How do you keep in touch with colleagues and clients?
Have you had any issues of isolation / invisibility?
Do you think you have more control over your work now?
Do you think you are a better worker now? – eg. more focused / efficient?
What was the learning curve / strategies developed to manage working from home?
Overall Impact on family
Overall Impact on career
Impact on life generally – positive / negative
Overall satisfaction – how would you change things, or would you go back to traditional work
Identity

‘How does home-based telework impact upon the professional and parental identities of men and women?’ – what do you think the findings might be? How relevant are they to yourself?

Has it changed how you think about yourself?

How would you categorise yourself – father / mother firstly or in occupational role? – has telework changed this?

How your kids/ spouse think about you / how others see you?

Office set up – why like this? Is this ideal?
Appendix 2: Participants summary sheet

(Researcher To Complete) Participant Number ............. Tape number..............

Gender, Telework and Career Research Project
Katy Marsh
University of Sheffield

Participants Summary Sheet

Name .........................................................................................

Gender ......................................................................................

Age .........................................................................................

Ethnic Background ......................................................................

Occupation ................................................................................

Organisation ............................................................................... 

Interview Date ............................................................................

Interview Venue .......................................................................... 

How many children do you have? ............................................

How long have you teleworked? ..............................................

How much time do you spend working from home? ............... 

.........................................................................................

Do you agree to participate in a video recorded interview for the purposes of the project named above?

(Please sign) .................................................. (Date) ..............................

Would you like your name and the name of your organisation to remain anonymous?

.........................................................................................

Contact Details ...........................................................................
## Appendix 3: Participant priorities table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Justification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td><em>My career means to me independence, it means independent money for me, it gives me more power in my life as well BF69</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Family life really does come first BF387</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Parental</td>
<td><em>K - How would you categorise yourself, as a father firstly or as a consultant firstly? D – Definitely as a father. DM256</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary</td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td><em>K - What does your career mean to you? G – Quite a lot, because, you know from our conversations, I studied for an MBA and completed that this year, so obviously that's an investment that we made to further the career GM47</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>K – How would you categorise yourself – as a father firstly or as a business relations manager firstly? G – As a Father GM338</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kath</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td><em>Me – How would you categorise yourself first as a mother, or as a business resource manager? Kath – As a European Resource Manager KF247</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td><em>I have a huge wealth of roles in life HF320</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| James   | Neither | K - How would you categorise yourself, as a father firstly or in your occupational role firstly? 
J – I think that for me the two are always in conflict JM574 |
| Adam    | Parental | K - How would you categorise yourself firstly, as a father or as a researcher? 
A – Father AM274 |
| Magnus  | Neither | The two jobs are obviously different but equally important, so I’m trying to devote as much time to each as I could MM278 |
| Sam     | Neither | Me - Do you think of yourself more as a father or more as a territory project co-ordinator? 
Sam – Em .Bit of both really, I do see my self as a father, it’s hard to balance SM448 |
<p>| Tina    | Neither | When I’m on me holidays and out of working time, then firstly I’m a mother, if God forbid something happen to them or they were ill or they needed me in some way that nobody else would do, I don’t mean picking them up from school, I mean if they broke an arm, a leg, or they’re ill or whatever, then I’m a mother firstly, obviously. But generally, 8 while 5, 5 days a week, I’m a manager first, that’s probably not what people want to hear TF300 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ken</td>
<td>Neither</td>
<td><em>K - How would you categorise yourself firstly, as a Dad firstly or as a computer analyst firstly? ...Ke – Er. It’s a tricky one that</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthea</td>
<td>Parental</td>
<td><em>Family come first before my job and my career, and you don’t realise that until they come along ... work pales into insignificance really, compared to your family, so they come first. So I am very family-focused. It dominates my thinking, everything, so that’s the sort of parent I am</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>Parental</td>
<td><em>I’m not really career minded, I’m just a normal housewife who’s got a full time job, with a nice family</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>Parental</td>
<td><em>Your children become an extension of you really, you think more of them than you do of yourself, they come first always</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4: Interview Transcripts

Order of transcripts

1. Barbara (BF)
2. Dan (DM)
3. Gary (GM)
4. Kath (KF)
5. Helen (HF)
6. James (JM)
7. Adam (AM)
8. Magnus (MM)
9. Sam (SM)
10. Tina (TF)
11. Ken (KM)
12. Anthea (AF)
13. Sandra (SF)
14. Ruby (RF)
Interview 1: Barbara

K - Just for the camera would you mind saying your name and where you work?
B - Yeah it's Barbara Hearn and I work for United Response
K - Could you describe the job that you do Barbara please?
B - I'm an inclusion co-ordinator for a national charity, supporting people with learning disabilities. It's a lottery funded position which means it's a temporary contract, at present it's until March 2005, although it has been extended a few times because we keep getting more funding. The job is about involving the people we support in their daily lives and as an inclusion coordinator I do a variety of things supporting service users to have a say, supporting the organisational change policies and procedures, training of staff and it involves quite a lot of travel - I work throughout a division which is quite a large area, so I do a lot of travel as well.
K - And what's your career background - how did you get into the work you're doing now?
B - Well I originally started off working in a laboratory when I left school and got qualified in chemistry and science. I did day release from there, but I sort of got bored of that after 10 years and a residential social worker's position came up for a local institution, for B-care, and I applied for the job and for some reason got it, so it was a whole new thing, working for people with learning disabilities. Since then I worked for B-care and did a lot of in-house training with them, then B-care transferred their services to United Carers, the company I work for and we transferred with it and through out my career I've worked as a residential social worker and sort of came up through the line management structure, my last job was as Service Manager and I was always interested in communication and I applied for this internal job, and got it.
K - Hours wise, how long do you spend at home in the office?
B - It depends each week is different because I do a lot of travelling with work but on average over the year I probably spend 2 and a half to 3 days on average.
K - And are you satisfied with the role that you’re doing at the moment, with your current job?
B - Yes I enjoy my job at the minute, it’s difficult cos it’s a timed job, we’re always wondering when we’re gonna be finishing, so that’s quite hard but other than that I really enjoy it.
K - What are your aims for your future career?
B - Well at the minute I’m at college because I haven’t got any sort of proper qualifications in social work or learning disabilities and so at the minute the organisation’s paying for me to the NVQ 4 Manager’s Award but I don’t really know what I want to do long term. I really enjoy the training aspect of the job I’m doing, the inclusion aspect. so maybe to stick around training and stuff. I wouldn’t like to go into management again.
K - I’ll ask you a really broad question now, what kind of worker are you?
B - (laughs)
K - Just anything that comes off the top of your head.
B - I can be quite a chaotic worker. I am quite imaginative so I do a lot of, you know, I can imagine a lot of things, and approach things from a different angle than some people. I’m not very good at... well I am a good organiser, but in a chaotic way if that makes sense, so I can organise large
events very well. things like that, and I do organise quite large events and
for people to do stuff, but organising my work time in my office. is
something I’m not brilliant at. I don’t like sitting down in an office but I
have to do it unfortunately, that’s the aspect I least like.
K – Yes, does that form quite a large part of your job. kind of deskwork?
B – It does in preparation. it should form more, at the minute I’m very.
very busy, so I’m doing a lot of out and about work, and snatching office
work and I’m really feeling that I need to catch up a lot. so after I come
back off leave I’ve got a lot of training courses that I need to prepare for. so
yeah, I need to be here, knuckling down.
K – What does your career mean to you?
B – What does my career mean to me? That’s a hard question, phew. I
really enjoy it, I really enjoy my job, I really feel like I’m making a
difference in what I’m doing, I like to see people empowered, which is. I
think, part of my role, is empowering people we support as United Carers. I
like to see change, so I’m quite good at change management and we do a
lot of change, sometimes I think ‘oh it would be really nice to stay at home
and not do any work at all’, so you’ve always got that cos you do miss out
on your family things but I don’t think I would be happy doing that. My
career means to me independence, it means independent money for me, it
gives me more power in my life as well I think.
K – Do you think your career’s been affected by you working from home?
Think it might have been different if you were in a more traditional setting?
B – I think the job that I’ve got now is quite a flexible role, so it’s quite a
flexible job, and I generate my own work, if that makes sense, so the work
that I do, is what I generated – ok it’s on demand- but I do generate my
own work. And I think that amount of flexibility, it’s good to be working
from home for that, I don’t think I could do this job working from an
office, cos I think, because of the travelling that I do. I don’t think my
career’s been affected by working from home. because I do go out and
about and I do meet a lot of people and I work with managing directors of
the organisation as well, I am quite a high profile person within the
organisation.
K- So you’re married, living here, and you’ve got 3 children, you were
saying. Could you just remind me how old they are?
B – 9, 7, and 5.
K – And currently how do you arrange childcare and schooling and things?
B – Em well, cos I’ve always worked, I’ve never had a career break, while
I’ve had the children, so I’ve always worked, and apart from a very short
space of working part time, I’ve work full time throughout having the kids,
at the minute, since my last job I hired a nanny. employed a nanny. and she
still works for me now. although she doesn’t work full time for me now.
she used to work full time for me. I was her main employer, but when Lucy
started school I employed her for 20 hours a week. I employ her. and she
comes in the morning, if I’m working from home then I take the children to
school, but she will pick them up from school and do the after school
activity, cos I tend to work til 5 o’clock. if I’m away like this week she
stayed overnight when I was staying overnight somewhere and she would
take them to school, but she has them in the holidays as well.
K - Great, how about domestic work in the home. how’s that organised?
B - Very badly! Yeah, my Aunty tends to come and clean once a week usually, she’s not been lately cos we’ve had a lot of building work going on, but usually she’d come once a week for a couple of hours, but apart from that we share that. My husband and myself. Share that out.

K - Is that almost 50/50 then?

B - Oh, at least, he does a lot, yeah definitely.

K - Did you have time off work when your children were born?

B - I had maternity leave, normal maternity leave, but I’ve always worked so I just had the... I can’t remember what it was then, it wasn’t the year that you get now, certainly not.

K - It’s gone up now hasn’t it?

B - Mmm

K - And another broad question, deep question, what kind of parent would you say you are?

B - Oh God! I don’t know what kind of parent I am. I think, I always said, (this is) very strange, cos my Mum always stayed at home when we were young, and I always said that I would go to work cos I was never very maternal and sometimes I feel, sometimes you feel guilty about it but I think that overall I provide my children with a wide range of experiences and that they’re... because mine and Adrian, my husband’s relationship’s fairly stable, and their childcare arrangements have been very stable, so they’ve had Joanne, for the past, for the past 5 years, the nanny. They’re quite confident that I’m going to come back, I would like to think that it hadn’t affected them much, I mean it’s bound to have affected people in some ways but I don’t think it’s affected them adversely, I think that they’ve had a wide variety of... and I would rather have done that - had Joanne. and then they’d be able to go to school and do all the things, than take them to a nursery. I think that’s not so good, but they have been in their own home, so, and they have got a stability in their lives. I do a lot of activities with the children, you know we do a lot of stuff together. A lot of stuff at weekends, and in the week if I’m about, we do a lot of things, so they get their money’s worth!

K - Great, what have you learnt since becoming a parent?

B - God, life’s tough! Life’s stressful. You have to sort fights out a lot. What have I learnt since becoming a...? Well, you’ve obviously got more people to think about than yourself. So obviously what you do affects... you know, so you have to be more organised, and you have to be thinking ‘oh they need a packed lunch today’ or whatever, if there’s a school trip or they’ve got to take something to school, I have to think about all that, so you have to be more organised. I perhaps don’t take as many risks as I would have done before, I used to do a bit of lairy stuff but you’re always thinking, well you’ve got kids, you’ve got responsibilities. So you become more responsible, you know, yeah.

K - Do you think your role in your family’s changed since you’ve began working from home?

B - No, I don’t think so, because I’ve always worked, the days that I do work from home, I actually do work and I do have childcare. I don’t work from home... if I hadn’t have my childcare sorted for the days I work from home then I would see my role as an extended role. Sometimes I have to say to Adrian ‘well...’ sometimes, oh - people do put more demands on
you than when you’re going out to work, so like sometimes I get jobs like going out to the bank or stuff that if I was actually working in an office that I wouldn’t do. But because I do spend a long time on the road and a lot of time away, I’m only supposed to do 35/37 hours a week. and I do a lot more because of the travelling I do, so you know, I can be quite flexible.

K – So you’ve worked from home for 4 years or so now.

B – Mmm

K – Who instigated that? Was it yourself or someone at work?

B – Well I had the option when I got my current role. I always worked in an office before then for United Carers, because it was a brand new role within the organisation and there actually wasn’t any office space for me to work in… they would have found some had it been desperate but I said ‘I don’t mind working from home’. so that’s what I did and all my colleagues work from home.

K – What have other people’s reactions been when you said that you wanted to work from home, for example in your family and people who you’ll be working with?

B – Well because all my colleagues, we’re all spread out all over the country, so the team I work with, we all work from home, so that’s a sort of normal thing, the family hasn’t bothered. I mean I’ve got the office here so I can shut it up at night and that’s it, so it doesn’t sort of… well it does sometimes encroach on the house but not very often, so they haven’t… nobody’s said anything adverse I don’t think.

K – Is it what you expected, working from home? Or is it a better experience or worse?

B – Sometimes I find it really hard to get motivated, especially if I’ve been really busy and I’ve been working away a lot and obviously I have jobs to catch up with at home as well, and people come round, I didn’t expect that. you know that people come round cos it is your home at the end of the day and you get a lot of phone calls, personal calls, at home that you don’t really get at work which, you have to get out of them. you have to say ‘I can’t really talk to you cos I’m working at home’. What was the question again?

K – Was it what you expected?

B – Was it what I expected…? I think so yeah, I think that sometimes I think that it would be nice to work in an office with other people. and I don’t think… I know for a fact that I wouldn’t like to work from home full time.

K – What were your opinions of other people who worked from home before you began?

B – I don’t know if I had any. I don’t know. I didn’t really know anybody who worked from home, but finnily enough there’s a lot of people who work from home in the road, in this road, that I live in now. so we do actually compare notes cos a lot of us go to… we keep saying that we’ll have to go out at Christmas and stuff, cos that’s the sort of thing you miss out on - office parties and all that sort of stuff. I presume I thought… I don’t know. I don’t think I had an opinion, but I know some people might think it’s a dos you working from home, but I think it’s more demanding and I actually think you get more work done. because I think that if you’re working in an office you walk in, you have a coffee, you have a chat.
Interview 1: Barbara

there’s always someone there to have a chat with, whereas if I’m here I will
be working pretty much solid. I do… I do feel guilty sometimes if I go out
for lunch, occasionally I go out for lunch with a friend and that is the thing.
I think I feel that people’ll be saying ‘oh it’s her, she’s working from home.
look she’s swanning off in Mackton’ or whatever. do you know what I
mean? And even days, I was talking to a colleague cos our job’s quite
imaginative, I can sit here and actually really struggle to work. like my
colleague he’ll say ‘well go and do something else and you can come back
to it’, but I feel really guilty that between 9 and 5 I should be working, so
although it can be flexible, although I do a lot of other hours above and
extra, even if I can’t work properly I’m still sat in here twiddling my
thumbs when I should really just walk away and treat it more flexibly.
K – Do you have an idea of what a typical teleworker is like?
B – As I say there’s one or two people work from home up here, on the
whole people tend to be fairly motivated and at the end of the day, if they
weren’t they wouldn’t still be in their jobs would they? I wouldn’t like to
work from home because of childcare issues, I’d have to have my children
separate. I think you’d be different if you had to look after your kids, I
don’t see how you could do it.
K – How do you keep in touch with your colleagues and people that you
work with at United Carers?
B – Well, there’s an Area Office in Mackton, and I’ve been there this
morning actually because all my mail, all my work mail goes there, so I
usually go to the office once a week to pick my mail up, so I sort of have a
chat with them then and just catch up on stuff and they’re also an admin
centre so if I have any administration stuff I’ll just go there and do that.
I’ve got a mobile phone that I use a lot and obviously email and probably,
on a typical day, I probably get 20 or 30 emails - I can spend a day on just
doing emails all day you know.
K – Have you had any issues of isolation?
B – No but I think that’s because I don’t work from home full time, if I
worked from home full time then yes, I wouldn’t want to work from home
full time, so I think that I would have then, but I think because I do a lot of
training, I’m out and about a lot meeting people, I don’t.
K – Do you have more control over your work now?
B – My work controls me, that’s where I’m not very good. I do tend to shut
the office up because I think you have to do, so I do shut the office up, but
then if Adrian’s working nights or something, and the kids are in bed and
I’ve got something burning, then I will come back to it, which, if it was a
real office, you know an office somewhere else, you wouldn’t do that, so I
will do work later on at night if I need something doing then I’ll do it then
whatever.
K – And are you a better worker? Are you more focused? Do you get more
done?
B – I suppose it depends on how I’m feeling at the time. Some days I’m
useless, some days I can’t do anything. I have sessions where I find it
difficult to remain motivated. You have to be self-motivated but also
there’s a certain amount of pressure on me to do a certain amount of work
anyway so… you just have to get it done.
Interview 1: Barbara

K - What was the learning curve for you to becoming a teleworker? Did you have to develop strategies to manage working from home?

B - One of the things that I found difficult to manage working from home, one of the things I need... I got a shredder - cos I generate a lot of paper. I do a lot of shredding, cos I mean, I've got a lot of stuff which is reference things, reading, training materials, so to keep on top of it. I mean that filing cabinet there, I've probably not been in there for a while, and I really need to clear it out, so probably one of my things is that every now and again you would have to have a good clear out, it's just full of stuff for United Carers this office is. So that would be a learning curve. not to keep stuff, cos I tend to keep stuff, and in an office, if I worked in a real office. I don't think I'd keep stuff because I think it gets archived and put away as a matter of course, doesn't it?

K - So you've developed ways to make sure that family and work are kept separate, for example shutting the door at the end of the day. Are there things that you've had to say to your children or to your husband, perhaps maybe 'don't disturb me between certain times...''?

B - Yeah, on the whole it's not too bad cos Adrian works full time. so if I'm in the office he's at work or if he's working nights he's in bed, the children are at school, all of them now. I'd say in the school holidays I think it's going to be... I mean we've just started the school holidays and I've actually been working away for the first few weeks so it's not been an issue, but I was thinking, if it does become an issue, I thought I might need to take my computer to the office for a couple of days in Mackton and work there, and work there, so that could be an issue, but they are fairly good, they know if the office is shut... And Joanne, who looks after them, she's good with them.

K - Overall what has the impact been on your family of starting to work from home?

B - I think the impact on my family of working from home... I don't think there's been an impact as such, I think the impact's been of the job full stop. Because of the amount of travelling I do as well, sometimes things do, if I'm preparing for a big conference or something, then things will... there's been one or two times when I've had stuff all over the dining room, so you know it can be, it can encroach on the rest of the house. But I mean, at least because I work from home I can take the kids to school, if I'm at home, so that's quite nice, I can sort of be flexible if they've got a school play or something, and go and see that. I've got my diary and I don't book anything else in, so I probably see more of their school activities than I would if I was working in an office, if I plan it right.

K - And overall, just to summarise, what do you think the impact has been on your career?

B - I mean I, I think as I say, because I'm quite a high profile person in the organisation and do a lot of travelling and meet a lot of people, it's not done me any harm, working from home, but I can see that if you were quietly beavering away at home by yourself then people could forget you were there, but they don't forget I'm there because, as I say, I'm out and about a lot, so yeah, I don't think it's had an impact. working from home. And my manager's particularly good, we still have a lot of support. I get a lot of support from her cos I mean she works in London. we're very
dispersed, she works from home, she has one day in her office, then works from home, and we have support time over the phone and things like that. so we’re in regular contact, and she trusts what we do, and I might say ‘oh I’ve gone to the hair dresser’s today’, but she knows that, like yesterday. I didn’t finish work til 9 o’clock at night, so I’ve got a very trusting manager. so I think that’s nice, that’s good, you can do that, but I still do feel guilty, I mean I sat in the hair dressers today thinking ‘ooh’ and yeah but actually they do owe me a lot of hours.

K – So the impact on your life generally of working from home is a positive one?
B – Yeah, I think it’s been positive, I think it’s been positive, but only because I travel about as well, I wouldn’t want to do it full time.

K – Are there things that you would change? Or would you ever go back to traditional office-based working?
B – Em, depending on the job, I think it depends on the job. I think… I was working in an office yesterday and they said ‘oh it’d be really nice to have you working here all the time’ and you know I do miss that, sort of building relationships with people in an offices, cos I enjoy that aspect of work anyway, so I don’t think I’d mind working in an office. but the job that I’ve got, I generate my own work. it’s a flexible position in a lot of ways, so it does demand a lot of hard work, I don’t think I’d like to go back to a job where work was sort of generated for me. you know, so it’s not a working from home issue, it’s the type of role I’ve got really.

K – So, to summarise what we’ve been talking about then, is telework an effective way for parents to reconcile work and family life?
B – Cor! You see, like, I wouldn’t work from home to look after kids because that would be impossible, well, kids my kids age, they still need separate childcare, so I don’t think it makes a difference in my family life, I still pay the same amount of childcare out as I would do if I was working in an office, and they know that I’m at work if I’m in here, because I’ve done it for so long, and if you think. Lucy, my youngest. it’s been since, I’ve been doing it since she’s been born, I’ve been doing this, pretty much, she was a year old when I started doing this, so they’re just used to that. that’s the way that they know that I work. So it’s not reconciled family life, no, but it’s been a good way for me to do my job.

K – Great. My overall research question is ‘how does home-based telework impact upon the professional and parental identities of men and women?’.

What do you think the findings might be?
B – I think it depends on the job, if you were working from home full time, with very little… and it depends on how it’s managed, if you were working from home full time and you weren’t particularly getting the support from your organisation that you needed, then I think it would be a very lonely way / place to be, and I think you wouldn’t be very motivated to carry on. depending on your job I suppose, because I’m working from home not all the time – I’ve got some time in the field and some time at home. I’ve got good support. I have a lot of contact with people, a lot of phone conversations. then you know that’s good. it does enable me, the only positive, the only sort of scam that there is is if one of the kids is ill off school and I’m working from home. then I can manage that with them, because I wouldn’t like to… cos I’ve got quite a large house and I’ve got a
Interview 1: Barbara

350 separate office. so it can get shut off, and we don‘t really... so it’s my
351 working office really. so when I’m in here I’m working, when I’m out
352 there I’m not, so it is sort of separate. whereas I know some of my
353 colleagues, one of them’s in her bedroom and I couldn’t cope with that.
354 you know, I’m glad I’ve got a separate office where it can all can be shut
355 away. So it depends on the person’s circumstances, some people will say
356 it’s impacted on their career because they’re lonely. because they’re
357 isolated, and because they’re not... they’re invisible to their organisations I
358 think, whereas with my job I’m fairly visible and, you know. I don’t do it
359 all the time.
360 K – Has working from home changed how you think about yourself and
361 who you are?
362 B – Changed how I think about myself? No, because I think the role that I
363 do is a very valued role and my manager values what I do and she’s a very
364 supportive manager. I think I’m really lucky to have a really good
365 manager, who also work from home, so she understands, we have sort of
366 mutual support, so if I say ‘right we need to shut up shop’, you know, it’s
367 stuff like if you get up at 7 in the morning and you come and might switch
368 your emails on, whereas you’d never. you would never dream of going
369 down the office to do that, would you? And sometimes in an evening you’ll
370 sit and do some work. I can’t remember what the question was, what’s the
371 question?
372 K – Has it changed how you think about yourself?
373 B - So no, I still feel valued, that’s what I was trying to say, as a member of
374 staff, and as a part of an organisation, I feel a very valued part of the
375 organisation, but it’s down to the skill of my manager. really I think that.
376 and I can see managers in the past. maybe people would have imagined
377 that I wouldn’t have thought it would be so good, so you know if you’ve
378 got that good support and people know you’re doing the work and you
379 know you do get regular contact, I think that they’re the important things
380 about working from home.
381 K – And how about the way that you would categorise yourself? Would
382 you say that you’re a mother firstly or would you categorise yourself as an
383 employee, in your professional role?
384 B – In my professional role? I mean I’m obviously a mother. I’m a mother
385 of 3 children, I’m a parent, because, my husband’s a parent as well. luckily.
386 cos I get a lot of support from him, so we’re both parents really, and I think
387 I’m me first and my job second, so all the things, the family life really does
388 come first, although work obviously impacts on it. it always does whatever
389 job you do, if you’re a working parent it does, so yeah me family would
390 come first.
391 K – Do you think you working from home has changed how your kids or
392 how your husband sees you?
393 B- No, because I work away a lot as well now. I think they still value what
394 I do, as I say, every now and again there’ll be a job comes my way. that’s a
395 house job, because I am about and I sometimes say ‘do you think I do
396 nothing at home all day – I’m working you know’. that occasionally
397 happens but not on a regular basis, but that still sometimes happens.
Interview 1: Barbara

K – Ok we’re pretty much through with the questions, I just wanted to ask you about the way that you’ve got your office set up down here, is it...

B – I need, as I say, I need to get more things out of the office, I’ve got a lot of equipment that I use, because I’ve got a lot of things like projectors, cameras, I’ve got 2 laptops, I’ve got a lot of things like big files that I use a lot. you know. training packs, so I’ve got a lot of equipment which I need to store, which does worry me sometimes cos there’s a lot of money’s worth in these offices, so I could really do with storing them up in the office and fetching them from the central office, but saying that it wouldn’t practically work because I have to leave the house at 5 o’clock some mornings, so the office, I could do with some more shelves really. but then I’d just fill them, so maybe I’m better not having any. I’ve got to ditch the filing cabinet, I don’t like the filing cabinet, so that’s got to go.

K – How do you feel about being next door to the kitchen?

B – That’s alright, to be honest with you when I’m in here and {I’ve got that door shut and I’ve got me music on, cos I tend to have music. it doesn’t bother me at all.

K – The final thing that I’d like to do is just have a scan around with the camera, if that’s alright?

B – It’s very messy! It’s very, very messy!

K – Don’t worry about it, but the final question for the film is - thank you for taking part - and could you give me some feedback about how you felt about taking part in this project?

B – That’s fine yeah, I don’t mind taking part, it’s interesting to listen to your questions cos obviously there are issues working from home and some people do get a rough deal working from home, we get a lot of allowances as well, we get home-working allowances so that’s good. I think it’s not people... some people do see it as a dos, so it’s quite nice that somebody’s doing some research into how... cos I think it will affect the workforces more and as more people work from home... cos there’s computers and it’s enabled people to do that. and organisations ought to understand what it’s like, I think my manager does you see, I think that’s the real difference.

K – Right thanks again. I’m just going to…

B – That’s me dog underneath here, see me dog there?

K – That’s what we could hear snoring!

B – He’s actually there all the time. and he’s wrapped his self up in my email wires.

K – I’m just gonna pick the camera up…

B – And he’s a bit smelly. so it’s a very smelly office. don’t like the smell of it! – I think he’s died!
Interview 2: Dan

K - Could you say your name and your job into the camera Dan, so we can
make sure I’ve got sound and things on it?

D - Ok, it’s Dan Timmons, I work as an IT security and network design
consultant.

K - Could you describe your job a little bit more to me?

D - Yeah. I generally design internet working, basically I was one of the
architects of the internet in the UK, so designed networks for banks, large
corporations, internationally and nationally. Recently my work’s moved
into the security field, so that’s to stop people hacking in to those networks,
and keep the networks safe for our customers.

K - Ah right, quite a technical role then?

D - Yeah, yeah.

K - What’s your background, kind of career-wise? How did you get into
this current occupation?

D - Er, when I left school I did electronics at college, then I joined a
company called M-call, famous for the phones, but they were doing
networking at the time, and did an apprenticeship in data communications.
and also went to college again and did BTEC’s in further electronics
qualifications and just progressed from there, and worked up from being.
er, originally I left school, I left college, and became a bench engineer
fixing stereo equipment, things like that, but data communications was the
way that the market was going – IT.

K - Right, do you work full time?

D - Yes, I do, yeah.

K - And how long roughly do you spend at home?

D - At the moment I’m spending about 70% of my working time at home.

K - Sometimes you’re out on the road, visiting clients and things?

D - Yeah, basically a lot of our customers are in London, I work for a
national – well it’s an American company, and we’re based in the UK, so a
lot of our clients are based in London, so a lot of my meetings have to take
place in Head Offices, either in London or wherever their Head Office may
be.

K - Right, but there is a local office you could go to if you wanted?

D - Yeah, 15 minutes down the road, as a national... in our company... in
the UK we have business centres: in Scotland, London, Manchester, Milton
Keynes, Birmingham, and obviously down south.

K - And are you satisfied with the role that you’re in at the moment?

D - I am yes, I’m very happy with it.

K - Great and do you have any aims for your future career?

D - Em. Pretty much just staying within the field I’m in, it’s an evolving
market, and technology’s constantly moving on, so it’s not like it’s a
stagnant role, it kind of keeps me very active and busy.

K - What kind of worker would you say you are? – Quite a deep question.

D - What type of worker? Well, to do this type of role you have to be an
expert in your field, so highly technical in the knowledge field that I’m in.
self motivated is a key factor, and self disciplined, certainly working from
home you need to have self discipline.

K - Great. What does your career mean to you?

D - A great deal. Since I was, maybe 21, I was very ambitious, and wanted
to be the top of the best, and one of the qualifications I attained, round
Interview 2: Dan

about the age of 23. was the highest you can get in the IT communications
industry, and since then I’ve always aspired to stay at the top of my field.
K – Great, and do you think that your career’s been affected by the fact that
you work from home?
D – Not as yet, but in coming years I think it will affect it more
K – In what way?
D – In a negative way as from a career perspective. Obviously, being
young and it evolving into a career position of a high standing is one gain
that you get but then when you have the child bearing / child caring needs,
then that can impact your career progression, it can either slow it down.
stop it, or set it back. I guess I’m at the point now where my career is still
going forward but I can feel that it will either slow down because of my
commitments to my child or it will have to take a step back and I’ll have to
do some downsizing.
K – Great, and you’re a single dad, and you’ve got one child who’s 4 and a
half. How do you currently arrange your childcare and schooling?
D – Ok, up until yesterday I had an au pair. or nanny. it just so happened
that it was my niece from Australia, 20 year old niece. but I did actually
apply and do some searches with agencies for an actual au pair. and it was
only when family found out that I was looking and my niece wanted to
come to the UK. that fitted, but basically she performed the same function
as an au pair would perform.
K – What about domestic work in the home. how do you organise that?
D – Again. I do my own housework, and when the au pair was here she
basically helps out 50/50 pretty much - a thankless task but. you know, we
all do it.
K – Great, did you have time off work when your child was born?
D – Yes, I took 3 weeks off.
K – And what kind of parent would you say you are?
D – Er, very... hands on, loving, affectionate, a mentor as well.
K – Great, in what kind of ways?
D – Obviously bringing up a son alone, you know he always wants his
cuddles, he wants affection, and he gets it, he gets that off me in equal
measure, obviously teaching him the ways of the world, I’m a very
practically minded person and he seems to like pulling things apart like I
did when I was a little boy.
K - Right. brilliant, and what have you learnt since becoming a parent?
D – Em, probably that it’s the most important job that I’ll ever do. whereas
before being a parent, work was probably the biggest ambition I had. after
having a child I wouldn’t swap him for the world. now I put obviously
family before work.
K – Great, and has your role in your family changed since you’ve been
working from home?
D – Well I’ve been working from home in a similar role for, you know, the
last 10 years, but I’ve only just been divorced for the last 2 and a half
years, so that’s were my role’s changed, as a single dad. so obviously there
has been a change as I’m now living alone, whereas before obviously I had
my wife, so the role has certainly changed but we adapt.
Interview 2: Dan

K - Sure, so you’ve worked from home for kind of about 10 years, but 2
years whilst managing the parenting role as well. Who instigated the fact
that you were going to start working from home?
D - Well within the industry that I’m in, the working from home has
always been an option because a lot of the work is technical, using your
mind and using a computer, so there’s not always the need to clock in to an
office or do a 9-5 desk job, so I’ve always had the flexibility to do work
from home, and it’s only in the last 2 years when I’ve actually asked my
employer for flexible working, it means that I will actually take advantage
of that a bit more.
K - Great, so the main reason that you decided to work from home was to
be able to balance your childcare?
D - That’s right yeah.
K - What have other people’s reactions been - mainly your child and
people you work with, for the fact you work from home?
D - Certainly from work, like I say within the industry it’s not uncommon,
I think some of the times I’ve… one of the practical ways I work from
home is to avoid going to London as frequently as I would if I wasn’t out
there doing child care, so one of the reactions would be that they’re
probably wondering where I am at a lot of meetings and why I’m always
teleconferencing in, that’s actually a small hurdle to overcome. With regard
to my son, working from home, he loves it cos he’s always got the
opportunity to come in and have his knee kissed better.
K - Aw. Is it what you expected, working from home, or has it been better
than you expected, or worse?
D - Sometimes it’s difficult to balance some of the work commitments and
working from home, and also the problem with working from home is the
extended… the hours of the daytime don’t actually have any clear
demarcations, and this is probably self discipline as well, knowing when to
cut off, when it’s work time and when it’s home time.
K - Yeah. What were your opinions of other people who teleworked,
before you began?
D - I thought they were jammy sods!
K - So you thought it was quite a privilige to be able to work from home?
D - Yes, like I say, about 10 years ago, because I work in the networking
industry, I developed, with an employer, some techniques, some tools, that
we could allow people to do the same job sat at a desk that they could from
home: special extension lines for the phone, so it looked like they were
logged into the office, computers, ISDN links, networking links, so the
companies that I worked for, I made teleworking more practical for them,
so I kind of, do as it says on the tin.
K - Great, do you have an idea what a typical teleworker might be like?
D - Typical teleworker? I certainly, well, looking at some of the customers
that we have, a lot of the banking customers, they have sales administrators
who work from home, they’ll do telesales and trying to cold calling people,
and chase up existing customers and offer services, so the only tool you
need there is probably a database and a phone to contact people. Other
typical teleworkers may be doing administration type jobs.
K - And how do you keep in touch with your colleagues and your clients?
D - We have bi-weekly teleconference calls, because…
Interview 2: Dan

149 (A child’s voice outside) – Dad, dad.
150 D – Bear with me Harry. (The child comes in) We have bi-weekly
teleconference calls and monthly meetings as well, face to face, so we all
keep in touch that way, and obviously we have email and in our
corporate... we have a chat forum as well so if we have any technical
questions or queries...
155 H - Dad?
156 D – Yes Harry?
157 H - Can we have an ice pop now?
158 D – Ok, can you get Emma to get it out the freezer?
159 H – Or I might do it.
160 D – Oh, ok, one each then ok?
161 H – Ok (runs off)
162 K – Have you had any issues of isolation?
163 D – No, actually, it’s quite a fair balance, I do travel a lot, when I’ve not
got my son, so when I’ve got my son you know, that’s the key focus, when
he’s with his mother, that’s when I splurge out on the work ethic and get in
touch with people.
167 K – Great, and do you think that you have more control over your work
now that you’re working from home?
169 D – I have less interruptions from work. Working in an office, especially in
the job I do, if you’re there, people, cos you’re treated like the technical
oracle, people are constantly tapping you on the shoulder and trying to
interrupt you. Whereas now, people are more likely to schedule my time.
so it gives you a more balanced and structured way of working as well.
174 K – Do you think you’re a better worker now – more efficient, focused?
175 D – I’m probably about the same, I don’t think it’s changed my focus.
176 K – What was the learning curve of starting to work at home? Did you
have to develop strategies to manage that?
178 D – Yes, you basically assess yourself after a while and find out that you’re
spending a lot of hours of the day going to the fridge or pottering around
the house and things, that can be a bit of a problem when you’re working
from home, cos you’re actually in your home environment, so it’s finding
that boundary where you switch off and work. It’s still not easy, you know
people still come to the door, trying to sell you double glazing when you’re
working from home.
185 K – What do you think the overall impact has been on your family life, of
working from home?
187 D – I think it’s been, obviously it’s improved vastly, you get to see more of
your child and hopefully Daddy won’t be just someone who popped to
work in the morning, and came home at night, tucked you in bed.
190 K – Great. and what do you think the overall impact has been on your
career. of working from home?
192 D – At the moment I think it’s stayed fairly balanced, and it’s not really
impacted it, but I do get the feeling that certainly, from the undercurrents
within my industry, that it can stifle your career, and basically there’s
always someone to replace you, who’s willing to go that extra mile, put
those extra mileages in and get away from home.
197 K - Right. overall then, what’s the impact been on your life? Has it been a
positive impact or a negative would you say?
D – Oh definitely a positive. And even if the work situation, the career, was put on hold. it’s still a positive experience because, like I say. I put family above the work.

K – Brilliant, so would you change anything? Or would you ever go back to traditional working do you think?

D – I think I would find it absolutely deplorable. I wouldn’t be able to do a 9 til 5 office job. I’m too used to being my own boss, in my own environment.

K – Is telework an effective way for parents to reconcile work and family life, do you think?

D – I think it most definitely is. We always talk about work / life balance and obviously if you’re spending most of that time in work, it’s not much of a balance, so having a work / life balance working from home is a lot more do-able.

K – My overall research question is: ‘How does home-based telework impact upon the professional and parental identities of men and women?’ – What do you think the findings might be?

D – It is a very grey area now. cos you, certainly your work identity is typically identified from your presence in work. The output that you give. if that presence isn’t seen, in person, I’ve experienced it. where my work has been appreciated, but no-one can put a face to a name, so you. that kind of stifles your career, because when people are talking about promoting people or giving someone some affirmation for some positive work, because people don’t know you face to face, they will probably put someone who they’ve seen face to face ahead of you, so it can actually set back your status in the work area. And from a family perspective. or from a parenting perspective. I think that it would probably put you up in the stakes, you know cos you’re a good worker. you’re a good parent. because you’re balancing the work and your parenting together. as opposed to: it’s one extreme or another, full on parenting or full or work.

K – Do you think things might be different if you were a woman, if you were a mother? Do you think you might find the impact on your professional and parental identity different in anyway?

D – It depends. cos we’ve seen the big shift in the career of working women. I think a career woman who’s reached the high level of the career ladder. would suffer the same consequences that I may suffer now. with careers being put on hold or set back due to childcare needs, but if you’re talking about a typical environment, scenario, where mothers do maybe a part time job, not actually a career-based job, more just a functional job. doing some kind of retail or something, then if she hasn’t developed a career for herself and it’s just a job. then you know. it would impact less. so if I. for example. stacked shelves in Sainsbury’s. I’d have the same effect as if it was a woman who stacked shelves. and I think it would be the same if it were a high powered career woman and a high powered man. it’s the same impact. I think companies frown upon anyone who’s gonna let childcare interfere with an active career.

K – Great. Has teleworking changed how you think about yourself and who you are?

D – Em. I think it’s just put everything into perspective. to know that there is a balance to be met. you can get too hung up on a job and a career. and
you lose sight of what the important things are in life. I think that working from home has allowed that balance to become quite clear and set in mind, so you know that your family is important and work is important, to feed and sustain that family. and that’s why you do it.

K – Brilliant. I think we’ve already covered this really but just to clarify, how would you categorise yourself, as a father firstly or as a consultant firstly?

D – Definitely as a father.

K – And has working from home affected that, do you think?

D – Em. It’s allowed me to be more of a father. But obviously as soon as you become a father and you get that bond with your child, then that’s first and foremost.

K – And has it changed how Harry sees you do you think?

D – I don’t know to be honest, I know a lot of my neighbours... I’ve got a nice car on the path and it never goes anywhere, and they see me here. also see young ladies entering the house all the time when I get a new au pair in, so they probably think I’m in some kind of dodgy industry. Who cares what they think as long as my son’s happy.

K – Exactly.

(Harry has walked in again)

H - Dad?

D - Yes?

H - Sammy can have a lolly?

D - Yes, he can, if his Mummy says, ok?

H - I have a lolly as well?

D - You’ve had one, don’t have another one, don’t be fat and greedy.

H - One for me and Sammy

D - No

H - Ohhh.

D - Have you just had 2 sticks of lolly?

H - No, I just gave one to Emma.

D - Ok, you have one and Sammy have one.

K – We’ve nearly finished anyway.

D - Nearly finished (he says this to Harry as the boy leaves the room. then turns back to me)

K – In fact I pretty much am finished, I just wanted to ask if there was anything else you wanted to add? And perhaps you could tell us a bit about Fathers Rights Collective?

D – Ok, the only thing, I know that I’m probably in a very privileged position to have a job which allows me to have flexible working. If I was a factory worker who had to clock in at 9 and finish at 5, 5.30, then there isn’t the option of teleworking, so I do consider myself very privileged, and I know there’s many a father would love to be able to do what I’m doing. I know there’s many a mother - within a family unit, they choose to be the
Interview 2: Dan

one that’s the primary family bread winner. they also adopt a work stance
either to go out and get employment that will allow flexible working or
allow working from home, whereas many fathers. in the majority. are
already in a place of full time employment that will not allow the
flexibility, so I’m hoping that the equality now, of people in work, and also
we’re pushing, with Fathers Rights Collective. for equality in parenting,
which allows. when a family’s together, for example, as a family unit, you
decide who does what role: you may decide to 50/50 balance your working
life and career and you both chip in or one may decide ‘well I’ve got the
biggest career potential, so I’ll push that route to get more money in’. while
the other person says ‘I’ll do the childcaring and balance that with maybe
some part time work’, and it may be the man or the woman who does either
role these days and people are going into a more 50/50 role. The problem
is, as I’ve said before, child care and a job go ok, child care and a career
can be something that’s stifling or just doesn’t get off the road, so I hope
that with 50/50 equal parenting that’s the thing that happens. people do
roles as required. Now, what Fathers Rights Collective does today, because
that’s the shift in society, that we know that there isn’t automatically a
presumption that one person is the primary child carer - cos it could be
either, cos you’ve negotiated it as part of the family unit - after separation,
divorce, the system today that takes on that old model: that mother is
always the primary childcarer. dad is the primary breadwinner… hang on a
sec, I think someone’s kid’s… (Dan checks the window) oh it’s alright,
sorry. So the fact is that society has shifted on from those norms but the
law today hasn’t shifted on one iota. I found it exactly, myself. was that,
when I went through separation and divorce, as soon as mother left the
house and took the kids, and for reasons better known to herself. she
decided not to let me have any access to them, when I took recourse to the
family court, after trying mediation failed miserably, so I had no choice but
to go to the family court, and when I got there I found that whatever Mum
said was believed and was true, and the fact that she claimed to be the
primary breadwinner…
(Harry comes in crying) Ooh, bare with me. (He scoops Harry up and sits
him on his lap) Y’alright? What’s the matter?
H – (undecipherable through the tears)
D – What have you done? Hurt your finger? Oh dear, how did you do that?
H – (Still crying) I tripped over.
D – You tripped over? (Dan kisses it, he crying stops) Is that better, eh?
How did you trip over?
(Another child off camera) – Tripped over that black rug.
K – Oh dear, I wonder if now might be a nice time to give Harry a little
present? What do you think, will it make you feel better do you think? Let
you have a little present?
D – Ooh, say thank you Harry.
K – Have I spelt your name right, is it with a ‘h’?
D - (to Harry) Is it right? Let’s have a look. ooh it’s a card and what does it
say? ‘To Harry from Katy’, ah it’s a voucher for the toyshop.
K – So you can get yourself a nice new toy.
D - Shall we go there today and go and buy something?
K – Brilliant.
Interview 2: Dan

349 D – Say thank you to Katy.
350 H – Thank you.
351 K – That’s my pleasure, and you can do some colouring.
352 D – You can colour, it says ‘colour me in’. It’s a good card that, isn’t it?
353 Shall we keep that safe and play with that later? You’ve got your dirty hands, so we’ll let you go out and play just be careful... I know I’ve just kissed that.
356 H – (undecipherable)... pointing...
357 K – Can you still point with it? Is it still your pointing finger?
358 H – (Nods)
359 D – Still working, isn’t it? (Dan wipes a tear from his son’s eye)
360 K – Good, good.
361 D – Go and play nicely, be careful.
362 K - Go and make sure you can still point at things Harry won’t you?
363 D – He’s fine. That’s what you get to be able to do working from home.
364 At this point Dan continues talking about his work with Fathers Rights Collective for a further 12 minutes, this is omitted from the interview record as irrelevant
366 K – Just to finish off the filming, if you don’t mind. I’m just gonna have a scan around of your office space.
369 D – Yeah.
370 K – So you can kind of see the balance. Starting from the front window.
371 You’ve got some toys on the top shelf. Are they Dad toys?
372 D – Yeah, Harry bought me that, ‘Back to the Future’ car.
373 K – Brilliant. So you’ve got a mix on the dresser, of work books...
374 D – Yeah, my work seems to be spreading more than the... I was actually building an extension on the side of the house before we divorced so I’d have a separate office space and that. I still have building plans for that.
377 K – Right, and a filing cabinet in the corner. And then doors leading through to the living room. Great, I think that’s all I need of that. Is the office space set up like this kind of, consciously, is it...?
380 D – I’m reluctant to have it here actually, at one stage I had it in the spare bedroom, then I brought it down here for more practical... you know, rather than being distant. I think it should be next to your home environment, when you’ve got childcare, you’ve seen Harry running in and getting a cuddle and be sent off, but I would like it to be a little bit further away than in this room, which is why I want to get build an office on the side of the house.
387 K – Does this double as a dining room?
388 D – It’s a dining room yes, so it’s a bit of an eye sore having a filing cabinet and that in a living room. We’re limited for space at the moment, but hopefully we can improve that.
391 K – Thank you for taking part, that’s pretty much it, apart from, could you give me some feedback how you felt taking part in this project?
392 D – No it’s fine. I think it’s great to say, to spread the word, of what dad’s can really achieve when you put your mind to it. Most of the dad’s that I’ve spoke to have said ‘ooh I could never do that cos work would get in the way’, well you’ve got to rethink outside the box, you’ve to change your career, change your job, or have words with your employer and see where the options are. Unless obviously if you’re a factory worker, your doing 9-
Interview 2: Dan

5. there’s not many options unless you can get extra holidays and things.

400 but where you’ve got a job where you sit at a desk, you answer the phones.

401 you work on a computer, there’s no reason to say to your employer ‘why

402 can’t I do this from home?’ and this is what I used to do with my

403 employers and we then put in a system, a network, to actually make them

404 accept that’s actually a reality and now more employers are actually

405 thinking that way there’s more opportunity for more people to actually

406 grasp that opportunity. And say, well there’s no reason to drive for an hour

407 to work, sit at a desk, answer the phone, drive an hour home again, when.

408 I’ve got a phone at home, I’ve got a desk, I’ll cut out the driving. and after

409 work they’re straight home.

410 K – Absolutely, brilliant, thanks very much then, I’ll turn it off now.
Interview 3: Gary

K - Could you just, so I can check the camera’s working properly and the sound and things, state your name for me?

G - My name’s Gary Jacques

K - Can you tell me a little bit about what you do? You’ve put your job title as Business Relations Manager.

G - Fairly vague. I’m program manager at the moment for an IT services based in the UK here in Milton Keynes, we’ve got probably four or so offices here, and my role is to program manage a productivity initiative across Europe, where the company’s hoping to save several million dollars by implementing technology through various people really.

K - Right, how did you get into that kind of work?

G - EMK, my employer is where I started working, from my first job, so this has been my progression through various jobs within the same organisation.

K - Right, when you were kind of at college and things was this the kind of area you always wanted to get into?

G - No, no, when I was at college, and studying it was first of all chemistry and biology I was interested in, but within Milton Keynes, it’s much more an electronics and technology town really, so it was an electronics and technology company that I applied to, took me on.

K - Right, so you’ve been working from home now for about one, one and a half years?

G - Yes.

K - How long do you spend in the home as versus the office?

G - It’s virtually 5 days a week at home, there might be a half-day each week when I’d pop into an office, as I say there’s several offices here, so I can pop in to see staff that work for me and have status reports and updates or look through finances or it could be my upwards reporting to the management chain.

K - Are you happy with the work that you’re doing now?

G - Er

K - Just asking kind of what… how good your job satisfaction is.

G - Could be higher. It’s not a bad job, not a bad company to work for, but I think after a year, year and a half of the same program, it’s time to move on, and after 7 years with the same company it might be nice to change as well.

K - So do you have aims for your future career?

G - Looking at the moment, checking it out at the moment.

K - Right. What kind of worker would you say you are?

G - What kind of worker? Are there any options?

K - No. Just the first words that come into your head when someone says ‘what kind of worker are you?’, perhaps…

G - Reluctant

K - Ah right

G - Fairly logical and technical, and I like to fault-find and diagnose and repair things.

K - Right, right. What does your career mean to you?

G - Quite a lot, because, you know from our conversations, I studied for an MBA and completed that this year, so obviously that’s an investment that we made to further the career. There’s still a need, whether you believe in
the man as the breadwinner or not, to bring in as much money as possible
to look after the family. So I want to have a career that I enjoy and that I
think rewards well.
K – Do you think your career’s been affected by working from home,
either negatively or positively?
G – I don’t think so. The one thing that I would suggest, is that by not
being in the office, you’re not visible. If you wanted to, it’s harder to play
the politics from home, because you can’t influence and network so much
in the corridors. But equally if you want to get on, progress through results.
it’s probably easier not to be involved in some of the gossiping.
K – Great. And you’re married with 2 children, have any of your children
got any additional needs or anything like that?
G – Nothing significant, I take the little boy to speech therapist once a
week.
K – Ok, and how old are they?
G – The boy’s 5 and my little girl’s 8.
K – Ok, how’s childcare currently arranged at the moment?
G – They both are at school between 9 and 3, or 3.30, within half a mile of
the house, so I often take them before 9 o’clock and drop them both off and
be back in the home office before 9.
K – Great.
G – And then collection, Kath or I would come home and collect them, or
more likely we have a friend that collects our little girl from school and
drops her off at home.
K – And how about domestic work, how is that shared in the home?
G – We hire someone else to do it.
K – Did you have time off when your children were born?
G – Only a couple of weeks, sort of a weeks holiday and a week at
management discretion.
K – And what kind of parent would you say you are?
G – Fantastic
K – Fantastic, that’s brilliant. Would you say you’re a very hands on
parent?
G – I think so, given that I’ve got a full time career. I don’t think it was so
hands on when I was studying, because it was full time career then 3 or 4
hours each night studying each night, so there was a lapse there, but we had
a little family meeting last night where we said that we need to go out more
and play more.
K – What do you think you’ve learnt, if anything, since becoming a parent?
G – Don’t have children
K – (laughs)
G – You’re a lot less selfish I think. I suppose you become a lot more
conservative, well I did, you look out for danger signs and kids being noisy
in the street get on your nerves a bit more and cars whizzing by, you
become more safety conscious about that.
K – Has your role in your family changed since teleworking?
G – I suspect that I collect, and do a lot more of the running around for the
children than I did before because previously I’ve had roles all over the
UK. The last one would have been an hour and a half’s drive from here
each way, so obviously if I’m an hour and a half away I can’t just nip back
and collect the kids if Kath’s busy. She’ll have to do it herself or ask a friend. So I suppose I have increased the amount of childcare I perform.

K – Do you think being able to have time to study was facilitated more by you being a teleworker?

G – Probably, but in the position I was in prior to becoming a teleworker I had my own office, so if I wanted to spend a long lunch doing a case study or something I could. But obviously the results and the daily tasks all have to be performed anyway, but if it overlaps into the evening that was fair enough.

K – Who was it that instigated working from home then?

G – Me, as I say the role previous to the one I have now was an hour and a half’s journey away and I couldn’t see the point in driving down to an office with an hour and a half of my own time. Sitting at a desk in an open plan office, and waiting until the end of the day. And doing the same to drive back, so more and more to avoid wasting 3 hours of my time, I started to work from home. Although that was commented upon by the account that I was working in and the management team there.

K – Oh right?

G – They expected to see me on site at least 3 if not 4 days a week. But when I questioned it they couldn’t say why I had to actually physically be there.

K – Right, so who else did you discuss it with?

G – My immediate management.

K – Yeah.

G – Because the group that I’m in, we sell our services out to other parts of the company, who then manage our clients, so obviously I discussed with my manager where I would be based, partially because the account management I worked were raising issues about it. So before I get asked what I’m doing I will tell them what I’m doing.

K – So was your organisation generally supportive of your decision?

G – As long as it caused no delivery problems, service delivery issues.

K – And did you discuss it with friends and family before you made the decision?

G – No.

K – What were people’s reactions, for example your wife and children’s reactions?

G – I think it’s been a slow process, over time, but more and more I would be working from home, so it wasn’t as if one day all of a sudden I could burn my suit and never put a tie on again.

K – (laughs)

G – So I think, because Kath and I work in the same industry, for the same company, we’re used to travelling, we’re used to each other. Having to cover for the fact that one or other of us is at home just seems to be the normality now.

K – And what do your kids think? Have they really noticed that you’re around more?

G – Well they’ve also had to learn what it means, because they’re still quite young. Our little boy especially, so their role play games, that they play with each other, are all about having a meeting and being on a teleconference.
Interview 3: Gary

K - (laughs)

G - So they know that when Kath and I are in the study then they shouldn’t really come in and ask questions about ‘can I have a lollipop?’

K - Right

G - Cos we’ll more than likely have an earpiece in and we’ll just hold our hand up and push them out the door.

K - Was it what you expected then? Or was it better or worse in any way?

G - I think it’s probably been better, because there is a balance between things that we need to do as a couple at home to manage the home, we can get done. I suppose if I was in an office and I wanted to talk to my bank manager I might want to go and find a quiet corner and I’d be using a work’s phone for personal use, whereas now I can pick up my own phone, make the phone calls I need to, still have the business lines clear. So I suppose working from home, it works for me personally, and it also works for the company.

K - Before you started teleworking, what were your opinions of other people who teleworked?

G - They were skiving, weren’t they?

K - (laughs)

G - Well I suppose the answer is out of sight out of mind really. But you don’t know what they’re doing cos you only see them at scheduled meetings. I’m not sure whether my management have the same view of me cos I’m not sitting there and they they can’t just pop round and watch me or ask me a question although, as we were saying earlier on, technology allows them almost to do that. We’ve just enabled today an instant messaging system for the team I work in, so at any point my manager could send me a message saying ‘can you give me a buzz?’ Where as, if it was purely email and phone calls, you could not read the email or you could divert the phone call.

K - Right. So now that you are a teleworker, do you have any idea what a typical teleworker might be like?

G - Like us really, myself and Kath. I suspect that there might be categories of teleworker and you have to work in a certain industry, a certain function, a certain level of either expertise or management level, to be able to do this. If I had direct people responsibility, which I don’t. I think it would make working from home a lot harder because I’d be expected to either physically monitor what they’re doing or be there and walk, walk the offices, and be seen as management, however my position is, is a virtual team, so I’ve got staff all over Europe, so even if I was in the office I wouldn’t see them. cos they’d be in another country or another office within the same country.

K - We’ve already touched on this a bit, but how do you keep in touch with colleagues and clients? What are the main ways?

G - Mobile phone is a big one. Virtually everyone in the company is issued with the same mobile phone. This week I’m having a car phone kit installed by the company. So the idea is that you are contactable. and quite often in the past I’ve been on virtually 24 by 7 call. Just because as the manager I need people to be able to contact me before they make their own decision, it might be one I disagree with. Email is huge. we’ve got a virtually private network, so the company has paid for broadband internet.
access to home, which we plug the laptop into and we have a secure
connection that goes through the internet back to the office, and the speed
of that it's the same as being plugged into the network in the office.
K - Right, so it's mainly mobile phone and...
G - Internet email access
K - Internet and email, yeah.
G - The instant messaging, as I say, it's been enabled today, but I have
used it in the past, and you end up just chatting more on it than you do
working on it.
K - (Laughs)
G - The one thing that people do say that it's useful for, is if you're on a
teleconference and you can't be interrupted, one of the other participants
can send you a quick message saying 'are you going to mention XYZ?' and
it can prompt you to do so. We also have net-meeting for sharing files. So.
I did one a couple of weeks ago, a virtual presentation, with probably ten
people that lasted all day. Each of the ten people have their own slides to
show and they just took control of the PC's, presented their slides, shut that
down again and the next person did theirs
K - Brilliant. Do you think you've had any issues of isolation working
from home?
G - My Dr says I'll be ok soon... (barely audible)
K - (laughs)
G - As I said before, I've had an open plan office. I've had a private office.
I had a private office at work because of the client details I had, the
financial details. Most of the time the office was door shut cos I was
discussing things with the client, so I was fairly isolated even though I was
at work, and also there was a lot of work to do, so I didn't have time to
spend 3 hours around the smoking room or in the canteen or outside
walking around, so there was some self-imposed isolation anyway and this
just makes it absolute really.
K - Do you think you've got more control over your work now?
G - I suppose I don't pick up so many informal actions, because nobody
bumps into me on the way to and from the coffee machine and say 'oh can
you just do this for me', so if they want something that have to specifically
ask for it. That's probably gonna come in via email.
K - Do you think that you're a better worker now in any way - more
focused or efficient?
G - I can get the things that I want done, however, you do miss out on the
networking aspect of passing your ideas, in a conversation, past two or
three people. If I were sitting in the same office and I was writing
something I could say does this make sense or what did Joe Bloggs say
about this system. If I'd got to phone or email you or leave a message, I
might not bother now. I'd just put what I think the response is.
K - Was there a big learning curve to becoming a teleworker - did you
have to develop strategies to manage working from home?
G - No because it was, as I've said before, it was a gradual slide into
teleworking, so Kath and I already had to have some kind of agreement
about who's picking up the kids today. Before we'd both turn up late or
neither of us had turned up at all. If we both think the other person is doing
it we hadn't really previously scheduled it then it's quite frustrating for us
both to drop what we’re doing at work, spend half hour coming across
picking up the kids getting them sorted before we’re back on line again. So
I think we already understood what was going to be involved.
K - So do you have different days when you’re doing it, and different days
when Kath does it?
G - Mornings are mine and afternoons are Kath’s for collecting the
children, doing the household chores as it were.
K - Just as a summary, what do you think the overall impact has been on
your family of you working from home?
G - I think it’s, overall it’s positive, it’s allowed a bit more flexibility. if
I’ve got a report to write before tomorrow morning, I can do it tonight. it
doesn’t have to be between 9 and 5 today. obviously I need to make sure
that I’ve phoned around and got the information and so that there’s
preparation to be done, but it allows me to say in this 24 hour period what
am I doing. Now that’s assuming that there’s no fires. and no one fires
across an urgent action that I now have to schedule into my activities, but
in general we’re more flexible I can take Andrew to speech therapy. I can
go and watch the harvest festival next week in Morden, and I don’t have to
ask anyone, I’ll just be out of the office and uncontrollable for half an hour,
and then I’m back.
K - And again, as a summary. what’s the overall impact on your career, do
you think?
G - I think, judging by... the roles that I’ve got at the moment as results
focused, so as long as I bring in the savings and the dollars and the chief set
objectives, then it will be classified as a success. I probably miss out on
some of the gossip about which roles are coming up next and if my face
isn’t seen then they might not think of me, so I have to keep my name up
there somehow.
K - So the impact overall on your life would you say is a positive one or a
negative?
G - It’s positive, yes.
K - So how would you change things if you could – would you ever go
back to traditional working?
G - Em, I suspect I’ll have to go back to being more office based, purely
because not all roles within our company are achievable by teleworking.
One of the next roles I’m looking at is based in the UK is for one of our
defence government types and purely through the security issues I doubt
that they would want me to be teleworking, so if I take that particular role
then I’ll have to adhere to their policies, which is going to be on-site.
K - Do you think you’re going to miss working from home?
G - I’ll miss the freedom of working from home, and also we will have to
at home schedule our activities a lot more
K - Overall then, is teleworking an effective way for parents reconcile
work and family life, do you think?
G - I think, again harking back to something I’ve mentioned before. it
depends what your work-life is. You know if you’ve got a European role
like many of my friends have, you have to be in Europe, you have to go
places, now when you come back you can do teleworking at home, and
catching up with family that way, but I think, you mentioned isolation, I
Interview 3: Gary

think that would bother some people, it depends on how sociable you are in the first place.

K - My overall research question is ‘how does telework impact upon the professional and parental identities of men and women?’ Do you have any idea about what the findings might be?

G - It depends, I think, for me, that my parental profile, as it where, would increase I would feel more like a parent, through being at home more, having to think a bit more about when the kids come home at 3.30 they’ve got to have something to eat before sixish when we have dinner. If I’m the one here then I’ll have to stop working and make the tea and make sure that they’re getting changed and they’re having something to eat. that they’ve done their home work. But I’m hoping, cos I don’t know, that the professional side also will, well at least won’t be negatively affected, because the company that I work for is going more and more towards homeworking, they’re providing the facilities to do so, so I’m hoping that they don’t just give you the tools with the one hand and then take away your career prospects with the other.

K - Do you think that the findings of this study will be different because of your gender? So if you’re a woman working from home, do you think you’d find different issues?

G - I suspect that if you take the stereotype of the woman being in charge of the house and the man goes off to work, that teleworking may allow women to increase their careers, but again its within a certain career structure and within a certain company that accepts teleworking. I mentioned virtual secretaries, that type of opportunity will open up to a lot more people, but if Kath wanted to go into account management then she’d probably have to go out and visit the clients, you can’t do that from home, so I think it will open up some possibilities.

K - Has teleworking changed how you think about yourself and who you are?

G - I don’t think so, I didn’t particularly want… if you’ve done all the things in an office by 3, then why do you have to sit there, for another 2 and a half hours watching the clock? I know that if the client phones me at 7 o’clock at night I’ll take the call, before or after I was teleworking. I think teleworking gives me the flexibility to say, I’ve done my hours I’ll either choose to take the call or not, I’ll write that report today or I’ll do it tomorrow, without thinking well I did my 7 and a half hours in the office and now they want me to do another 3 at home.

K - How would you categorise yourself – as a father firstly or as a business relations manager firstly?

G - As a Father

K - And do you think working from home’s changed that at all?

G - I don’t think so, I suppose if I put on a suit and a tie like I used to everyday and had to polish my shoes and go into the office, that physical badge is going to be on me when I leave and when I come back. I think it’s also a signal, a symbol, to everyone else, they see you leaving and they see you come back, and they might see you come back at 5.30 or it might be 7.30, our next door neighbour is also in IT, and she’ll joke that I’ve been sitting at home watching telly all day, homeworking has got a bit of a jokey image.
K - Mmm. Do you think it’s changed how your kids see you?

G - Not really cos I think we’ve been quite strict. both of us, if we work at home, that when the door’s shut or I’m on a call then they can’t interrupt.

They’ve come to the offices occasionally, just for a couple of hours. and they’ve seen again, that I’m on a PC and I’m taking phone calls and one or two people might pop by. so they know that they have to sit and be quiet.

so I suspect that they’d rather do that at home. where they’ve got their toys than do it at an office.

K - And has it changed anything about the way that your ‘wife sees you do you think?

G - I don’t think so, she has commented that I need to make sure that I pull the blind up in the study and I’ve got the window open cos she was a bit worried that I’ll just sit in the dark for 7 or 8 hours and that’s not healthy.

but I do find that when working from home quite often I’m in the study the laptop’s on permenantly so the mails can come and go at high speed. I had pictured in my mind before full time homeworking. that at 10 o’clock I might go and cut the lawn and midday I’ll have my hour for lunch like I would in the office, but I find that I end up working through lunch because there’s no particular break no one else is going off to lunch, there’s no one here to say ‘do you want a drink?’ or anything, so I tend to work longer stints, and then might think I haven’t had a break and it’s one or two o’clock in the afternoon. So then I’ll take some time off. and then it’ll be time to go and collect the kids so that’s a half hour. 45 minute interruption that wasn’t there in the office, but it balances out.

K - Have you ever told anybody that you work from home and had a negative reaction or a particularly positive reaction?

G - Em, nothing significant, no.

K - Ok, we’re pretty near to the end, is there anything else that you’d to talk about to do with teleworking? Any other comments that you want to add about how it’s affected your family life or your career?

G - Well I might have to answer the career one in about 5 years time but I think I mentioned before, that the technology has to be there, there’s no point in working from home if you haven’t got the facilities, other than providing company paid for phone line and broadband at home. work hasn’t really done anything to make this happen, I wanted to work from home first so I started doing a few days. and I’ve got a laptop anyway. so all my computer files are with me all the time, but I think - the one thing I did notice, I had to complete a health and safety questionnaire recently about working from home. and a lot of it I thought was fairly irrelevant it was ‘don’t strangle yourself when working at home cos there’ll be no one there to help you’. ‘don’t electrocute yourself on a dodgy piece of wiring’, I wouldn’t do that whether I was on my own at home or at work anyway.

One thing I noticed, you fill in a form it talks about ‘have you got your screen positioned correctly?’ ‘have you got an adjustable chair’? ‘is it a safe power adapter?’ all this kind of stuff, which is ok but it’s a bit of an idiot’s guide to not harming yourself. but once you’ve filled it in. if you’ve got any questions, nobody knows the answers. I mean I asked what happens if I have company visitors come and visit me at home rather than me going in to the office. what happens if they hurt themselves here. is that my insurance problem or the company’s or what. and the company just said
don’t have visitors at home, because we don’t cover it’. If I fall down the stairs here then there’s nobody to help, whereas at work if I fell down the stairs in an office there’d be people by every few minutes, and again the answer was keep your mobile phone with you all the time and phone for help, so there’s only so far that the company can watch over you. And I think a lot of it seems to be around the health and safety, to make sure that we’re all covered and nobody has done anything that will upset the other party.

K – About this point in the interview, I’m pretty much at the end, I’d normally have a little look around the working space. Would that be OK?

G – Yes fine.

K – Great.

K – So this is a downstairs office. You can just see here some pictures of the family, they’re on top of the filing cabinet, very comfy looking leather chair. Big white board, some notes, and on the desk there’s a laptop, a phone, 3 mobile phones?

G – There’s loads of phones.

K – There’s the home phone - landline, lamp, another landline, computer speakers, some drawers and a printer.

G – Shall I point out a few things?

K – Yeah.

G – The office was primarily equipped for my MBA studies, I needed the white board for all the sketches of the models, making notes for homework and revising, and that’s really why the bookcase is in here as well. There was a lot of stuff for study there. The desk again was for studying on and for having home computer with. The big flat screen monitor was provided by work last week and I’ve got a keyboard and a mouse for attaching onto the laptop, because that was one of the things that they wanted for the health and safety, that a proper size keyboard and mouse is advisable if working on the laptop for extended periods and my negotiation was that I have a proper screen as well, but I don’t think that’s a health and safety issue, I thought that if I’m saving work $800 a month in office space fees, they can spend $500 on a screen as a one off they can spend $500 on a screen as a one off.

K – Absolutely, good idea.

G – They provided broadband internet access and a work phone, well I expensed it back, but I requested a hands-free one, you know a digital hands-free, so I could actually be up and about and move around rather than being stuck in this room for hours on end, so if necessary I can virtually anywhere in the house.

K – So is this ideal for you now would you say Gary?

G – Pretty much. I have to use the home PC for faxing cos I’ve got a scanner and a printer which are mine but the work will provide me with ink jet cartridges if I request it and I can grab paper from work, so not out of pocket as such through working from home, the only thing that we haven’t come to agreement on is how we cover heating, electricity, food and drinks as it were, cos I don’t have use of the work’s canteen. I don’t use their power or heating or anything else and that again, that was one thing I asked but nobody had a very good explanation of how do you calculate it, so I think we’ll have to come to an agreement later on.
Interview 3: Gary

K – I’m pretty much at the end of the interview then, so thank you for taking part, could you give me some feedback please, about how you felt taking part in the project?

G – I was happy to help, as I said I’ve studied for an MBA, I had to do research studies and projects on that, and it is difficult not going to the same people over and over again, asking similar questions and I also wanted to continue my own learning now that I’ve the course and I think that involvement in the Chartered Institute of Management, marketing, personnel development, they all help and helping other people.

K – Brilliant, thank you very much for your time.

G – That’s ok.
Interview #: Kath (Kh)

1. K- Could you just say your name for the camera please?
2. Kh – Kath Jacques
3. K – And you are a European Resource Manager, could you tell me a little about what that role entails?
4. Kh – Absolutely. I cover the resources in 22 countries across Europe. I look after all of the staff as to our requirements, so if for example we win a new piece of business in a country I make sure we have the staff in the right place at the right time, with the right skill set, and equally if we loose a piece of business I make sure that the headcount is reduce, either by redeployment and new business elsewhere or alternatively by restructuring.
5. K – How did you get into that kind of work?
6. Kh – No idea. I joined EMK 7 years ago and I very quickly started working on the people side stuff, I put together a pan-European recruitment plan which hadn’t been done before, and also a requirements plan. and it sort of grew from there, as EMK grew within the year the need to have that sort of function became more and I became a subject matter expert in the European business.
7. K – Just for the camera can you tell me how much time you spend working within your home versus the office, on the road…?
8. Kh – Probably 50% I would think
9. K – So a typical day might be the morning here…?
10. Kh – This is a typical day, it’s a good day to do it, so for example this morning Gary has been here today. I was in the office early this morning, I left the office at just before 2 to come home, as soon as I got back here I went straight online in the study. I’ve had 2 or 3 calls, with the States and Belgium and Germany whilst I’ve been in the study, then I’ve gone to go and fetch the children, come back, and I’ll start again once we’ve finished here. This evening, for example, I’m putting together a whole load of data for the States, and I’ll be sitting on the sofa over there - it’s a wireless house – and I’ll compile the data and then send it off this evening, still within the US operating hours.
11. K – Are you satisfied with your role at the moment?
13. K – And do you have aims for your future career?
14. Kh – That’s probably questionable. I have actually just been offered another job, which I’m considering currently. still using some of the core competencies, but I love what I do and I’m lucky and fortunate that I’m actually very good at it and I’m recognised as being good across Europe, which makes me feel, it gives me what I need.
15. K - Absolutely. And will that still be flexible as to where you can be based?
16. Kh – Absolutely, I don’t think I would ever go back to having a purely UK focused role or a role that’s in the office all the time, because the flexibility, of having a family, it just wouldn’t work.
17. K – What kind of worker would you say you are?
18. Kh – It depends how you want that answered. I’m extremely driven, I’m completely self-sufficient, I’m very motivated and very enthusiastic. I think if you gave me a job where you had my boss sitting on my shoulder saying ‘Kath please do this…” I would have resigned.
19. K – Perfect. ok. And what does your career mean to you?
Interview 4: Kath (Kh)

Kh – Probably too much if you ask Gary, I think he would say that my career is probably, probably the most important thing, I love my children dearly but they’re going to grow up, my relationship with Gary is fine providing I’m working, I think if I didn’t work I’d be depressed and I’d be really upset, so it means everything to me.

K – And do you think your career’s been affected by working from home?

Kh – I think that it’s helped, it’s helped relieve some of the stress for the family, it’s made life easier, it’s also made me probably more of a workaholic than I was before, but more flexibly.

K – So you’re married to Gary and you’ve got two young children.

Kh – Yeah, 5 & 8.

K – And... some of these are going to be the same aren’t they, I’m going to be asking things like how’s your childcare and school arrangements and...

(A phone rings next to her and the filming stops for a moment while she answers it)

K – How’s the current childcare and schooling arrangements managed?

Kh – Currently Gary takes the children to school. I leave the office sort of half past two-ish normally, go and collect Andrew, come back start work, somebody drops Emma off, because our ironer collects Emma from school and then drops her off in the afternoon. School vacations we have a club at the church in the town and we put them into the club there alternatively my sister has them in Wales.

K – Oh lovely. and how about domestic work in the home, how’s that shared?

Kh – We have a cleaner that comes in for 8 hours a week and we have an ironer that comes in once a week, the cleaner does all the washing, so on the whole we don’t do any washing, we don’t do any ironing, we just do the shopping. The shopping on the whole has been done online by Tesco’s and it’s delivered either when Gary is on a conference call, during the day, then he can be on a conference call on his mobile, and unpack the shopping, or we unpack it in the evening.

K – Brilliant. How much time did you have off work when your kids were born?

Kh – I had 6 months off for Emma, and 5 months off for Andrew. When I went back to work after having Andrew we had a nanny for 6 months and then we put them both into private school.

K – What kind of parent would you say you are?

Kh – I’d say that I’m probably very tough, I think I have high expectations of them. I think I’m also very fair and I give them a chance to have opinions about things. I’m very focused on the work ethic, because of what I do for a living, so I think they’re probably being bought up knowing what they need to do, they have deliverables, that they have to do it at the right time, so I think that’s probably helping them for later on. I think I’m very fair. I know I don’t spend as much time with my children as people I pick my children up from school with, but then equally I think our children travel extensively, they do loads and loads of things, they do skiing, we’ve just come back from Portugal, they were in Paris at the weekend, you know they have an amazing lifestyle.

K – What would you say you’ve learnt since becoming a parent?
Kh – How to love more, how to give more. I think the enormity of being a parent – it never ends. You think about having children, and you think they’re gonna be there for the next 50, 60 years, and you really do end up worrying about them forever. I think it’s a big responsibility, you have to be financially ok, as far as I’m concerned, and I want to make sure that I’m bringing them up to be ok adults.

K – Has your role in the family changed since you began working from home?

Kh – No, no, not really... no actually I think since Gary has started working from home my role in the family has changed, I think he shares a lot more of the child stuff, than he did before.

K – So you’ve worked from home, on and off, for about 5 years. Who instigated that? Was it yourself who decided...?

Kh – I think... it certainly wasn’t EMK, it was one of those things that happened, I think primarily because of the sheer volume of work it started that it was impossible to get anything done during office hours so started doing things in the evening, and I had a global job for a year which meant that I had teleconferences in the evening, starting at 10 o’clock in the evening, and equally because of Asia-Pacific I had conference calls at 6.30, 7am in the morning and it seemed more sensible to that working from home.

K – Who did you discuss your decision with?

Kh – Nobody at all. I just decided that this was going to be working better for me.

K – And people at work reacted ok?

Kh – Absolutely, because I’m given things that I have to deliver and it doesn’t matter where I am or what I do as long as I deliver, if I don’t deliver I’d be sacked.

K - What did Gary think when you said you’re going to be working more from home?

Kh – He hasn’t minded, apart from if we are both at home at the same time, and the wireless network isn’t working and both of us need to be in the study, that’s a bit stressful.

K – And how about the children, how did they react when you said you were going to be at home more?

Kh – I think they like it, I think like to know that we’re here, I think they find frustrating if we can’t always sit and do homework with them when they come home, but quite often if I’m just sitting down, going through mails and stuff, I can do that and listen to Andrew reading at the same time, so it makes him happy and also I’m clearing my mails out.

K – Is it what you expected? Better or worse?

Kh – I think... I think it makes life slightly less stressful, because I think if I was in the office permanently and I knew I had to collect the kids and then I was late because I was on a conference call it would be far more stressful, so I think it’s probably better and I certainly wouldn’t want to go back to being just in the office all the time.

K – Before you began teleworking, what were your opinions of other people who worked from home?

Kh – That if you’re not a self motivated person and you’re not a worker, I think it would be isolating and also people use it as a reason not to work:
‘I’m working from home’ and it just means actually mowing the lawn, because of the nature of my personality that wouldn’t happen with me, but I can easily see it happening with people. K – And now that you telework, do you have an idea of what a typical teleworker might be like? Kh – I think probably fairly similar to me really, you have commitments, you have family responsibilities, you have certain things that you have to be able do during the day, because you have harvest festival or an Easter service that you have to go to, and you want to be able to fit everything in. K – What are the main ways you keep in touch with your colleagues and clients? Kh – On the phone – I’m on the phone permanently. K – Have you personally had any issues of isolation? Kh – If I was at home all the time, for example, like Gary is, unless he’s travelling abroad, I would be very isolated I think. I’m lucky because I’m in a pan-European team, I have contacts in all the various countries, and I’m on the phone permanently and therefore I feel ok, but I think if I didn’t have that contact, if I just had, I don’t know a data entry type role, where all I was doing was keying data via a phone line, I think that I would be very depressing. K – Do you think you have more control over your work, now you work from home? Kh – Control over the work as to what? I have no control over the content of my work because that’s given to me. I have to look after the staff, I have to make sure we have hiring approval, I have to make sure I know how many people are being made redundant, for example. K – Perhaps the timing of your work? Kh – The timing? How many hours do you mean, do I do a week? K – Yeah. Kh – Well I’ve recently had a hysterectomy so I’ve been off work for six months - sorry 3 months. Prior to that I would do 45, 50 hours I guess a week, split between the mornings and evenings at home. K – And has it been more flexible since you’ve been in the home environment, to do your hours as and when you can? Kh – I think they just get more out of me, basically. K – Do you think you’re a better worker now - more efficient may be, more focused? Kh – I think I’m very disciplined about what I need to deliver and when. K – And what was the learning curve for you to be working at home? Did you have to develop strategies to manage working at home? Kh – Personally no I didn’t, no. Because I’m quite flexible I like change, I don’t find it a worry, as I said previously you have to know what is required, by when and make sure you’ve delivered it. And I think it doesn’t matter providing you’ve done that. K – So overall what do you think the impact’s been on your family? Kh – I think it’s better for the family, I think it’s made a positive difference, having both Gary and I working more flexibly. And I think the children have benefited, certainly I’ve not missed as many school things I did as when I had just a UK focused role. K – Overall what do you think the impact has been on your career?
Interview 4: Kath (Kh)

Kh - It certainly hasn’t been negative. I can imagine for other people possibly they lose the visibility. But certainly in my case it’s been absolutely fine, it’s made no difference whatsoever. I can’t say it’s helped it, and equally I can’t say it’s made it worse.

K - And just to summarise then, has the overall impact on your life been a positive impact or a negative...

Kh - Oh definitely positive. Definitely.

K - Is there anything that you’d change or... you’d never go back to traditional working?

Kh - I would never want to be in an office all day, and particularly in a UK focused role, this works for me, Gary and the children much. much better.

K - Is telework an effective way then for parent to reconcile work and family life?

Kh - Given the nature of what I do for a living, if you ask me as me. if you ask me as an European Resource Manager, personally I think it’s absolutely perfect, I think that if you as me as a resource manager. looking at people across countries, I think you have to have good management, you have to have very good direction, and you have to make sure there’s good follow through on a person’s abilities and what they’re delivering, and if people are not delivering to time, to the quality that you require, I think it’s very important that your manager can follow that up and make sure it’s fixed if there’s a problem and resolved quickly.

K - Would you recommend it to other people then?

Kh - Oh absolutely. definitely. definitely.

K - My overall question is ‘how does home-based telework impact upon the professional and parental identities of men and women?’ what do you think the findings might be?

Kh - I think it depends on the market people are in, I think in this day and age you’re going to get a lot more professional people working from home. as more companies become global. as pan-european opportunities increase I think you’ll find a lot more people doing what Gary and I do. And I think that has a big advantage to the family. I think it depends - if you have. I don’t know. people taking calls for a call centre from home. I don’t think that’s going to make a difference to the world or to their families but I do think if you’re looking at a professional person doing this type of role I think it’s fine. I think it makes a very positive impact on the family.

K - And do you think that would be different, the issues would be different for men than for women?

Kh - I think it might make them more understanding of what actually takes place in family life – I’m in a very fortunate position with Gary because he understands completely what it’s like, but I think that’s unusual even in this day and age, but I think it would probably make men more aware and understanding, and therefore should have a positive effect on their partnership. marriage whatever it is.

K - Has teleworking changed how you think about yourself and who you are?

Kh - No, not at all, no.

K - And how would you categorise yourself first as a mother. or as a business resource manager?

Kh - As a European Resource Manager
Interview 4: Kath (Kh)

250  K - Do you think telework has changed this?
251  Kh - Has it...?
252  K - Has it changed this or is that the way you always...?
253  Kh - No, no, no, I'm very focused about what I do for a living.
254  K - And do you think it's changed how your kids see you?
255  Kh - Definitely, in fact Emma said - she's recently changed schools, she went up to the middle school - and she came back within a few days and said 'I don't think our life is like some of my friend's families Mum' because I travel, I go away a lot, Gary goes away, and she said 'I don't think our lives... you don't do what some of the other Mum's do, you do something different I think'. And it was quite interesting to see it cos I'm probably the only one of the mothers who goes to school with her mobile phone in her ear and I can be on conference calls whilst I'm picking them up, and I think our kids are really used to it. Our daughter'll say Mum's on a call, or she'll be late cos she's on a conference call. And she's really together about it, and I'm really proud of them. And I think it's made a very positive effect on them because it's difficult world out there and it's good for them to know that you have to work hard to make a living, it's not just going to come to them.
259  K - Has it changed how Gary sees you do you think?
260  Kh - Em, I wouldn't have thought so, I think he knows I'm quite a driven individual.
261  K - And has anyone else made any comments when you've said that you work from home?
262  Kh - You have a lot of very negative comments from other people, you asked me a question about working from home and how much they do, basically. I think that people's belief is that if you work from home you don't do a lot and in fact the gentleman over the road, he works for Autocom, and works from home also and his wife laughs cos he'll be out shopping or whatever and she'll be working, but if you're asking what they think of me as an individual, everyone knows that I work.
265  K - That's pretty much it, is there anything you'd like to add, anything you'd like to discuss about working from home and how it's affected your career or your family?
266  Kh - Apart from the fact that, I think it's an area that big corporations are exploring more, call centres straight into peoples homes. I think it's just a very positive thing to do, but again it comes down to the management. you have to have good management in place because otherwise people will just take the Mickey. So if you don't know what you want to deliver and there's a loop to make sure that: it's finished, done, it's finished done, then it's quite dangerous and could end up costing the company a lot of money, but I think if it's done well, then it's a very good idea.
271  K - I've been through and I've seen the office space where you and Gary work, is it set up... is it ideal how it's set up now, for you?
272  Kh - I think it would be nice if it was bigger, frankly. But if you look as the kids, it's a wireless house. We have the scanners there - I've got more things at home than I have in the office, I don't have a scanner. I don't have my own printer, so I have to walk down the corridor to get my printing, given that it's a confidential role and I could be talking about making people redundant, it's very useful to do that quietly.
K - Thank you for taking part in the project.
Kh - That's a pleasure.
K - Could you give me some feedback about taking part?
Kh - It's been fine, really interesting, I think it's an interesting topic that you're studying.
K - Thank you very much again.
K - Could you just state your name and occupation for the camera please?
H - Helen Stephenson-Noble, I'm a hydro-geologist
K - And could you describe the job that you do?
H - We work for a large professional services company, in an environmental consultancy division. We work mainly on sites that have been contaminated by previous industrial use and need to be re-mediated. or investigated and potentially re-mediated, my particular role is looking at the chemical results we get back from the site and how they can impact on the ground water and nearby surface water resources.
K - How did you get into your current occupation?
H - I finished a geology degree and was looking for work I could do in a technology field, I'd worked in engineering geology a couple of years before studying for a masters in hydro-geology, which I followed up with a PhD in hydro-geology, and then returned to consultancy work where I specialised in hydro-geology.
K - So how long do you spend working at home, compared to working at home or on site?
H - My working week is 3 days, I would probably make one visit every week or fortnight, either to site or to another office or for a clients meeting or a regulators meeting at their base. I don't have a regular office base anywhere else.
K - And are you happy with your work at the moment?
H - Em, yep
K - You're satisfied with the career that you've chosen
H - I enjoy with the technical side of my work, I enjoy what I do - I have down days, but don't we all
K - Do you have aims for your future career?
H - I'm happy with what I'm doing at the moment, because I have children, I would have very different aims if I didn't have children, so I'm happy with how things are going at the moment, and that's good enough really, right now.
K - What kind of worker are you?
H - What are the options?
K - Broad question isn’t it? I suppose some people have answered it by saying oh I'm a very committed hard working person – that kind of things
H - I like to do things as well as they can be, the best I can do them, to the best of my abilities, it hadn't occurred to me until recently that that wasn't the approach everyone took
K - And what does your career mean to you?
H - Em, it's something I enjoy a lot, it's something I'm trained for, you know, specialised, taken a lot of time to specialise in, em. and I like those things and I know that if I stopped doing this for a few years I'd probably never get back into it again because of the technical basis, because scientific and regulatory framework changes.
K - Do you think your career's been affected by working from home?
H - No, it's been affected by working part time, but that's a different issue, but in possibly similar ways, so I couldn't, as a part timer I couldn't manage people, and working from home I couldn't manage people but that had already happened because I was part time before I started working from home, and so progressing through the company in to a managerial
Interview 5: Helen

51 role won’t happen but it wouldn’t have happened because I work part time,
52 so it’s been affected for other reasons.
53 K – So you’re married to James and you have a 2 year old, and another
54 who’s shortly on the way
55 H – That’s right
56 K - How is childcare currently managed?
57 H – At the moment I’m on maternity leave and therefore we don’t have
58 childcare issues because I’m not currently working, when I was working
59 our 2 year old went to his grandparents 1 day a week and to nursery for 2
60 days a week, most recently, 3 days a week before that.
61 K – And do you have plans for childcare for when the second one…?
62 H – Childcare with 2 kids we would like to. we’re hoping to find a nanny
63 to work in our home, the nursery wasn’t, er. didn’t work out as well as I’d
64 hoped
65 K – Can I ask how domestic work’s organised in your home?
66 H - Housework? Chaotically!
67 K – Oh right. And how’s that divided? Between the two of you or do you
68 have outside help?
69 H – We have a weekly cleaner, which is just as well cos it wouldn’t get
70 done any other way, we have some things I do, some things he does.
71 K – Is it almost 50/50?
72 H – It varies depending on what we’re up to and how busy we are, so on a
73 grand scheme 50/50 on a weekly basis, but if James isn’t here for a week
74 he doesn’t do anything, but he works much longer hours than I do at his
75 job, I wouldn’t complain and I think it’s perfectly equitable, but that
76 doesn’t necessarily mean it’s exactly 50/50.
77 K – How much time did you have off work when your first child was born?
78 H – About 8 months. It was the maximum amount of time after the birth
79 that I was entitled to.
80 K – And you’re planning pretty much the same with this one?
81 H – I’ll have 12 months because the law’s changed
82 K – Oh right, of course
83 H - So I’m allowed. I’m entitled to a longer period of time off.
84 K – What kind of parent would you say you are? Some people say they’re
85 very hands on or…
86 H – I don’t know, involved, relaxed… I’ve no idea really.
87 K – Maybe I’ll ask James
88 H – (Laughs)
89 K – What have you learnt since becoming a parent?
90 H – I’ve had to change nappies…
91 K – Has it changed you at all as a person, do you think?
92 H – I’m probably more patient, not hugely as a person, I mean the things
93 we do have change dramatically the lifestyle we live’s changed enormously
94 but as a person I’m still chaotic and disorganised and involved as I would
95 be.
96 K – So you’ve not worked from home for very long, just a couple of
97 months, and who was that instigated by?
98 H – The company, who closed down the team that I worked in, within our
99 local office and decided to offer me the opportunity to work from home,
presumably they decided that they’d rather have me work at all, wherever it was, than not have me work for them.

K – So why did you decide to accept that offer?

H – Because the alternative would have been not working for them, the other options they could have offered me were working in an office a long way away which would have meant moving, wasn’t feasible for us as a family.

K – So did you discuss this with James, what was his reaction – was he keen for that to happen?

H – I think we both felt that given that the options were working from home or not working at all, we had absolutely nothing to lose by working from home, if it didn’t work out for any reason then I could just quit, which was the alternative.

K – Your son’s quite young at the moment, but did he have a reaction, did he realise that mum was around more?

H – We changed quite a lot of things at the time I started working from home, for reasons that are different to the working from home, so at the time I started working from home we changed his childcare, because his childcare wasn’t working out, and because I was about to go on maternity leave, had that not been the case then we wouldn’t have changed his childcare arrangements, so he wouldn’t actually have noticed, because he would still have been going into the same childcare environment.

K – Have your colleagues and clients notice that you work from home and made any comments about it?

H – Clients and external contacts don’t know, generally. I have a different phone number, and I specifically had to ask my colleagues in my old office when giving out the phone number to stop saying I was at home, just it’s a new work number and here it is.

K – Why was that?

H – Because I had people ringing up at 9 o’clock in the morning and saying ‘oh have I got you out of bed?’

K – (laughs)

H – And I felt that externally people didn’t need to know that I was sat at home rather than sat in an office, cos it made no difference to them and I’d rather they didn’t know. Internally people know that I’m sat at home, on the whole their views haven’t changed, I think that some people see it as a perk or that I need to be kept more of an eye on to see that I’m getting my work done, neither of which I think is reasonable

K – Was it what you expected when you began working from home? Did you have certain expectations?

H – Yes, the things that I expected and things that I’ve noticed, that I’ve seen in my ‘working’ environment, there’s less of a sense of belonging to a team which I miss, um, and that was the thing I noticed from a work point of view, from a personal point of view the big bonus was not having to drive to work, I was driving about 40 minutes each way, each day, and not making that journey makes a big difference on the time I’ve got morning and evening.

K – So overall had it been a better or worse experience than you expected?

H – Than I expected? To date, it’s been possibly worse, but I would expect that to get a lot better. I’ve had a lot of teething troubles with IT equipment.
getting the computer set up, getting a computer at all. Getting the email working, I had teething problems finding a place at home to work in, so it was tougher to start with and once we've settled in to the situation and once I've got a more permanent computer set up and a more permanent space to work in I expect those problems to go away. We'll see what happens over the next few 'working' months, which won't be for another year.

K - Before you began working from home did you have opinions of other people who worked from home?

H - Em, in terms of them working from home?

K - I suppose the perception of teleworkers.

H - I don't know anyone else in my company who works from home or within my field, for a company, I know people who are freelance, but no one that's employed and works from home. So I didn't have any sort of opinions particularly on them. James, my husband, worked from home for the last year and I didn't really have any opinions on him working from home that would be different than if he was in a traditional office.

K - Now that you work from home yourself do you have any opinions of what would be a typical teleworker?

H - As varied as a typical office worker. No.

K - So no real typical.

H - No.

K - I don't see why there would be.

H - Great. And how do you keep in touch with colleagues and clients?

H - When I was working in an office and when I'm working at home, by far the majority of my contact is by phone and email. When I was previously working in a much larger office I'd be working alongside the team of people, my colleagues you know were at the next desk, so in terms of project work, I now keep in touch by phone and email and probably visit colleagues in their offices maybe once a month if there's a specific project need, so I'll see people face to face. I'll also see colleagues face to face at external meetings or sites or in clients or regulators offices, so in terms of project work communication there's no change there. In terms of general ongoing communication sort of just chatter, there's a big change, so I completely don't have those just gossipy chats in the morning. I no longer have a receptionist I see in the morning who's love life I vaguely keep in touch with or those kind of things, which you might sort of miss in a social way but not... that's not an issue at all. I also don't get the conversations about what's going on in the company. I don't have my ear to the ground that there's a new grading system coming in, or anything like that. I make an effort to phone up and you know chat to colleagues in other offices but that's more difficult because they expect a phone call to be about project work, not just general - general stuff - does that make any sense or shall I elaborate at all Katy?

K - That's fine. So would you say you've had some issues of isolation in the few months since you've been working from home?

H - Yes em, but not in ways that actually matter, so there's really trivial things that it's absolutely petty to complain about, like I haven't been invited to a Christmas party. But because I'm about to give birth at that time I wouldn't be able to go, so it doesn't matter and if I'd wanted to
know that I could have phoned up and said ‘I’m coming to your Christmas party!’

K – (laughs)

H - When I went on maternity leave I didn’t have good luck cards, or a sort of goodbye session, and you know it’s petty, it doesn’t matter, it’s not a big deal, just because I don’t ‘belong’ to anyone’s team, or the team that I do belong to don’t really realise that I do belong with them. so they’re not issues in that, they don’t make any practical difference

K – But personally...

H – There’s a sense of personal belonging that isn’t there, that would have been.

K – I suppose that they’ve seen the bump either, developing?

H - No, there’s people I see every couple of weeks, so there are people who I see regularly, but things like that would have been managed by your team secretary and I don’t even know who my team secretary is.

K – Do you think you’ve got more control over work now you’re working from home?

H – No.

K – Would that be because of the teething troubles you’ve had?

H – No. No change. My technical work, I get work to do, I do work, I finish it. It’s really made no different.

K – So would you say you’re a better worker now you’re working from home, or again has that not really changed?

H – No change. The teething problems... but since then I don’t think there’s been any change.

K – What was the learning curve of becoming a teleworker? Did you have to develop strategies to manage working from the home environment?

H – Em. No, not in terms of the way I work and way I manage my work, only in terms of things like the communication system, setting up the new email system, that kind of thing.

K – And what’s the overall impact on your family been of you coming and working from home?

H – Em. The key impact to date was not having travelling time and having a little bit more flexibility. My working hours aren’t flexible and they can’t be flexible, but if actually nobody else ever notices the difference then there’s a bit more flexibility than there was. So the key change to date was a bit more flexibility and not having the travelling time. In the future when we have the two children and the nanny there will be quite an impact.

because the children will be cared for at home and I’ll be working from home, so our plan, our intention for that point is that James and I will be converting a shed in the garden

K – Right.

H - So we can go out to work and we’re physically not here and so they won’t notice. I think it will be exceedingly hard for us to work in the house, with the children also cared for in the house.

K – Especially so young?

H – Yeah, because they’re actually here, they’re not out at school, they’ll be here with someone else looking after them, so we feel that we need to be at least slightly somewhere else, even if it’s just a couple of metres outside the back door. The other impacts that we probably haven’t covered, you
know which they’re getting quite trivial. when I was working in an office
on the high street, on a lunch time I could run out and get the shopping, bits
and pieces I didn’t have, we’re now deeply in the middle of nowhere and I
can’t do that but the other side is I actually get all the laundry done on a
working day, by putting it in and out of the machine during tea and loo
breaks.
K – Do you sort of set yourself specific working hours then, you say
they’re not very flexible…?
H – I’m contracted to work 9 til 5.30 and I would expect to work 9 til 5.30.
so yes. And people need to know that I’m available. it’s not that I’ve got a
certain amount of work to do a week, but I actually need to be available for
people, which may be by phone, it may be emails that needs to go
backward and forward within the day, so that’s why it’s not flexible,
because I have to be available.
K – What’s the overall impact been on your career since you started
working from home, has there been one?
H – Didn’t you ask this before?… In the 2 months I’ve been working from
home, there’s not much of an impact, I wouldn’t expect much of an impact
any different than working part time.
K – Ok, so overall has the impact on your life been positive or negative?
H – Neutral. It wouldn’t be the choice I’d make, if there was an office I
could go to just down the road to work in that had a team of people, you
know not just somewhere I could go to just sit at a desk, but if I was down
the road from a company office with a team of people doing my sort of
work in it. I would ‘prefer’ to do that, but you know I see the impact as
pretty neutral, I wouldn’t see it as heavily positive of heavily negative
K – So overall do you think telework is an effective way for parents to
reconcile work life and family life?
H – Em. No, not… that would depend so much on what people and doing
and how their work works. If you’re significantly more flexible about the
hours you do your work in then there’s an impact but really the fact that
you’re sitting at a desk at your home isn’t really any different, not
travelling to and from an office, is a time saving thing, but it’s not an awful
lot else so just, to answer that, it depends so much what the work pattern is
rather than…
K – Sure
H – Rather than the fact you’re at home
K – My overall question is: how does home-based telework impact upon
the professional and parental identities of men and women? Do you have
any speculations as to what those findings might be? – An impact for you
personally – has it affected any part of your professional or parental
identity?
H – Professionally I miss working immediately with a team but I do work
with a project team on my project so it’s not a huge deal. From my point
of view working hours have a far bigger implication than working location
and working from home and I think the main impact where teleworking
would help parentally is if you’ve got very flexible hours and you can work
when you want to, the main places where it would impact professionally
are when you’ve got to have the close colleague contact to move on
professionally and that alone would make the difference.
Interview 5: Helen

K - Do you think that when I interview men as opposed to women that the findings will be slightly different? – Particularly as your husband works from home...

H - I know James will say quite different things because he has a very different working pattern and his experience of telework is very different to mine, because his colleagues are all in a similar situation to him, and he meets up with them more frequently, and none of them belong in an office somewhere, so I know his experience is different to mine, and the fact that he's full time whereas I'm part time has an impact, and some of those things may be more associated with men rather than women, and whether it actually matters whether you're male of female in those situations. If we were the other way around I don't think we would have much difference.

K - And has telework changed how you think about yourself and who you are at all?

H - No

K - I know it’s been a relatively short period...

H - No, and I can't imagine it really doing so.

K - How would you categorise yourself? As a mother firstly or as a hydro-geologist firstly?

H - I'd categorise myself as a mother firstly, because that's the unchangeable, that's the thing that can't give, what ever else I do, I have a huge wealth of roles in life and they're just two of them but I can't not be Henry's mother, I can't just not be my children's mother and pretty much everything else has, you know, quite a lot of give.

K - And do you think it's changed how other people see you or think about you?

H - Working from home? Other people being sort of personal contacts, family, friends that sort of people?

K - Yeah

H - Em. I think a lot of the people I meet personally are full-time mothers, when they think I working from home they see it as significantly less serious than working in an office and part of that I suspect is that a lot of full... non... mothers who don't work for money – whatever the right phrase might be – earn some extra money doing what they would call home-working or working from home doing things like pyramid marketing schemes or a bit of this and a bit of that, so a very different work pattern.

And some family members have found it hard to realise that I'm not suddenly more available and that, you know. I still need a full day to do a full day's work, we both have to be very specific about saying this is when I'm working, this is when I'm not working because my working hours aren't flexible – that's quite straight forward to me. I have times when I'm working and I won't do anything else during those times, James's working hours are quite flexible, he flexes it more. flexes his time more than I do. not a huge amount, but more than I do. so he finds it easier to do things in what might appear to be working hours.

K - That's pretty much all I've got to ask you. Thank you for taking part.

Is there anything you feel we haven't covered about working from home that you'd like to comment on?

H - No
Great, could you give me some feedback on how you felt taking part in the project?

Em. As someone who spent a lot of time trying to get material for my PhD, you know I hope it's been helpful for you, Katy.

It certainly has. And it gives you a bit more to build your research on. And because between the two of us, we've had involvement in research in business studies and so on, we identified to some extent with what you're doing, possibly a bit more than if we hadn't had those sort of backgrounds.

I'm very grateful.

Would it be convenient when I've interviewed James to see the office space you use?

Yes, don't set your hopes and expectations too high.

Is it not ideally set up as you'd like it to be?

My space definitely isn't no.

So you have separate office spaces, one for James and one for you - I see.

He went there first cos he was home-working way before me, and his space only has space for one person.

Whereas yours has...?

No room at all.

So you're going to convert the shed.

The intention is we're going to convert the shed, we looked in to getting one of those garden office building thingies and we're hoping that converting the shed will be a bit cheaper and will give us enough space to get two desks set up. We'd probably only be in there at the same time about once a week.

Can you foresee problems with that?

No. We should have enough space for both of us. As you will see when you see our office space, both of them are not ideal. Mine is deeply non-ideal and very much a temporary measure.

Do you look forwards to having a more ideally set up office space?

Yeah.

And working together with James?

It won't change much.

Brilliant, thank you ever so much.

Looking at Helen's working space with Helen and James

That's one of the issues isn't it? When you're working from home there's no sort of pure... I mean I guess some people manage to get a very fine divide don't they? - for us work comes into the living space and there isn't really work space.

Impacts like the fact that we didn't have this bump here when I started working here, everytime I sat on a chair on the slopey floor I went backwards.

Yeah you found that you had to keep your feet on the floor to stop yourself rolling backwards.

You better not show this to anyone, Katy, or I'll be hung by our Health and Safety team they realise I'm working in this situation.
J – That’s the other thing, you’re not supposed to just be working off a laptop
H – No, we’re supposed to have proper computer and docking station. which they would have bought for me. 2 months ago. but I didn’t want it in the house for the next year when I’m not working
J - The other problem’s the internal accounting thing wasn’t it?
H – Yeah they were going to buy it, charge it to the division. then in August...
J –Charge full price
H - Then in August they’re going to start suddenly owning all the IT equipment and renting it to the division. So they were going to charge the division then charge our division monthly rental during the year that I’m not working.
K – Right. So just for the tape – this doubles as your bedroom and we’re upstairs and we’re talking quietly cos Henry’s asleep in bed
J - Henry’s asleep next door, that’s right
K – So currently you’re just using the laptop to work from. while you’re on maternity leave
H – I’m promised a proper computer, docking station and keyboard and everything
K – So currently things aren’t set up as perhaps they will be
H – No this is a sort of emergency set up, to get you home
K – You’ve got a nice view from the window though, it’s actually gorgeous
H – I’ve got a telephone on my desk, with a separate number
J – We have a business line, and then we have a broadband connection
K – Excellent. I think that’s all I need to see up here.
K- Could you state your name and occupation?

J - I’m James Stephenson-Noble and I’m an electrical engineer

K – And could you describe your role, your career?

J – My career at the moment, or career to date?

K – To date, yeah

J – I trained as a physicist, my first degree was physics, during which time I was a sponsored student with NT, and I’d done a number of student placements at NT’s research labs, which is about 30 miles from here. I grew up in this area, by the time I came to graduate, NT had decided that it wasn’t really into doing research, physics, and so I drifted into a different kind of long term research which was all around business scenario planning and really envisaging future networks and along the way, in the early nineties, I just happened to drift into internet network engineering and sort of rode that, as the internet grew up, firstly at a technical level and then really into product and marketing roles. So I stayed with NT at the labs until 1996, so that was 91-96 at the labs, at the end of 96 I moved to work for one of NT’s international venture businesses and spent a long time, well felt like a long time over the course of 2 years developing NT’s international businesses on the internet side and then in 98 I joined a company called Techcom Communications. who were a start up organisation developing international networks and I was with them for about 4 years and then 2002 I left Techcom, taking redundancy when they were downsizing, by mutual agreement, because there was not a lot that was really interesting me at that point, focused in the next 6 months on completing an MBA, and it was towards the end of 2002, and we were expecting Henry, our first, and the lease was up on our flat in London, and I’d finished the MBA, and I was looking for a job, we decided to move out to Suffolk, and at that point I took a job with some friends who had a small software company in Ipswich. spent about a year with them, doing a mix of organisational and development work and some strategy planning for them and then September of last year, 2003, I took a job with my current employer, Tele-research, which is more of a marketing / business development type role again still in data networks but on the equipment side instead of the service provider side. So that’s a potted summary.

K – So your role at the moment is kind of electrical engineer, but also on the marketing, development side

J – Ya, well it’s a mix I guess, it’s somewhere between technical sales and product marketing I guess, the job title is Director of Service Development- that means nothing to anybody. Basically I spend my term working with telecoms operators and trying to figure out how they can make money out of services that require them to buy our equipment

K – Are you satisfied with your role at the moment?

J – No

K – Are there things that you’d like to do instead?

J – Ya, I mean I guess a large part of my career’s been spent working with small new ventures, or certainly in developing something new, and that’s big component of what I’m doing at the moment, I came in off the back of an acquisition that Tele-research made last summer, a silicon valley technology company, and I guess. for me. the kind of organisation that interests me most is one that’s working in new technology, but is still in the
set up phase, so I guess either that or working with one of those kinds of organisation, not necessarily inside one. But as time goes on you find that you’re making more and more trade offs between what you’re actually doing in your work and the overall sort of lifestyle that you’re trying to balance with it.

K – Do you have aims for your future career?
J – Em, I would say that they’re not very clear at the moment. If I were to step back 4 years from my MBA program, then I had very, very clear aims, and I guess those have been diluted to some extent, just partly through the industry downturn and the necessity of what ones working in but also partly through having a family.

K – What kind of worker would you say you are?
J – Kind of worker?
K – Just anything that comes into your head.
J – Well I guess to some degree I’m probably a workaholic, I’ve never worked a 40 hour week or whatever it is. I guess I work... yeah, so I work hard, I work partly for fun and sort of the inherent interest of what I’m doing is a big part of what motivates me, but these days there’s no way I’d consider just doing something interesting without it also turning up the financial rewards.

K – What does your career mean to you then?
J – I guess... well it’s multi-faceted. It’s partly about self-fulfilment and sort of recognition for being good at what I’m doing, there’s an element of that, although, my recognition needs, in a classic sense are probably relatively low, I don’t need anyone telling me I’m doing a really great job or anything, I know when I’m doing a good job, so I guess just having a small group of peers I respect, a small group of colleagues I respect, who I know think I’m doing a good job is enough recognition for me so I guess more broadly it’s about achieving something useful, I guess that again has tended to decline over time. at the beginning of my career when a lot of my contemporaries from college were going off to become accountants I though that was pointless and so I was going off into engineering and sort of changing the world - a bit. So I guess over time as well it becomes, the balance becomes a bit more orientated towards our actually earning a living and providing for my family, so in that sense the career becomes a means to an ends.

K – Do you think your career’s been affected by working from home?
J – No, not at all because actually the environment I work in, the whole of this organisation really is orientated around people working from home, the organisation I work in is pan-European, it’s a US company but our bit of the organisation’s pan-European and a lot of the people scattered across Europe are home-based so no I don’t think so, not in that sense although there’s probably the wider question of whether I’m working in the right role in the right kind of organisation, should I have taken the opportunity to leave Techcom when I did? Should I have gone and work for my friends in this small software company instead of working for a larger company in London a couple of years back? Should I be doing this? – I don’t know – so, not the homeworking but the context of the organisation in which I’m doing the homeworking maybe.
K – So your married to Helen and you live here with your 2 year old and one that’s due at any moment as well
J – Yes
K – Currently how’s childcare arranged?
J – Well at the moment Helen’s on maternity leave. So on the one hand she’s fulltime doing the childcare. He’s not in nursery or anything, but on the other hand I’m increasingly conscious that she’s finding harder to keep up with this energetic 2 year old as she’s been getting closer to having the baby, so I guess the actual arrangement at the moment is Helen’s doing the childcare. And when I’m home I try to be helpful in terms of nappy changing starting the lunch but there’s a limited amount one can do in a regular working day and I would guess, I mean it’s actually a bit tricky to assess objectively when I’m at home, because when I am at home it’s actually because I’m working on a particular project and that project may end up being quite time consuming and it ends up being just as bad as if I were out at the office till late at night or whatever. But what we try to do is try and make sure that we’re alternating in terms of doing the bath and bed time routines, Helen definitely does the majority. Certainly on working days. Would it be useful if I talk about how things were before Helen went on maternity leave?

K – Absolutely, yes.
J – Ok, so, up until August, Henry was in nursery 2 days a week and he was with my parents one day a week and that covered that 3 days Helen was working, and the 2 days that Helen wasn’t working she’s be there for the childcare so on that basis there is no child care for me during the days, and days when I was actually at home we typically do, you know Helen would do the drop off in the morning and I’d do the pick up in the evening from nursery, or vice-versa, you know depending exactly what are commitments were. Sometimes we’d both do both ends of the day. The thing that was particularly challenging through the first half of the year I found myself travelling and I’d be away for a week at a time and that became really quite demanding for Helen in terms of taking the drop off and the pick up everyday when she was at work so that was a bit tricky, and then from August until last month, so I guess two and half, three months probably 2 months, Helen started working from home. We went on holiday and he seemed to really enjoy not being in nursery so decided not to take him back to nursery and Helen very much bore the brunt of that in terms of organising her work around the needs of Henry and I think to be honest probably over did it. At that point she should probably have been getting more rest, so we didn’t really have a good solution.

K – How about domestic work in the home, how’s that managed?
J – In terms of general cleaning around the house. Neither of us do any really we have somebody in once a week who does most of that and we manage to keep things as best we can. In terms of cooking. When I’m here it’s probably roughly 50/50, and certainly at the moment. The way we’ll typically work an evening one of us does the Henry’s bath and the bedtime routine and the other one gets the meal on, and then typically I’ll do the washing up afterwards. Helen tends to say I have higher standards than she has when it comes to washing up and wiping down surfaces and so on, so she prefers to let me do the clear up at the end of the day. But obviously
that does depend on me actually being here which is probably only 50% to
60% of the time, although at the moment it's a lot better because I'm
avoiding travel as the baby's due
K – Did you have time off work when Henry was born?
J – Ya. I actually had... I was actually only a week into this job with the
software company and they very generously gave me a week free paid in
addition to any leave I was due and I think I only took a week, and Helen
had her parents around as well so it wasn't needed particularly. with this
one the plan is to have at least two weeks off and then that will merge into
the Christmas break
K – What kind of parent would you say you are?
J – A very disorganised one. Gosh, I don’t know, I’m probably around a lot
more than a lot of fathers are able to be this is one of those things I’m just
not sure about in terms of my current work arrangements if I have to be
away overnight that means I miss Henry both at bedtime and in the
morning and that would be the case if I’m away over night, and then again
if I’m here then I’ll see him in the morning and we’ll have a good bit of
time together in the morning and I’ll probably see him for lunch - I’ll
probably pop in several times during the day and I’ll definitely see him in
the evenings and anything else I was doing, if we were living here the other
option that a lot of people locally would follow would be to travel daily
into London, in which case a regular pattern of work would be on a train at
7 o’clock in the morning and not be back before 7 in the evening, which
means I wouldn’t see him at all it’s difficult, everybody organises their
work in different ways I guess, so from that point of view I’m reasonably
hands on, and I guess of the two of us I’m probably sort of more indulgent
and disorganised and tend to take things at whatever pace things go which I
guess a lot of Dad’s probably do and have the luxury to do and Helen’s the
one that makes sure - ah, now that’s the really important bit of housework
we missed out – is actually the laundry because Helen does all the laundry
and there’s a lot of laundry with a two year old
K – Especially when he’s learning to eat soup
J – Yeah, he will absolutely have a change of clothes everyday and a
change of nightclothes everyday
K – What have you learnt since becoming a parent?
J – I know I’ve learnt all kinds of things just sort of details. how to change
a nappy for one and names of lots of Bob the Builder’s team and things like
that
K – (laughs)
J - I don’t know - much more profound things than that I guess. I never
have the opportunity to reflect on these things really, but I guess the extent
of unconditional love that you can feel for a person - it’s probably an
unusual marriage relationship where you feel that all the time, and I’m sure
as children get older it becomes more challenging. I think it’s a wonderful
thing, although there may be moments of frustration. the complete
commitment you can feel for this little person is extraordinary. Helen and I
have been talking recently about the early days of having Henry as we look
forward to having this new baby and I’m amazed how little I actually
remember of it, just the sheer exhaustion of the broken nights and all the
rest of it. so yeah some trepidation towards that. I don’t know, we’ve had
so many life changes actually have been concurrent, coincident with
Henry's arrival, there's all kinds of things I've learnt - how to use a chain
saw and how to chop wood but they were coincidental
K – Do you think that your role as a father's changed, been changed by the
fact that you're working from home - they sort of came at the same time for
you?
J – Well 'ish'. I had the year or so – first 10 or 11 months of Henry's life I
was working for the software company and I was doing my strict 9-5 and
the deal there was I took that job because it was one I could contain and in
that case I had a reasonable amount of Henry time at the end of the day,
then so in some senses shifting to this role where I'm home-based, I'm not
sure I see anymore of Henry, from that point of view, although there are
the benefits like when the workload's more manageable - and it ebbs and
flows - I can stop at 5 o'clock and catch up on some things after he's gone
to bed and after we've had dinner – I don’t remember exactly what your
question was
K – It was about whether or not your role as a parent has changed because
of working from home
J – I don’t think it’s changed ‘because of’ working from home, but I think
I'm able to spend more quality time with him because I'm working from
home, I think that's true – certainly more than if I was commuting to
London
K – Oh yes. How long have you actually worked from home
J – It's now mid-November, I started at the beginning of September last
year, so about 14/15 months
K – And who instigated that?
J – It came as part of this new role that I was taking, and to be clear, I guess
on average maybe I spend approaching 50% of my time at home, actually
at home, and the other 50% could be away over night or I could just be
away for the day
K – Why did you decide to take a role where you'd be working from
home?
J – I think really it was about the role than really being home-based. This
particular role, if I wanted it to be office based I could have been office
based, but the office is out in Buckinghamshire which would have meant us
relocating and we didn’t want to do that, so being home-based and having
to travel a certain amount is the price I pay for doing this role and living
here
K – Did you discuss with your wife that you might like to start working
from home?
J – Yes it was part of the overall discussion about the role although I think
that being home-based for some of the time was certainly part of it and I
think we were expecting me to be at home more than I am and it was an
attractive thing for both of us, I think
K – And your wife's reaction was a good one
J – Yeah
K – Did you discuss it with any other people?
J – No I didn’t actually, I think, because I work in the communications
business and because I was involved in the technical side of telework trials
Interview 6: James

for NT in the early nineties I think I had a reasonable insight into certain
some of the aspects of what it was going to be.

K - Was it what you expected?

J - Yeah absolutely, I think again the mix I have means that I'm not prone
to some of the issues that maybe some people experience when they're
100% home-based and they miss the social interaction or whatever, so yeah
pretty much what I expected.

K - So you're not having a better experience or a worse experience than
you thought?

J - No no. As I say, there are things that are different and the things that
are different are firstly I'm actually spending less time at home than I
expected so I'm having to travel more and that's - you know there are
evenings, especially when I first took on the role, where one wishes to appear
to be ready to please and all the rest of it, whether one is or not that's part
of it... so certainly during the first 6 months of the role I was spending a lot
of time away and that wasn't how we wanted things to be and that's
something that over the last 6 months I've been able to manage it a bit
better so I'm not at home as much as expected - one difference - the
second difference is actually our lives have changed a bit over the time,
when I started Helen was working 4 days a week which meant there was
only 1 day a week when I actually had other people in the house at the
same time and from my workspace - they way it opens - as you'll probably
take a look at later - the way it opens onto one of our other rooms, it's not
really very conducive to working when there are people in the other room,
so having people around more actually is unhelpful so the working
arrangements aren't ideal from that point of view, and we need to do
something about that, just in terms of the workspace. I've gone from
basically having 4 days of the week from when I'm here, it's just me to
having no days of the week when I have the place to myself.

K - And you prefer to have the place to yourself?

J - Yeah it's easier to concentrate.

K - Before you began teleworking did you have - what were your opinion
of other people who teleworked?

J - Good question. So, at Techcom I had a team of about 50 people that I
was managing and they were all professional people, you know, they were
all graduates and quite a number of them had higher degrees and we were
based in London in offices and a lot of people were travelling considerable
distances to get into London and we were a start up company and certainly
in the first year or two there was a discussion whether they could be home-
based at least for some of their time to reduce the time they were wasting
travelling. And the feeling, early on, was that because we were in start up
mode and we were still forming the teams and forming the relationships
was that we couldn't afford to do that we needed to hot-house people and
have them in one place from the point of view of interaction, and so we
didn't have any teleworkers and if we had had teleworkers in that
environment I think that they would have been out of the flow er, so
whatever, whilst objectively, I might dispassionately look at them and
think great that person's teleworking, they've got good reasons for doing
that, I think probably I'd have viewed those people as peripheral. At NT we
had plenty teleworkers and that worked just fine so there's no particular
disadvantage to being a teleworker although again most of those were on a part time basis so I think it very much depends on the organisational environment, if everybody teleworks to some extent then everyone’s in the same boat and there no particular disadvantage to being a teleworker, there no sort of reduced perception of those people, but probably in an environment where more people are office based then I think everybody naturally views the teleworkers with some degree of scepticism and I think that’s what Helen is experiencing at the moment.

K – Do you have an idea what a typical teleworker might be like?

J – Mm. Well, now, I guess the implication of what I’ve just been saying is that I don’t regard myself as a typical teleworker. I have no idea, I have no data to know what the typical teleworker is, I suspect that the typical teleworker, numerically, the average teleworker probably is teleworking part time and part time either on the road or in the office, so if that’s the case then I’m actually fairly typical and it’s some mix between time with clients or time meeting with colleagues elsewhere. we say in Tele-research that the place one’s most likely to meet a colleague is in the BA lounge at Heathrow, that’s an occupational hazard. But I guess there’s another extreme of teleworkers that I guess is my image of the classic teleworker which is probably shaped by my work at NT where we were pushed a lot of our call centre staff out to work from home and so the majority of those people are doing relatively process oriented jobs with a procedure they’re following, following a pattern and they’re basically at a desk, at a PC. and a head set and they’re doing exactly what they’d be doing if they were tied up to the same equipment in an office, in a call centre, so I guess that’s what I think of when I think of a teleworker, typically. Although I suspect that maybe numerically there are maybe more people in my kind of position.

K – How do you keep in touch with colleagues and clients?

J – Yeah, so, I guess with colleagues a lot of it’s by email. huge amount of email and my life has been transformed through the course of this year, that’s another huge change that I wasn’t going to mention was actually finally getting a broad band connection in here has made a real difference cos we’re outside reach from DSL broad band so had to get a radio system put in and I guess that technologically one of the things I’ve found has changed over the last ten years is just the speed of the connection that you need to work remotely effectively I’ve had some kind of home working set up since 1994. therabouts, maybe a earlier, starting off a with a modem running through ISDN and now I have a broadband connection and through out all that time I’ve also spent a lot of time on the road when you can find yourself reduced to just having a 9.6k dial up on your mobile phone but the big thing that’s changed over the past ten years has been the size of the email you get and there’s important stuff that you need to be able to see and work through which is embedded in 4,6,8.10 mega bite powerpoint files that you’ve just got to be able to get to. so email is the biggest thing and that’s been a change. The mobile phone. I’ve got a phone number which appears to be an office number which rings on my mobile. it’s patched through to mobile, and that’s the other one. And I use Yahoo messenger a lot actually. so instant messaging has been another
transformation, and there are a number of us who use it within the organisation, so that's really useful.

K - Is that for more for kind of social communication?

J - Yeah – I mean it’s never just social. There’s always something else there, what I think is the key thing is the presence awareness, so you know that someone’s actually sitting at their computer and they’re logged on so it’s that same… it’s the metaphor of someone wandering into the office and you just happen to see them passing, so you know somebody’s there at their desk and that I find incredibly helpful.

K - Have you had any issues of isolation?

J - No not at all. although you could occasionally go a couple of days, especially living here, where the only people I see is Helen and Henry although that, in my experience, having travelled a lot, is actually less isolating than being stuck in a hotel room somewhere, so there’s a lot to be said for that as well.

K - Do you have more control over your work now, now you’re working from home?

J - I think I have about as much control as I’ve ever had, one of the things I disliked at the software company – I said it was ‘nice’ working from 9-5, it was also a complete nightmare working 9-5 cos I’ve never done a 9-5 job, so I hated that feeling that I had to be in for a particular time I had to finish at this particular time, so yeah may be I do

K - Do you think you’re a better worker now you work from home?

J - No, I don’t actually and particularly now Helen and Henry are around it’s actually quite difficult to work from home at the moment and the thing is I’m not… Helen has a very good way of describing this about me, I can’t remember exactly how she puts it – the truth is there’s nothing to motivate me like a deadline so I guess I’m a bit of a last minute person and so if I’ve got something that has to be done I can put it off for ages until it becomes a crisis and then I can end up working through the night to finish it off, and that was fine when I was a student, if I had to pull an all nighter I was hurting nobody but myself but now I’m in a family environment that’s not really acceptable so I have to be diligent having Helen and Henry around is a real temptation, especially if there’s in the next room, and I hear Henry having a lot of fun, I’d love to go and see what he’s doing

K - what was the learning curve, did you have to develop strategies to manage working from home?

J -Mm. I think there are a number of things that I’m still grappling with. it was easier when it was just me here, but things like it’s very easy to, or I find it very easy to land at my desk, at 8 in the morning, and just stay there until you know half past five when it was time to go and get Henry and I just work and work and work and work, and I know that that’s not effective, I know that I need to take breaks and so on of things that I started making myself do, when it was just me here, would actually take half an hour out at lunch times, which was great. there was a period I guess from February time through to May, maybe June, when you know I’d get out for a run all week a couple of times a week, if I was here for a whole week, at lunch time, because I don’t really eat a lot at lunch anyway, and that was just fantastic, I’d come back to my desk again having had a shower and it was just like starting the day again cos I’m best first thing in
the morning, that’s when I get my best work done. So taking breaks, that’s one thing, and another thing that I find is actually when there’s stuff that absolutely needs to be done, is actually not answering the phone and when you’re a teleworker that can be a bit tricky cos you almost feel that you have to be more available than if you’re in the office. If you’re in the office people would understand, you’re in the office but you didn’t answer the phone so you must be busy. But if you’re at home and you don’t answer the phone does that mean you’re off skiving somewhere. I am kind of sensitive to that one and actually that just jogged a thought from a couple of questions ago about attitudes to teleworkers again – so, within Tele-research in Europe, we’re about 200 people in the organisation of which I guess 60, 80 of us are UK based, of which about 25 who are predominantly office based and one of the things our Vice President has been trying to achieve as he’s been bringing new people into the business and he’s had a strategy of managing some people out of the business due to the way our business has changed over the past few years and bringing people in, so sort of recycling people through the organisation, one of the things he’s been trying to achieve is to build more of a critical mass in the office, because he feels we’ve got insufficient cross-fertilisation between people and I think that’s a matter of concern that he has and it’s a matter I’ve discussed with him at a conceptual level, more generally, not just about me and he actually views people who live close to the office, but don’t come into the office, you know choose to telework but live in a half hours drive of the office, quite negatively, he understands the situation of those of us who are scattered elsewhere, and in that kind of case – I think organisations who have learned to manage this well are some of the large financial services firms who have people out on locations a lot of the time people like Cap Gemini etc. These kinds of organisations know how to manage the fact that they’ve got a large part of their workforce is hardly ever in the office, because if they’re in the office they’re probably not making money – you want them outside, so that was just an extra thought K - That’s great, so overall do you think that the impact on your family’s been positive?

J - I think so overall with respect to the sort of overall change to work and what else I could be doing, Helen will say that I’m better at home if I’m happy at work and I’m happier at work now than I was 18 months ago K - What do you think the overall impact’s been on your career of working from home?

J - Well again, inside this organisation I don’t think it has any impact, so inside Tele-research I don’t think it makes any difference...

(There is a pause as a parcel is delivered to the door)

J - So I think within the organisation I’m in I don’t think it’s had a big effect because it’s an accepted part of the way we work and my immediate boss works in the same way he’s exactly the same set up so that’s understood as well. I think I mentioned earlier I’m not sure if just doing this role has been a good career move, I’m not really doing the kind of work that really I’d be hoping to do at this point, so that’s a question mark, and that has more to do with the organisation I think than, it’s more to do with the role than it has to do with teleworking
But has the experience of working from home generally been a positive or a negative impact?

I think it’s been positive and I really would like to be spending more time at home and I’ve been managing that recently on the basis of the work, you know, particular projects that I’ve been working on recently, which have enabled me to be more home based and partly just because as we look through the rest of this calendar year, over the next month and a half, with the baby coming I can’t venture too far a field so Helen and I agreed I’m not getting on anymore flights until after the baby’s come.

Would you ever go back to traditional office based work?

Em, yes, I’d never say never. I don’t think I’d ever be prepared to travel everyday to London, no. And I... I’d much prefer to continue having a large chunk of my time at home if I can manage that, and whether eventually that means working for myself or just working for somebody else with the same kind of balance of work, I think would be my preference to stay this way now, but I wouldn’t say I’d never go back to office working.

Is telework an effective way to reconcile work and family life?

Well I think it probably is, but that depends on the kind of work you’re doing, when I’m at home I can normally organise my time fairly flexibly, I’ll have some number of fixed commitments around conference calls or whatever, I try to avoid conference calls cos they’re normally pointless but, you know normally I’ve got quite a lot of flexibility around my schedule, so I can fit other things, you know tomorrow’s Henry’s birthday, we’re having a small birthday tea for family and people, and that starts at 4.30 so the great thing about that is I’ll be able to work at least until 4 o’clock and knock off then and if there are any outstanding items, in fact. that’s right, somebody was asking for a conference all tomorrow afternoon at 5 o’clock, with a customer, which obviously I’ve said I can’t do, it’s Henry’s birthday but we are going to have a conference call at 7 o’clock tomorrow evening, so you know I can juggle that around. One of the things that interests me, and I’m sure there are many studies that exist that I’m not aware of, is historically a lot of people had their work close to their home, people weaving, or blacksmith having his forge, building a sort of idyllic rural picture – which probably never existed - but I guess historically people worked close to home in the rural economy or worked in their homes and it’s only from industrialization that people have begun to work outside the home or a long distance from home. so I guess I’ve always viewed the teleworking thing as potentially a way to maybe return to a more traditional way of life, of course that’s a load of rubbish cos now we tend to live in nuclear families or smaller family units which never existed previously. people tended to live larger extended families. but there are wider things, like we see people around here, day in day out, you can have a chat with someone who’s passing by or they can knock on the door if they want something, so there’s almost more of a social context working from home than working in an office, when I previously worked in an office my social contact has always been in the office and associated with the office predominantly and you know I never met my neighbours. so there’s a
Interview 6: James

wider social thing there not just about family – obviously that’s outside the
scope of what you’re looking at.
K – That’s very interesting actually and something other people haven’t
commented upon. But for you then, do you think your role in family life
has been reconciled more neatly with your work life since you’ve managed
to be working from home?
J – I think when I work from home I’m more involved with the family than
if I were in an office, but the main challenge I find in what I’m doing is the
sort of quid pro quo of working from home is that I also have to have a
chunk of time when I have to be completely away from home and that’s the
trade off that we both find difficult.
K – My overall question is: how does home-based telework impact upon
the professional and parental identities of men and women? Could you
speculate what you think the findings might be, perhaps from your point of
view, how has it affected you parental identity and professional identity?
J – Let’s do professional first because that’s easier – I don’t think it has
affected my professional identity and I don’t think there’s anything I want
to say to elaborate on that, I think in the context of the organisation I’m in,
working from home makes no difference but again may be that only works
because I also have to work away from home and there’s a balance
between the two, I think, so now I’m purely speculating so this is no use to
you, if I think back to my previous roles where I have been office based, I
don’t think I could have continued to work in the way I did or indeed to
develop my career the way I did by teleworking in those roles so I think it
really does depend on the context of the organisation you’re in. On the
parental side, I think I’m able to be a lot more involved with Henry
certainly than I would be able to if I was working in London and
commuting and I guess the question, the real comparator for me is what
am I able to do in this current working context versus when I was working
half an hour away and working 9-5 and that’s actually not clear to me, the
role I’m doing now and perhaps more so because I’m home-based
impinges on the weekends more than my previous role did and so that
obviously reduces family time and however hard one tries to protect it but
equally I’m around during the day, and then again I have to be away, so in
terms of my role as a parent, certainly if I were working in London, and the
only way we could manage that would be either for Henry to be in nursery
more for all the time that Helen’s working and she’d have to do both ends
of the day so we’d have to do something different there, or she’d be doing
full time childcare and that wouldn’t suit her – I think I’ve strayed from the
point. So parental role…
K – We were talking about how telework has impacted your role as a father
J – Really hard to tell whether it has to be honest. I would probably desire
to be involved, you know to be quite an involved father whatever the
situation, I’d chose to manage my work around that, so that’s why I’m not
commuting to London every day. For me the bigger question is around –
you know telework is probably an element of it, you know the bigger
questions around what I’m doing in my career, I could probably be doing
things that are a lot less family friendly
Interview 6: James

K - Do you think the impact of teleworking might be different if you were a woman? You know, both upon your professional role and your parental role?

J - It’s hard because - Helen probably has some interesting views on this partly because of what we chose to do with Henry when Helen started telework which was effectively to pull him out of full time childcare. Helen was working 3 day weeks and Henry was in childcare for 3 days and effectively what we did was to reduced his childcare to 1 day or may be less and Helen somehow covered his childcare and worked when he was napping, sort of 5 days a week, and in the evenings as well, which you know is hard work, so the fact that that was an option perhaps then lends some validity to the natural suspicion that maybe some managers would have, that you know that a woman with children who’s teleworking maybe isn’t as focused on her job as maybe she would be if she was in the office, but I have to say, I’m not as focused on my job when I’m in the office so maybe that’s a legitimate concern.

K - Has telework changed the way that you think about yourself and who you are?

J - No, I don’t think so, it’s a funny thing though. at Techcom I had a 50 person team and I had a nice office. and those sort of status trappings, that I guess contribute to anybody’s idea of self, concept of self. Now I spend most of my time in hotel rooms, airport lounges. or in a funny little lean-to room at the back of the house, which is much more untidy than I’d allow a workspace in an office to get to. Idea of self... And then again I think I’ve always been - and this goes back to my early days at NT. I’ve never really been a really corporate person, I’ve always been something of a renegade as far as corporate stuff goes, maybe I’ve just been set loose in the countryside and I’ve gone native. So I don’t think it’s affected my concept of self but there are some rambling thoughts around that which may or may not be helpful.

K - How would you categorise yourself, as a father firstly or in your occupational role firstly?

J - I think that for me the two are always in conflict, I don’t feel I’m doing as well in either role as I’d like to and you know, before we had Henry, it was either husband or whatever my work role was and I never felt I was as good a husband as I’d liked to be, although in that case to be honest, I made my decision. I worked - it was the work that took priority and that was a decision that I made then, either consciously or unconsciously, and now, as a father. I’m much more conscious of the conflict and that probably goes back to our views and our desires of how you want to be fathers how you want to be parents goes back to our experiences of being children, our relationships with our parents, I’m sure that must be the case.

My father commuted to London.

K - And was that one of the key reasons you didn’t want to be a commuter?

J - This actually was something I discussed with my father when I was making the choice, back in 2002 between taking the job in London and taking the job, the software start up in Ipswich and my Dad said ‘you only get that time once with your children’ and he said ‘I made my choices and I’d say to you think very hard because you only get the time once’.
K – So going back to this conflict that you say you feel between your as a father and your role at work, do you think working from home has added to that conflict or alleviated that a little?

J – I think it increases the conflict to be honest, partly because it’s made it more immediate, em yeah. I think it is the immediacy actually, I’m sure it’s very easy – well I’m sure it’s not very easy – but if you get the 7 o’clock train to London and you’re not back til 7 in the evening, your gone before the children are awake, so you don’t see them for breakfast and you ‘may’ get to see them to kiss them goodnight, well depending how you organise your life, everybody organises... keep their children up late or whatever. but you know, that time between 7 and 7 your out of the house you may be aware of the conflict, you may be concerned that you’re neglecting your family or whatever but I guess you reconcile that against providing for them financially, but whatever it is, it’s what you do everyday, off you go, now what I’m finding here particularly when Helen and Henry are at home, when they’re here and I’m here and I’m trying to work, I find that more difficulty and what I actually find I’m doing is - I always work all of my hours, I’m doing at least 40 hours and often more - so if I’m taking time out during the day to spend with Henry then normally that time’s being taken out of the time I would spend with Helen in the evening after he’s gone to bed, so it’s a case that there are only so many hours in the day. and if I’ve chosen to sell however many of those hours to my employer, there are only so many hours left for Helen and Henry, I don’t think I ever think of it quite like that but I am conscious of this decision, hour by hour. and goodness me the mechanics of that may be different because I’m selling my time. I have an occupation, but it’s probably no different to what people experienced, you know 200 years ago working in their homes.

K – Do you think working from home’s changed how other people see you?

J – Well not in terms of professional colleagues, I suspect. nobody’s ever said anything, I suspect a lot of the people I know around here or I see around here, probably wonder what it is that I do, some of the time he’s here and some of the time he’s not here and if he’s here what is it that he’s doing, so I think there’s that angle. And there’s another point around that which is around status symbols that maybe I’ll come back to. My parents are interesting because my parents live close by and, my parents are about a mile and half away and they typically look after Henry a morning or maybe a day a week and they have to be very clear with her, so that’s something. And finally just back to the point on status symbols, the environment I work in, a lot of the people I work with are sales guys and they’re very into their conspicuous trappings of success and wealth you know be it cars or smart watches or whatever it is, and I’m not and I know Helen’s not. and in a work environment that’s fine, the people I work with know where I sit in the organisation so they’ve got an idea of me from that – not that I care really, what any of them think. What’s more interesting I would think is people locally, we live in this house which is plenty adequate for our needs and we drive used cars which are perfectly adequate for our needs and I’m
knocking around at home and that gives on perception to people and that's fine, but if I chose to have an E class Mercedes on the drive or a range rover or whatever would that give them a different idea, and put the fact that I'm working from home a different context? - I don't know. I think that's an interesting question, I'm not sure if this is helpful or relevant, one of my other colleagues he and his wife have a farm in Yorkshire where she runs a riding stables and stud, and he basically, rather than teleworking, the way he runs his life is he weekly commutes down to the office once a week and lives in a hotel during the week, he could telework a lot of the time his clients are in the south east, but he, I went to stay with him a few months back, and he took me to his local pub, where he's a well know face with the regulars and he's regarded as this very interesting character because he's conspicuously wealthy and he disappears every week and nobody is quite sure what he does, so his experience may be different to telework, I'm not sure if that's a useful reference point or not but I thought I'd share it with you

K - Do you think it’s changed how your son sees you? Or is he possibly not old enough to...

J - I think he’s too young. One of my colleagues in California, his son’s about year older than Henry and he has a calendar on the wall at home, a sort of tear off calendar, and he said that, week days are black on the calendar, and weekends are red, and his son’s question to him every morning was ‘is today a black day or a red day?’ Because the black days he goes into the office and he’s there until late, I think it’s going to be really interesting with Henry and this probably merits some thought from Helen and me actually rather than blindly continuing - how we are how are we shaping Henry’s expectations of parental presence by having me around? I always try and explain, if I’m going away I often have to leave before he wakes up, so if that’s going to be the case I’ll try to explain that to him when he goes to bed, because I don’t want it to be a surprise for him in the morning, I want him to know when he goes to bed that I am going to be there in the morning unless I’ve told him I’m not going to be, because I think that those expectations are really important for children to know where they are and so I’m not really sure how things are going to work out in the future if I change my pattern of work, once he goes to school I’m not sure it’ll make much difference, but then we’ll have other children to think about as well, so we’ll see.

K - Finally then do you think it’s changed how your wife thinks about you?

J -Mm. I don’t think so. I mean it certainly changes the way we interact because there’s stuff that, I guess we’ve always called each other during the work day and said ‘ooh I’ve forgot the such and such’, or ‘oh I was just thinking about the whatever’, so we’ve always done that to some extent and that’s so much easier now and there is this issue about sorting out our working environments, I think Helen feels at the moment that she needs to be careful about disturbing me when she’s around and she makes a particular effort to get out of the house to toddler groups and so on, to make sure I have time to get on with things, so all of those things are issues and I would like to get to a situation where, just logistically the fact that I’m working from home isn’t impinging on how daily family life works, so
Interview 6: James

K – We’ve come to the end of the questions. Is there anything you’d like to add anything that you don’t think we’ve touched on that are issues for you about teleworking?

J – No I don’t think so, I think I’ve mentioned pretty much everything. Nothing leaps to mind, I think the really interesting challenge, is just a bigger life balance thing, if I just framing it in the context of the organisation I’m in, if I aspired to my immediate boss’s job, I could do that in the current pattern perfectly ok, if I aspired to his boss’s job I think I’d have to be in the office a lot more and geographically I couldn’t do that house moving, and I think whatever organisation I look at that’s going to be the case so there’s a real career question of how to manage that and there are ways to manage it, I could spend two or three days in the office a week, and weekly commute, but again it’s the whole balance with family is an issue, but then I think the only way I can reconcile all of this is by going into business for myself but then maybe I’d be working all the time, so who knows...

K – Thank you very much for taking part, could you give me some feedback about how you felt taking part in this project?

J – Yeah, completely happy. I think the questions are very reasonable. I think I’ll be honest, some of the questions are so deep and they’re not things I’ve really reflected on so I’ve given off the cuff answers. So if I sat down and think deeply about some of it I might come up with something rather different

(looking at James’s workspace)

J – So, it’s very untidy if you’d come yesterday it would have been even more untidy, it’s a perfectly adequate space, actually as a work space it’s more than adequate, it’s far more disorganised and untidy than any office I’ve ever had in a formal work place. I guess one of the issues in this room is we’ve got a complete mix of all our personal admin and my work, we’ve got these two mini filing cabinets and that’s predominantly personal stuff. I’ve got almost no work paper work in that sense, although a lot of what’s on the shelves is I guess personal, is I guess professional, it’s work related but it’s not directly company related, and in terms of the IT equipment and so on, that’s kind of standard, we’ve got a fax machine which I hardly ever use, very rarely need to do a fax, and the broadband connection which is great, basically from here over the broadband connection I’ve got secure access into our company network, I can access all the file servers and so on, so basically my IT here is as good as it would be in the office, so that’s great.

K – Is that part of the office equipment?

J – This one, no, this is Henry’s keyboard

K – For when he’s typing with Dad is it?

J – Yeah, so, this is an area of controversy between Helen and me - I think it’s great, early IT learning, she says it’s just encouraging him to become a computer games addict

K – Does he come in here often

J – He only comes in here when I’m going to let him come and play on that because if he comes in here he wants to play on that and we ration it to
Interview 6: James

only 10 maximum, 15 minutes at a time because it’s not really terribly
good for a little person to be staring at a screen and when he’s looking at
the screen he doesn’t blink he just goes ‘ooh’ - completely transfixed
K – So that goes on to the computer and you can see what he’s typing?
J – Yeah, it sits on top of the keyboard, it’s what’s known as a keyboard
topper, it’s fisherprice and I’ll fire it up, just switch to the other computer.
we’ve got two PC’s here ones my work one and ones my own, for
convenience, Henry has this rather wonderful piece of software, I think it’s
wonderful, which I got in America and the problem with it, it’s teaching
him to say ‘Zee’, and other tings, but basically he’ll sit here and he’ll play
with that
K – That’s wonderful
J – He’ll play with this for age and he’ll just play and play and play, sooner
or later he’ll choose something else...
K – And does he realise this is Dad’s space? This is Dad’s office?
J – And so the problem, the problem with this room is to do with precisely
that, to do with this open studwork
K – Oh I see, looks straight through to the kitchen and dining area
J – Exactly and this room we look through to is where we’ve got all
Henry’s toys and so on, which was fine when I was working at home and I
was on my own there might have been one day a week with other people
around, and so obviously if I’m working then I have to dash in there with it
otherwise whoever’s on the end of the phone hears this baby voice in the
background, this toddler yelling and thinks I’m not working, and equally if
he sees or hears me though there he wants me, so it’s not really – so the
choices are we block up that studwork, but that wouldn’t be good for that
room from a light point of view, so that’s not a really good option, you
could glass it in but he’s still be able to see me, and of course it doesn’t
solve the problem of where Helen works, so we have an old brick shed out
the back which we’ve decided that we at least want to get quotations on
getting converted into office space and that would provide office space for
the two of us and we’d probably annoy the heck out of each other, by
sitting in there working together and seeing each other for the rest of the
time but it seems like the only solution, so that’s the plan.
Interview 7: Adam

K - Could you state your name and occupation for the tape?
A - Yeah, Adam Smith, self-employed company owner
K - Great and could you describe role?
A - Well as I'm the only person there I suppose do everything. I'm the owner and manager if you like. I do all the marketing and everything, accounts, the lot.
K - It's called 'Researchcom'.
A - It is yeah, basically I used to be in research and one of the things that I have been doing, although it's gone a bit quiet now. It's data entry and tabulation for market research companies, which, when I first went self-employed, is the route I thought I would follow, so it made sense to try and you know, give it a research based name. However at the moment I tend to do a lot of manual counts, that's basically putting on streets, shopping centres, wherever, clicking away, counting people, so that is more or less the core of my business now.

K - How did you get into working for yourself?
A - Well I used to work, as I say I started working in research about 10 years ago down at Shopper's World... (a child walk in and stands in front of the camera) Come out the way. Go and find Mummy then.
W - No
A - (whispers) Come out the way (the child leaves). That's thrown me.
Yeah right, 10 years ago doing market research, then they moved to Brighton so I was taken on by a company called Stepcount who do electronic people counters again working at Shopper's World and then they had a restructure and I was actually made redundant so I took the decision then - I'd already got some work coming in, freelance - to go full time self employed, so it was something I was thinking about, but when your already working it's quite a big step unless you've got a nice chunk of work, but just to suddenly do it when you've just taken on a mortgage, you know and a child...
K - A big step
A - But I was kind of forced into the decision, and I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, so I thought right let's give it a go.
K - Have you always had a background of research?
A - No, when I first left school I was working in retail and I actually went into manufacturing, then back in '89 it wasn't really going anywhere and I needed a change and again I was kind of forced into it because the company went bust, so it was a perfect opportunity to retrain so I actually went into IT. And through the training course I did an opening came up at Shopper's World and cos I live very close to there I thought I'll go for that and it just happened to be in research, so it wasn't a conscious decision, it just opened up for me.
K - So now you work for yourself and from home, typically how many hours do you spend at home working?
A - Well it does vary, it depends on the type of week I've got. Mondays are almost exclusively. I work for a company in Birmingham, for a company down there, Stepcount, and quite a few Tuesdays at the moment, so that takes those days out, and Wednesday, Thursday, Friday - Fridays I'm usually at home so you can definitely count Fridays as a home day and mostly Thursdays. The other days I do a lot of validations for Stepcount so
I might be out and about, I go all over the country, so it’s very difficult to say a typical week, but it could be typically between 16 and 24 hours.

K – And are you happy with the position...?
A – *(he nods)*

K – Do you have aims for a future career then, staying in this field I presume?
A – Yeah, I want to expand the business, and I want other people to do the hard work. Simple as that, you know.

K – So what kind of worker would you say you are?
A – What kind of worker?
K – Yeah it’s a very broad question, just anything that comes to your head.
A – That’s a very difficult one. Fairly lazy, if I’m honest, and that’s why I like what I’m doing.

K – Fair enough, fair enough, and what does career mean to you?
A – Career, I hate the word, I’m not somebody who pursues a career at the expense of all else, again that’s why I like what I’m doing, I’ve always seen a job as a means to an end. If I didn’t have to I wouldn’t work, I’d rather spend it with my family, and this gives me more time to spend with them.

K – Do you think your career’s been affected by working from home?
A – I wouldn’t say affected, again I wouldn’t see it as a career. I’m not someone who’s got this career path that must be followed at all costs, so there’s nothing really to be affected.

K – So you live here with your 2 small children, how old are you children?
A – Well William’s four and Jo’s 20 weeks.

K – Currently how are childcare and schooling arranged?
A – Well Ellen’s not working at the moment so that’s fine, there’s no real pressure, so William goes to school one afternoon and nursery 2 days and obviously she takes care Jo.

K – And how about domestic work, in the house, how’s that shared?
A – A good question.
K – A cheeky question.
A – No, it basically gets done when we get chance.

K – Does one of you take the lion’s share?
A – I’d say Ellen does, to be fair.

K – Did you have time off work when your children were born?
A – Yes I did, yeah. I had 2 weeks when William was born, when I was still employed, and with Jo, I tried to take as much time as... it’s more difficult, it’s not like when you go into an office and you say I’m having these two weeks and the phone stops, being self employed means the phone can go anytime, so I did take time and maybe over a longer period, maybe 2 or three days a week.

K – I see, and another general question, what kind of parent would you say you are?
A – Em, very loving and I really enjoy it, I have a lot of fun with my children.

K – Do you think your role in your family’s since you began working from home, I mean, were you working from home between the 2 children were you?
A - To be honest, even with Stepcount, I did spend a bit more time at home then, even though I was employed, so I’ve always had more time to spend with, you know certainly with William, I still had 2 or 3 days I’d be at home, so it’s not changed significantly. I’ve always got to spend more time than somebody who does 9-5 in an office.

K – And what do you think you’ve learnt since becoming a parent?

A – What have I learnt? Blimey. What I’m trying to learn is to remember their needs more. It’s too easy to go around doing your day and forget William’s not had his lunch or perhaps he needs a drink and try and see the signs of when he needs a bit more attention, which is fairly obvious, starts playing up more, and try and give attention

K – Are there times… (William interrupts)

W – Need to have a drink

A – Ok

K – Are there times when you’re trying to work from home and Ellen’s not around and you’ve got the kids and feeling…?

A - Generally if Ellen’s not around I won’t bother trying to work, it’s just not worth, there are times when Ellen is around and I’m trying to work and William perhaps wants me but then you know the advantage is if he does, unless it’s incredibly urgent, I can break off and give him some time which is nice.

K – Great. So you’ve worked from home for about 18 months and that was entirely your decision following the termination of another job, so what were the key features of your thinking, your decision-making when you decided to base yourself from home?

A – Because a lot of what I do, a lot of it is out of the office if you like, 2 days a week in Birmingham anyhow (babytalk from William) shhh, there’s numerous days out at various shopping centres, I didn’t need any staff, there were no start up costs, I’d just bought a PC so all I had to do was install a bit of office furniture and there’s no need for the extra expense of getting an office.

K – Absolutely, so who did you discuss your decision with? Did you discuss it with your family?

A – With Ellen yeah, there’s nobody else I needed to discuss it with really

K – And what was her reaction?

A – Well when you first come home and said, and it was just before Christmas, I’m being made redundant. it was quite a shock. I still remember the day I was told, and you get over the initial shock and you sit down and think ‘well what am I going to do?’ I had a nice cushion of 3 months notice, plus quite a bit of redundancy. so that effectively gave me about 6 months of not having any pressure to actually earn anything, to get it up and running, so I straight away decided ‘yes let’s do this’ and I did a training course with the local enterprise agency and it just seemed the right time.

K – And so was Ellen happy with your decision?

A – Yes

K – Great. Is it what you expected, being able to work from home? Or is it better or worse?

A – Em, I’m not sure what I was expecting. It was kind of thrust upon me. I think it’s better, there’s always the fear that you haven’t got the salary
every month guaranteed, so if you haven’t got anything coming in you
wonder where the money’s going to come from, but touch wood it’s been
ok. And it’s perhaps harder than I anticipated, I’m perhaps busier than I
though I was going to be and I’ve actually probably spent less time here
than I would have hoped, some days I might only get one day here. and
actually I moan about having a 4 day week if I’m really busy which seems.
you know when I say to other people and they’re 5 days in an office, you
know it puts it into perspective
K – Before you began working from home. what were your opinions of
other people who worked from home?
A – I’m not sure I had any of people who worked from home particularly. I
didn’t really know anybody, I suppose it’s getting more popular, I think if
I’d known anybody I’d be quite envious actually, cos it’s nice, it gives you
more freedom.
K – So now that you work from home, do you have any idea what a typical
teleworker or home worker might be like?
A – I don’t know whether there is a typical one, it depends what you’re
doing, there’ll be some people who work exclusively from home and don’t
have to go out on the road, and then there’s me that might spend 4 or 5
days away and I do have to spend quite a lot of nights away aswell
K – Did you have any idea about the kinds of people who might telework
A – Not particularly, no
K – Ok, how do you keep in touch with your colleagues and your clients?
A – Generally by phone, phone and email I guess are the two biggies at the
moment, but I generally prefer to use the phone if I can. but it’s just more
personal isn’t it? Emails fine for a lot of things, but the phone’s better.
although I have a lot of personal contact as well, I mean my biggest client
is Stepcount and I’m there twice a week anyhow. so I get a lot of face to
face contact
K – A lot of people who work from home say they’ve got issues of
isolation, have you experienced…?
A – Well no I don’t. I think if you were purely from home, I wouldn’t
enjoy that, even if I do just one day a week in the office. I still get the
office culture, so I get to see people, because I’m used to that and I do like
that, I think you need some contact. plus I’m out doing the validations, so I
don’t have a problem with that
K – Do you think you have more control over your work now?
A – There is some control yeah, but having said that, when you’re in the
early stages I do tend to find that I do what ever it takes to get a particular
project done. maybe if you were bigger you could say it’s really not worth
my time, so I do sort of bend over backwards than if I were a bigger
company
K – Do you think you’re a better worker now you work from home.
perhaps more efficient?
A – Em. I think you have to be, at the end of the day, the difference now is
whatever I do is for the benefit of me, when you’re working for someone
else. it doesn’t matter how successful or how many jobs you get it
somebody else is always going to feel the benefit of that, so you know the
better I am and the more efficient and the better I am with clients, the better
the benefits and the more secure the business becomes, so it’s got to give
you extra motivation to do things better.

K – What was the learning curve for you, starting working at home?

A – Em, well, given that most of the work I started doing was stuff I’d
already been doing, in terms of the work, not particularly big. In terms of
accountancy and tax issues and employment law it was huge and I’m still
learning now, on that side.

K – With respect to working from home did you have to develop certain
strategies, I’m thinking perhaps some people try to keep like separate
spheres, they try to keep their family very separate from their work

A – No I don’t think I did, no, the office is upstairs and it’s just one of the
bedrooms, I don’t shut the door, I don’t keep William out, if he wants to
come and see me he can. I don’t want it to become this isolation zone
where nobody’s allowed, I get on with my work and if somebody needs me
I’ll be there and I won’t just say no you can’t talk to me I’m in work mode
now.

K – What do you think the overall impact has been on your family?

A – I think it’s been quite positive, the amount of time that I’ve been able
to spend with William compared with working full time, the amount of
things we can do now, so long as I’ve not got anything particularly urgent
on, I can take him to school, take him to nursery, pick him up again, if we
wanted to go out for the day, if we need to go into Sheafstown, if we need to
go to Shopper’s World, you know everyday things that you can do, that if
you’re in an office you just can’t get to do, it just gives me so much more
flexibility and the amount of time I can give to the family than if I was
stuck in an office is something I would never want to give up now.

K – And on the flip side, what do you think the impact’s been overall on
your career?

A – Again, as I say, I’ve never really seen myself as a career person, I
don’t see as there’s an impact as such, I haven’t got, you know I’m a
doctor, or I’m a specific job where, if I were to take time away I’d
suddenly be out of the loop, I run a business where I’m doing something I
know how to do, I don’t see an impact on a career.

K – So the impact on your life generally has been a positive one?

A – Incredibly positive, yeah.

K – Is there anything you’d change about working from home, would you
ever consider going back to traditional work?

A – I would say no, a while back I would have said for the security but
having said that I’ve been in jobs, my last job, I was made redundant so is
there security? You know, has anybody got it? So I trade that for the
freedom and flexibility that I have now. I don’t think there’s anything else,
because I already do days in the office, it’s not like I even miss that, and
would want that back. because if I was solely at home perhaps I would say
yes I would like the contact of the office or anywhere, you know
probably one of the happiest times was in the factory I used to work in it
was great fun, but as I’ve got a bit of that, I’m out and about a lot. no I
can’t think of anything.

K – Great. Is telework an effective way for parents to reconcile work and
family life then?
Interview 7: Adam

A – I would say so yeah, I mean the freedom and flexibility you get, provided the work’s there, um, is great, yeah.

K – Great. My overall research question is ‘how does home-based telework impact upon the professional and parental identities of men and women?’ Have you any idea what the findings might be for that?

A – Ooh, I guess that depends on what your business is. If you’re the kind of person, as you say, has an office at home and excludes everyone from that and puts yourself in work mode and shuts the door, then maybe it has an impact, I don’t know, I means I try and put, the family comes first and the work comes second, whether that’s the right way to do it or not, it’s just the right way for me and there are times when I’ve perhaps not done some particular work because there was something more pressing here, so for me it’s been a positive impact in that I get to spend more time, professionally, I wouldn’t let it impact on me professionally, no I don’t think anybody’s particularly aware that my office necessarily is upstairs in a bedroom, my contact number is my mobile, simply because I am all over the place and a phone line here, they wouldn’t get me most of the time, so I don’t think there’s any impact professionally of work from home.

K – And looking at the gender issue then, would you speculate on how you think working from home might affect women A – Well I can only see it being a good thing, if you’re a career woman who doesn’t want children, then I can’t see it making much of a difference, cos you can do that in an office and it might be better for you, if however you’ve got a family and you can get work that you can do around their commitments and needs I think it’s fantastic and the best way to do it I’m sure.

K – I think we’ve covered this already – how would you categorise yourself firstly, as a father or as a researcher?

A – Father.

K – And do you think working from home’s changed this?

A – I can only see it as being of more benefit cos as I say the time that I get to spend is brilliant.

K – Has telework and working from home changed how you think about yourself and who you are? – It’s a deep one.

A – It is a deep one, em.

K – Or perhaps how other see you?

A – I think it’s certainly changed how other perceive me, I think there are quite a few people who are quite envious actually, cos they’re stuck in, I won’t say stuck in cos it’s probably what they want to do, but they’re in 9-5 jobs, where as there are times when somebody calls me, ah - a good example, a friend of mine called me, he was stuck on a train back from London, and we were on a steamer on Ulswater, I’d been working in Scotland, and that’s the other thing I get to take them with me, you know, I was working in Scotland, I’d only had to be there an hour in the morning but it needed to be done, so on the way back we called at one of the lakes and went on the Ulswater steamer, that to me is a prime example why I like it so much, I did that, we were in no rush to get back, and I can take them and do that.

K – Do you think working from home has affected how your children see you? Obviously one’s a little too young...
Interview 7: Adam

A - They’re used to it, I don’t think there’s anything to affect because as I say when I was employed I did have more time here, I was still home-based as such even though I was employed. It would be interesting to see if I’d had William a little earlier, when I was a 9-5 person. Whether my relationship with him would be as strong as it is now. Because I’d of only seen him an hour or two at night and then weekends, I would had to have made more of weekends because I wouldn’t have seen him, I mean my brother puts his son in full time care you see and only see’s him... whereas I get to see him a lot, and I think my relationship with William’s brilliant, I wouldn’t want to change it.

K - Do you think it’s changed how Ellen sees you?

A - I don’t think that’s changed her perception of you?

K - She probably would actually – or has anybody mentioned they’ve changed perception of you?

A - Whether I’ve changed in their eyes... no I don’t think they have. I’ll have to ask people and see

K - And then email me

A - Whether I’ve become more relaxed or more mellow or more stressed – I mean I am more stressed but there are more times when I’m having more fun so I can live with that

K - I’ve had people say that when tradesmen have come to the door and seen that there’s a man at home in the daytime they’ve made assumptions

A - I am convinced that people make assumptions about me because a lot of the time if I’m not going into the office I might not have a shave in the morning, I might just get up and get on with what we’re doing and yes I am around a lot and might take them shopping and maybe people think I’m unemployed – I actually don’t care anymore. I know what I’m doing, I look at a lot of people and I think - I had to go on the train to London and I see all the people getting on, you know I was on the 5 o’clock train last week cos I had to be in London early and for me that’s a one off but you get on and there’s all these people commuting to London, backwards and forwards, and I have a bit of a snigger cos I don’t have to do that

K - We’re pretty much at the end of the interview so thanks for taking part

A - That’s ok, hope it was useful

K - Is there anything you want to add, anything that you can think of

A - Only that if anybody’s thinking about it I’d give it ago, there’s always with anything in life there’s always the ‘what if?’ question, ten years later ‘if I’d done this where would I be?’ Working for somebody else is fine. But the majority of people will never get any reward from that because it’s someone else’s company, so go for it, do the best you can and if it works out you’ll be laughing, especially if you’ve got a family. It’s the time that you get to devote to them, is fantastic.

K - Is it possible I could look at your office space

A - It’ll be a mess

K - That’s fine, it’ll be realistic

A - Ok

K - So you’ve got nice big bookshelves

A - Yeah the left hand one’s actually Ellen’s so the right hand one’s mine.

K - Some family stuff on there as well
Interview 7: Adam

A - That's right, yeah
K - And then you've got your more officey stuff, your work files, little
shredder in the corner, some furniture that you're going to move out, filing
cabinet in the corner
A - Nice leather chair
K - Lovely leather chair, that looks very comfy
A - It is actually
K - And then printer
A - Two printers, other one there, laser one there
K - Lovely, and Computer, and you've got a picture there, one of
William's?
A - Yeah it is yes
K - All the glitter, great and your sporty car calendar. That's brilliant
Adam thanks very much. I suppose the final thing that I should have asked
you downstairs is do you have any feedback about the process that you've
just been through, taking part in this interview, is there anything that you
would have changed, didn't mind being filmed?
A - No I think that, having been in research, you don't want to be taking
notes because it'll take far too long and you might miss something, you
could just record the voice, you're right, but no I think a lot of companies
do video research now so I had no problem with that
K - Thanks again then.
A - No problem.
Interview 8: Magnus

K - To start off could you describe your job to me?
M - Yes, I'm a management consultant and I specialise in telecommunications. So I do work for companies that want to know something about either telecommunications as a subject or looking at companies on behalf of other companies who are involved in telecommunications.

K - How did you get into that kind of work?
M - Well I worked for Nat-tel for 36 years, and I took early retirement in the year 2000 and set up my own business which is Magtel Limited, and I advertised for jobs and eventually I got some work and at the moment I'm working for a private venture capital company based in New York, and I'm looking at a number of companies, the technology that they use in telecommunication, I'm advising the bank whether the company is worth investing in or not.

K - So you work from home for about 90% of the time. What do spend other time doing? - Are you on the road or do you have traditional office you can go into?
M - No I don't have an office at all, the other time is meeting my partner who lives in Dublin, he also has a house in Manchester, so occasionally I go to Manchester, he comes here, or I go to Dublin, and other things are like attending conferences and meetings with companies, the last company I was looking at was in Stuttgart so it meant me going over to the company there and looking at some records and getting a few presentations and so on.

K - Are you happy with your role at the moment?
M - Mm yes, I would say so.

K - Do you have aims for your future career?
M - Well obviously I'd like to retire at some stage, I'm 56 now and my normal retirement age would have been 60 with NT but I'll continue to work as long as I want to really, when I can financially stop, and I want to stop. I'll stop.

K - What kind of worker would you say you are? - Quite a broad question. Just say anything that comes into your head.
M - In terms of lazy or hard or...?
K - Yeah possibly. I'm thinking in terms of - some people would say they're very committed workers or very hard workers, kind of along those lines, how would you position yourself?
M - I'd consider myself probably a hard worker, certainly with NT when ever I worked with NT my hours were 40 a week and it wasn't unusual to work double that, you know 70, 80 hours a week, depending on the sort of work load, but it was fairly steady, well above the 40 hours, nowadays I tend to be more what you would term flexible working because some days are quite long, other days I've got quite a bit of private time. I tend to work Saturday and Sundays when the job involves it, work right through 7 days a week, and then the next few weeks I might only work 2 days.

K - What does your career mean to you?
M - Well there's the money aspect to it obviously, particularly this contract I'm on now pays quite well, but there's also the reward of doing something useful, a large part of the work is doing research, largely on the internet, but some background reading as well, but basically all of it is research, finding out about new things, you know broadening the sort of
Interview 8: Magnus

51 knowledge. I suppose it keeps your mind occupied at the same time as
52 getting some recompense for it
53 K – And do you think your career’s been affected since you’ve worked
54 from home?
55 M – It’s obviously a different career but it hasn’t been affected in the sense
56 of promotion aspects or it hasn’t been detrimental to my lifestyle or
57 anything like that no, it’s a different way of working, and one which I
58 prefer actually, but it hasn’t been detrimental or positive to my long term
59 career. it’s just something different
60 K – So you’re married and you’ve got 3 children, how are childcare
61 arrangements managed at the moment?
62 M – We don’t have any formal childcare arrangements, the 2 oldest girls
63 are at primary school so they’re out of the house from nine til half past
64 three say, four o’clock, and the youngest one. he’s at nursery in the
65 mornings so he tends to be here at home in the afternoon, and at the
66 moment my wife doesn’t work, she has worked in the past, you know, I’ve
67 had Luke to look after as well as working, but at the moment Diane looks
68 after him in the afternoon, so for most of the working day I’ve got virtually
69 undisturbed time
70 K – And how about the domestic work in the home. how’s that
71 managed?
72 M – My wife does most of it. We tend to separate tasks, I tend to get the
73 children up in the morning, give them breakfast, the girls get themselves
74 dressed, but I normally dress Luke. Diane does their packed lunches and
75 then they go to school. Diane does virtually all the cooking, so the meals at
76 night – I normally just have a sandwich at lunch time, but the meals at
77 night Diane normally cooks, anything outside, you know the garden.
78 cutting the grass and that sort of thing. and when the house needs it I do the
79 decorating, so that’s kind of how we split up the functions.
80 K – Did you have time off work when your children were born?
81 M – No, well apart from 2 or 3 days holiday. I didn’t have paternal leave or
82 anything like that
83 K – And what kind of parent would you say you are? Again it’s a broad
84 question so…
85 M – I’m probably not the person to judge that actually, but I’m in the
86 unusual situation that this is my second marriage, to my first wife I had 2
87 daughters and they’re both grown up now. so to a certain extent it’s like
88 doing a rerun of what my earlier life was, so I guess I learnt a lot from the
89 first two and I’m probably a better parent for that experience, but you know
90 I’m probably not the best person to judge
91 K – It’s interesting you say about learnt from past experience, because my
92 next question was going to be what have you learnt since becoming a
93 parent?
94 M – Oh right
95 K – Are there any ways in which you’ve changed as a person since you’ve
96 been a parent – either time round?
97 M – Well from both times, the first child changes your life, not just your
98 business life, but your whole life because every thing has to revolve around
99 the child, the second one coming along is more of the same really it’s not a
100 big step change like having the first one is, so that isn’t such a big burden.
K - Made you develop as a person, your personality's changed due to becoming a parent?
M - I mean I find that probably more tiring, especially as I'm older now, having 3 children as well as having the 2 before I think find it more tiring than had I been younger, but apart from that I don't think there's much difference
K - Has you role in your family changed since you began working from home?
M - Er, yes, I probably see a lot more of the children than I would have with the first 2 because I tended to be out before they were up in the morning and they were either in bed or going to bed by the time I got in at night. Whereas here I see them, apart from the times they're at school and nursery I see them all the time, so that's quite nice, quite nice to have that
K - So you've worked at home for about 4 years now, and that came about because you set up your own business?
M- Yes
K - Why did you decide you'd work from home rather than find a traditional office space?
M - Well I think the first reason was that I had the facilities at home to do it, the second reason was the expense of having an office when I didn't really need it, so you've got the expense of the floor space but you've also got the telephone and electricity and all the rest to pay and I wasn't sure if the business was going to be financially successful or not at that stage, so I think prudence got the better of me, and luckily now we've got broadband it's a lot easier to work from home and it's pretty invisible that I do work from home from anybody outside
K - Who did you discuss it with when you were deciding to work from home? Did you discuss it with your wife and children?
M - Not the children no, I discussed it with my wife I think and we decided that initially that was the best thing to do. At the moment there's effectively only me in the business, although I've got a partner, there's no employees as such so I don't have to worry about payroll and welfare facilities for employees or anything, so I should think that, as long as it remains just me, in the business that the way it will stay I think
K - What were other peoples reactions? So how did your wife feel when you said you were thinking about working from home?
M - I think she was quite pleased because you know I'd be around, I'm not always helping but I'd be around if needed and the children would see a lot more of me. I don't think she would have relished me having the same sort of operating style as when I worked for NT, i.e. out before the early morning rush and back late evening, I don't think she would have relished that
K - What have your children's reactions been, having you around the home more?
M - They've not really known any difference, the older two are in Aberdeen, so they're not here anyway, but the others ones are too young really to notice any difference cos they've always known me to be working from here
K – Is it what you expected, the experience of working from home?
M – Em. I think it probably is yeah, I think it probably is
K – So before you began working from home, did you have an opinion of other people who worked from home?
M – Well I think the tendency was, certainly with NT, if you rang them up and their secretary answered and said ‘he’s working from home today’. They really meant he was having a day off, so I suppose people who alternate between the two, having a full time office and working from home, at that stage, you know 4 or 5 years ago it was regarded as a bit of a cop-out if you like, nowadays I think it’s more and more accepted, because more people do it, and businesses themselves have grasped the advantages of not having to have marble palaces to house people in if they can get them to work from home, so I think it’s becoming more and more accepted that it’s a genuine way to work
K – Now that you work from home do you have an idea what a typical teleworker might be like
M – Yes I do
K – So what kind of person might be a teleworker?
M – It’s someone in the jargon who would be information intensive, somebody who’s working a lot with information systems, an IT programmer, an internet researcher. NT tried at one stage to have directory enquiries operators working at home, and that’s the sort of person or job, as it were, that lends itself to working from home
K – And how to you keep in touch with your partner and clients?
M – Occasionally we meet, occasionally we have meetings, I don’t go to the expense of going to New York if I can avoid it, so I don’t actually go to the company that I’m working for all that often, so usually we keep in touch by telephone and email, email we use quite a lot
K – Have you had any issues of isolation, being based in your home?
M – Not really, I suppose I enjoy going out with friends certainly more than I did before, certainly look forward to going out for a wee drink and getting out of the house as it were. I think the things I don’t miss about working are firstly the office politics, which is all about people, and secondly – I mean I could have avoided that by just working on my own in an office I suppose but that’s just something I took as a necessary evil, and the second thing is commuting – I don’t miss commuting at all, that’s something which is a great benefit with being able to work from home I think
K – Do you have more control over your work now?
M – Yes, yes, definitely
K – I suppose that part of that is that you’re self-employed now as well
M- Yes, yes it is
K – And do you think you’re a better worker now, than you were when you were office based?
M – It depends how you define ‘better’ I think, I’m probably more productive, you know I get though more work in a day than in the office where there’s distractions. The quality of my work probably isn’t any better, it’s probably the same as it was when I worked full time. But on the whole I think anybody employing, me would probably get – it’s probably more cost-effective than with me being half an hours drive from the office.
K - What was the learning curve for you, working from home, did you have to develop any strategies?
M - No, mainly it was the difference between working for a company and being a limited company because I had to learn all about Value Added Tax and all the rest of it, I’ve had to employ an accountant and keep accounting records and tax records and so on, so that’s been a bit of a learning curve, particularly the red tape surrounding just a small business like mine – keeping the inland revenue at bay – that’s quite a problem, but apart from that I’ve obviously had to learn in depth things like Microsoft Word and PowerPoint and I could use them before but cos I use them all the time now I need to use more facilities, I’ve had to learn them in more depth
K - Did you have to develop strategies to make sure that you kept work and family life separate?
M - I find it difficult to keep them separate, partly that’s because the job I’m doing, but also the time difference between New York for example and here means that I’m working in the morning when they’re out of the office, then we both share the afternoon as it were, because afternoon here is morning there, but then they ring at night because that’s their afternoon, so that disrupts the life – even without that I would be working into the evenings when I needed to, to meet deadlines and probably Saturday and Sunday as well, but when I don’t need to meet deadlines in the week I’d be doing something during the week with the children
K - So what’s the overall impact been of working from home, on the family?
M - I think overall it’s been positive, they certainly see more of me than they would have before, perhaps they don’t want to nevertheless it’s probably better that both of their parents are here most of their waking hours
K - And overall what do you think the impact of working from home has been on your career?
M - It’s been neutral I would say, yeah neutral.
K - So the impact generally on your life, would you describe that as positive or negative?
M - Oh definitely positive yeah
K - So overall you’re quite satisfied with working from home, but is there anything you’d change? Would you ever go back to traditional office work?
M - Em, Well I suppose the short answer to that is no, but that would have to tempered with the practicalities of the situation, if for example I didn’t manage to get another contract in after this and there’s no money coming in, I’d probably have to resort to either full time or part time employment but that wouldn’t be my preference, as it were, my preference would be to get more work into our company
K - Do you think overall then that telework, or working from home, is an effective way for parents to reconcile work and family life?
M - Yes, if they’ve got a job that, you know a function, that’s particularly suitable to working from home, some professions obviously aren’t, salesmen have got to be on the road the time most of the time and so on and so on, so for those who working at home is suitable, yes I would say so, yes.
K – My overall research question, I’ve already discussed with you, is ‘how does telework impact upon the professional and parental identities of men and women?’. What do you think the findings might be. Would you be prepared to speculate?

M – Em, I would think most people would prefer to work from home. Again if the job was suitable. I think from the employers’ point of view, on the one hand they’ve got a more productive person. But on the other hand there’s a bigger trust relationship has got to come to play and it would be much more difficult I should imagine to manage a dispersed workforce than if they’re all in one tight group, some jobs also need a good degree of teamwork, and I think forming a team and keeping them congealed is a lot easier if they’re all in one place than if they’re distributed. On the social side, I think personally I don’t suffer being alone here most of the day to get on with work because I’ve got a social circle outside that but I think some people would certainly miss the social side of work and the interaction and the office gossip over coffee and so on and so on. Work is an important social aspect of life to some people, so I think some people would miss that quite a bit.

K – Has telework changed how you think about yourself and who you are?

M – No I don’t think so, I think that has changed, but it’s more I’m working for myself in my own company rather than working for a big corporation with a lot of employees, so it’s mainly the move from the corporation sector to the private one man business sector that’s affected me rather than whether I work in an office or work at home.

K – I see. And how would you categorise yourself firstly as a father or as a self-employed businessman?

M – Em. Probably as a self-employed business man, because if you meet people they say ‘what do you do?’ I would automatically respond ‘I’m a management consultant’ rather than ‘I’m a father’. The two jobs are obviously different but equally important, so I’m trying to devote as much time to each as I could but on balance my answer to that question would be as a management consultant.

K – Do you think it’s changed how your kids see you, the fact that you work from home?

M – No as I say Katy, they’ve always known me to work from home.

K – Ok.

M – Cos Anna the oldest one was probably, what 2 or 3, when I started working from home so to all intense and purposes they remember me as just working from home.

K – Do you think it’s changed how your wife sees you, thinks about you?

M – Yes. I think it probably has, yes. I think she would view me as more of a father.

M – She would want me to have family responsibilities when I’m at home rather than just business responsibilities, so there is a bit of a difference of view there.

K – So have you had to develop strategies with her, to say ‘right I’m in work-mode now’ or…?

M – Mm.

K – That was the way that you managed it?
M - Generally it works quite well. what does cause a bit of friction is the times when Diane’s been working part time and the kids are on holiday or whatever. when we’ve got to juggle looking after the kids, her going to work, and me going to a meeting in Germany. there’s sometimes clashes and it’s unreasonable of me to expect her to take the day off work for no reason, but the kids need looking after, but I also need to be in Germany as well. so it’s just a bit awkward. so it’s a lot easier from a management or managing the situation perspective if Diane isn’t working

K - Do you think it’s changed how people see you generally? I mean you’ve said that probably for your clients it’s almost irrelevant because it’s an invisible fact -

M - Mm

K - ... that you’re from home, for example when people come to the door during the day and see a man at home, do you think it affects how people see you?

M - Em. I don’t know that there’s a... em I think that people who know me and have known me for several years I don’t think that there’s a difference but there’s subtle differences when you get introduced to new people and you say I have my own company and I’m the only employee, compared to I’m the super-duper manager of so many thousand people, so I guess there’s a sort of status thing that people would act differently towards me when they don’t know me. but all the friends I’ve had for years it’s not made a difference no. I don’t think they look at me as a second-class citizen or anything like that, no.

K - That’s pretty much all the questions I wanted to ask you, is there anything you wanted to add or ask me about the project?

M - I think it’s an interesting project. the social aspects of it are quite interesting, quite apart from the business, how productive people are and how satisfied they are with work and so on, just the social sides of working from home I think will be quite interesting, I’d be interested in other people’s views, of how they’ve got on compared with mine to see if I’m unusual or in a similar sort of group

K - Do you think the experience of working from home for a man is different to the experience of working from home for a woman?

M - I think it would probably be more difficult for a woman because she would be expected to do everything that a normal wife and partner would be expected to do in a home, plus the job. I think that would be the expectation. Whereas with the man there’s a hidden expectation that he’s the breadwinner and he ought to be left to get on with his job whether he’s at home or... so on balance it would probably be more difficult for a woman

K - Thank you very much for taking part in the project

Looking at Magnus’s working space

K - So this is Magnus’s office, we’ve just come up the stairs, and there’s a nice toy box up the stairs and as we come around there’s a lovely big book case which is like your library. your working library isn’t it Magnus?

M- That’s right yeah

K - And Magnus’s office is tucked in the corner on the landing. and he’s got lots of nice storage space. is that all work related storage space
M - Yeah, there’s CD’s there. various bits of paper. files. files in here as well. And underneath, behind these doors.

K - On the bookcase

M - There’s lots of files from various projects and so on

K - I see, and one thing that’s a bit different about the office space to other places I’ve been to is that you’ve got a sound system set up which is lovely and is what I think I would do if I was working from home as well

M - That’s music off the internet, streaming through

K - Oh I see, and you’ve got it coming though your speakers there. So you’ve got a fax system set up there and you’ve got your broadband computer link for your email and things

M - this is a laser system set up there and you’ve got your broadband computer link for your email and things

K - I see, 2 printers as well

M - And I’ve got a headset for voiceover IP calls

K - Oh right, so do you do a lot of that sort of thing?

M - Yeah I do, particularly to the states because the calling rates are cheaper, this is a synchroniser for my palm organiser

K - You’ve got all the gadgets!

M - And this is actually a networked wireless modem, so I have a modem card in my laptop which is in the bedroom, and Anna’s computer is networked in as well, so Anna’s computer can use this printer and we can share files between...

K - Oh I see so that whole house is networked to the main printer here. So Magnus you were saying that originally you’d set up your office in one of the small bedrooms and that’s been... you had to change your plans for that didn’t you?

M - Yeah, because originally we didn’t expect another child, so when the last one came along I had to move out of his bedroom effectively

K - So you’ve ended up on the landing

M - Yeah

K - But does this space work well for you?

M - Yes it does yeah

K - Is it ideal

M - Well ideally I would like to have more desk space, but it’s manageable and doesn’t give me much problems really

K - Ok I shall leave it there Magnus. thank you very much again.
Interview 9: Sam

K - For the camera, could you say your name and job title?
S - My name is Sam Benson and my job title is Territory project co-ordinator.
K - And could you describe to me Sam, what that role is all about?
S - The role is er... the organisation I work for, ABC, I work for the field services part of that, all the engineers who do the work on the ground, the UK's split up into three territories, the south, central and the north territory, I'm in charge of the north territory, which is basically from Yorkshire, up to Scotland, and the whole of Ireland, and the remit I have is to control and manage all project work which comes into field services, not the day to day fixing PC's but the billable project work, so all that work comes to me and is channelled through to me from various places and I manage that and have the overall say of 'yes', 'no', whether it happens and make sure that field services as a whole in the north understand what's going on and that we have the resources to do that work.
K - Great. And how did you get into this line of work?
S - My present role seemed to come, it was like all my roles seemed to just move on from one, I don't actually apply for them. I've been working for field services, em, all my career, just about, which I started, my IT career, back in eighty... when was it? Do you know I can't remember when it was... ninety-five, yeah ninety-five, I think it was. So I joined the Mailcom group as an engineer an IT engineer doing national projects, moved into field services then, of which er, that was just a trans... a reorganisation, started line management of two or three staff and over the years my hands on role disappeared and I took on up to I think it was 18, 20 engineers, looking... er controlling the north east of England for Mailcom and the north west as well in the end, so I was doing that until about a year and a half ago, no a year ago - it was exactly a year ago and I was approached by the territory manager, the overall person in charge of field services in the north, and what he found was he didn't have any control of projects going off, it was all dealt with by 101 different managers, we didn't know where the resources were and stuff like that, so it was a brand new role and said 'Right Sam we need to have control of that, I want you to have the whole control of it', still field services, but specifically on billable profit making project work, so that's my, how I came to where I am now.
K - Great, you've been working from home for 5 years now
S - That's right
K - And you're pretty much full time from home?
S - Yeah, that's more this role, in the last year I became 5 days a week, year before that, or a couple of years before that, I was probably 3 days a week, and years preceding that cos I was a field engineer, so to speak, with line management responsibility, in the Mailcom all field engineers are 'location independent working' because they've got a big patch they don't just working one office, so I could work from home, my base was home, but I spent a lot of time travelling so to speak.
K - Are you happy with your role at the moment?
S - Yeah, it's ok, it's been interesting cos it's a brand new role, to be quite honest because I'm getting to the stage, because I set the role up, and it's running itself now, still very busy, I don't find it challenging anymore, I'm looking to move on
Interview 9: Sam

51 K – Oh right, so you have aims for your future career then?
52 S – I have what sorry?
53 K – You have aims for your future career?
54 S – Oh yeah definitely
55 K – Would you say you’re quite ambitious in that way?
56 S – Em, yeah, yeah I am ambitious I want to move on but because I’ve got
57 a young family there is an added aspect that I want to balance that as well
58 K – Mm absolutely. Quite an abstract question now – what kind of worker
do you think you are?
59 S – Em. I’m very well recognised for doing things very quickly, so I
60 don’t know if that’s efficient or whatever, but yeah I certainly manage myself
61 very well, time management, making sure things are done, and probably
62 put in… I do get recognised because I put a lot of hard work in to, and I am
63 hardworking I have to say
64 K – Great, and what does career mean to you?
65 S – Career means to me, is basically advancing up the chain, you know, it’s
to do with, there’s two part to career, increasing the challenges and making
it harder and harder for yourself, so that’s the main thing and that’s were
you get enjoyment you know, and the other thing is to earn more money as
well
66 K – Absolutely
67 S – That’s why you go to… But primarily it is about the job and the
challenges but I wouldn’t be challenging myself if I didn’t get rewarded for
it at the same time
68 K – Do you think your career’s been affected by working from home
69 S – So so, yeah
70 K – In what kind of ways?
71 S – I don’t know if it’s to do with working from home or to do with the line
of service I’m doing and so – cos you’re out in the field and not based in
the head office I think there’s a general assumption that you can be
removed where it’s all happening seems like it seems like if you’re not in
Churchtown in the main office you don’t always see the opportunities and
get the face to face when you’re sitting out in the field and on top of that
you working from home as well you know that if you want to put
something I’d probably agree to that you know you don’t have face to face
contact
72 K – Yeah. So am I right in thinking you live here with your wife?
73 S – That’s right
74 K – And you have 2 children who are…?
75 S – 4 & 3
76 K – 4 & 3 that’s right, and at the moment how’s childcare and suppose
schooling, how are they managed?
77 S – It’s just changed actually for the past year both my children have been
going to full time nursery on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, that
tied in with my wife working those 3 days part time, but she was made
redundant back in October, but we carried on with them both going 3 days
a week, but on Monday this week the oldest one’s actually started full time
school
78 K – A big step
79 S – Yeah that’s right
K - So how is domestic work organised in the home?
S - In what way
K - Is it balance equally between you and your...?
S - Yeah... it's different, when my wife was working. I probably, it all
depends how busy I am, but I would do some domestic work during the
day if I get chance but I tend to think we share it 50/50, in different ways, I
don't think you can balance it out, but we do pretty much 50/50 share in
this household
K - Did you have time of work when your children were born?
S - Yeah that's about... I can't remember, yeah it was 2 weeks off 2 or 3
weeks off for each one
K - And what kind of parent would you say you are?
S - Oh blimey! Um. My role is, I'm the... I'm Dad who does all the
playing and messing around whereas Mum does the domestics on the side.
But I also I seem to be the one that they'll listen to if there's any discipline
to have, I think my wife gets a bit um... runs round and does things and the
kids don't listen to her much as if I say 'Stop' you know, but I balance it
with lots of fun and lots of loving, my wife loves them very much, but I do
all the play stuff but also do the discipline as well
K - What have you learnt since becoming a parent?
S - What have I learnt since becoming a parent? Bloody hard work!
K - (laughs)
S - There's 2 things, firstly your life as you've known it before changes
and it's not bad or worse, it's just your... what's important to you changes,
you don't go out so much, you can't stay in bed, your life does turn upside
down, but that's a good thing, you wanted children, so you know that's...
but your life does change because they're there 100% of the time so you
don't get much space to yourself
K - And do you think your role in your families different because you
work from home?
S - Yes I do, because I'm at home, especially on Mondays and Fridays,
when the boys and my wife are at home I do seem to have more hands on
than some one who works away. you know going out in the morning,
coming home at night, definitely a more hands on role. and I get to see my
kids a lot more
K - So working at home was mainly instigate by your employer. would
you say?
S - No, I actually instigated it. all those years ago, it's because I was
actually based out in Matlock and we moved here when I got married. and
it's an hour and 20 minutes, which I didn't mind doing and I still have to
do it. but Mailcom was just kicking off working from home then. I was one
of the first few who took it on and I just said 'look can I work from home. I
don't need to be here. If I'm travelling to Scotland I don't need to be in
Matlock in the morning' so I actually instigated it
K - So you decided that it would be a good idea mainly because of all the
travelling you were doing anyway?
S - Yeah and also it was a lot of hard effort when it didn't need to be. and
the opportunity was there so I took it
K - And did you discuss it with your wife?
S - Yeah, I can't remember what we discussed...
K – And she was pretty much pleased that you’d be working from home or...?
S – Em, yeah, it was a long time ago, I think obviously she was pleased because it would be saving quite a bit of money in travelling to work, we used to live in Sheffield before and we moved over here when we wanted a family so I wasn’t LIW status it was when we moved here – what happened was we moved to this house from Sheffield to this house and that was when I asked if I could take LIW status so it was quite natural and we both agreed it was the best thing to do
K – And what was the reaction of the people you were working with?
S – Em yeah they were ok, my line manager was really good about it, the only thing he did say was if you were working from Matlock he still expected me to be there at nine o’clock in the morning and leave at 5 o’clock at night, even though my contract, my base was at home, so really I could set the case that my contract had changed that I would get to Matlock at quarter past ten in the morning and I’d leave at half three in the afternoon, so I could see his point of view and because he was accommodating and letting me do it in the first place, I said fair enough, so yeah, that was the only thing that I can remember, although my contract changed and LIW said when you leave home this is when you start, I had to compromise a bit, which is you know the only issue
K – How about other people’s reactions? Where there any reactions from your clients or customers or anyone?
S – No because they never noticed, they never notice the difference, you know, and logistically wise if I was working up in the north it was probably better for them, instead of saying that I’ve got a 3 hour journey to make I could probably do it in an hour, so it means I could start work earlier, you know, all depending on geographically where I needed to be
K – So your children have always known you as Dad who’s worked from home?
S – Mm
K – Have they, kind of, noticed that you’ve spent more time at home in the last year? Or have they had any kind of reaction to the fact that Dad works at home and that perhaps some of the Dads of their friends don’t?
S – Well I think they’re still a bit young to know about that, that’s still to come cos they haven’t had a self-realisation yet, but they do know that Dad’s home a lot, which is probably different to a lot of their friends at school, because Dad goes away at 7 o’clock in the morning, comes home at 7 o’clock at night or whatever, so I think that’s good for them, that’s one of the advantages of working from home
K – Is it better than you expected or worse?
S – Working at home? It’s a balance, there’s some really good things about working from home and some really bad things – well not bad things but you know disadvantages
K – Do you want to expand on those?
S – Yeah, the good things are like, as you say, you get to see your family, there’s no rushing around, you can save a lot of money working from home, you can go at your own pace, and if it’s quiet - if you get an hour or something, or even for lunch break you’re in a more comfortable surrounding, instead of sitting in the canteen you can actually go down, and
watch TV, watch the news, which you just can’t do at work so that’s really good. And also – I was going to say this was a bad thing but it’s a good thing – you’re far more flexible at home, that, you work during the day, and if it’s really busy you don’t stop, on the other hand if you need to pop out for half an hour you can do and if you’re really busy during the day or you need to have an hour off to go some where, I will just work at night, you know put the kids to bed at 7 and do a few hours at night, so the flexibility is good, the down fall to flexibility is I personally think I do a lot more work, a lot more constructive hours work at home than I do when I was in an office, the first thing you notice, when you work from home, is how much time you waste in an office talking, and because you’re at home by yourself and when you do talk, it’s on the telephone for a specific reason about work, you just realise that 50% of your day in an office is just not productive, and it’s good, it’s nice, but you’re far more productive working from home than you are in an office

K – What were your opinions of other people who worked from home before you started working from home yourself?

S – Cos I was one of the new ones, cos it was quite new, yeah, I thought for the same reasons I’ve given you, there are advantages and disadvantages I didn’t have any real thoughts to it all because I was one of the first ones to do it in Mailcom, I didn’t have much base information to work on, but if I was looking at it now, you know a lot of people have gone LIW on the basis of talking, you know, asking to me, I didn’t ask anybody because I didn’t have anyone but a lot of people have asked me and gone to do it so that’s it. This is, do you want me to talk about, you know disadvantages you can, when you’re busy, which you know is quite often, and your children your wife at home, I’ve got to be honest, it’s a nightmare, they can disturb your work and I get very frustrated and somebody’s shouting and screaming downstairs and I’m busy and I say ‘I’m busy’, ‘oh can you come here for a minute’, and you know, not so much this year because I haven’t had the opportunity, but the years before I would try and get out on a Monday an Friday, if the children are in and my wife’s at home, obviously not so bad if my wife’s at home by herself, I think the main disadvantage is your family understanding that just because you work at home that, you know, I’m there for anything: ‘come and do this’ or ‘come and do that’, and that’s the hardest thing is like saying that ‘I’m at work’ I can handle it but I find the family don’t understand just because I’m at home I can jump and do anything, so that’s the big disadvantage.

K – Absolutely, so have you had to develop strategies to manage that?

S – Screaming, shouting

K - (laughs)

S – Em, yeah it does work sometimes, yeah especially this year because I’ve been working at home 5 days a week and before it didn’t happen all the time because I probably was out on a Monday on Friday because that was part of my job, now it’s 5 days I’ve had to say ‘Look, don’t let the children come in the room, don’t shout me every 2 seconds, if I come downstairs and have a coffee break talk to me then, but I just can’t do it’ if I’m really busy I just can’t do it. So that has sunk a bit, it doesn’t always work, but you know the children know they can’t come into Dad’s office when he’s busy, and they’ve slipped up once or twice. If they’ve been out
Interview 9: Sam

and they come running in and your having a meeting or Manager’s on the
phone or something like that, so words have been said, and it is better, it's
not perfect, but it’s ok

K – Do you have an idea what a typical teleworker might be like?
S – A typical teleworker? Em no not really. It all depends, on the basis of
having a PC and using your PC to connect to systems to do your work and
having a telephone and a PC at a desk is you know, my understanding by
speaking to people, is that a lot of people don’t have what I have, a lot of
people may be sitting at the dining room table and don’t have the room
specific, and I’d find that quite hard, I personally don’t think I could do
that, I’m quite lucky that I’ve set a room aside for myself and I’ve set it up
as a working environment in my home and I think that’s quite important,
you know, kids running around – I don’t know how they do it, I think that
would be very disadvantageous to do that, you need certainly need a
special place to work from home

K – How do you keep in touch with your colleagues and clients? Is it
mainly through the computer and the phone?
S – Telephone and through the computer, me personally, I’m one of those
people who likes using the telephone, I use the telephone an awful lot,
whereas a lot of people do it by electronic email and stuff like that, but if
I’m working I use the telephone, I don’t have to but I think that
communication by word is better than communication by email

K – Have you had any issues of isolation?
S – In what...

K – A lot of people tend to report that they feel quite isolated working from
home
S – Yeah you can, yeah yeah. There is a big thing where I’ve said that
you’re very productive at home, but if you think you spend the majority of
your life working, more so than seeing your wife and kids, yeah it is
isolating and you do realise the importance of being with colleagues at
work, and talking and having that break from the home life, so yeah it can
be isolating and you can sometimes, it doesn’t happen always, well no it
does happen quite a lot, I can look back and apart from taking the bin out I
can be shut inside my house for days not going out, I think the longest I’ve
been without going outside is like 7 days, and you think ‘Jesus – I haven’t
been out’, so yeah it is it can be, it is isolating, yeah.

K – But do you think you have more control over your work now?
S – Definitely yeah. More control, very self-managed, you know get on
with it. Yeah, you do get more control and more management over how
you do things, when you do things, obviously you do get time scales to
meet but yeah

K – So overall do you think you’re a better worker now that you work from
home?
S – Yeah definitely, more productive. For the good of the company, so to
speak, and for productivity and work-wise, yeah you get far more out of
somebody working from home

K – I think we’ve touched on this slightly already, what was the learning
curve of becoming a teleworker?
S – Everybody thinks, and it might be other people, but for me, everybody
say ‘ooh I couldn’t work from home, the commitment required for working
from home, I couldn’t motivate myself, I didn’t actually find that really
happen for me, I don’t find it hard working from home, I don’t have to drag
myself out of bed in the morning and I certainly don’t turn off the phone
and sit down and watch TV, whereas a lot of people say ‘oh I’d just watch
TV all day’. I have this swings and roundabouts thing in my head
sometimes I’ll work from half eight in the morning til half six at night with
no lunch break maybe coffee and stuff like that. if I’m really busy, I’ll just
do it, and I’ll work some more from 7 til 11 o’clock at night if I have to and
they’re busy days. on the other hand you know sometimes it can be quiet,
it’s seasonal, just before Xmas or something, it can be really quiet, and so
you know I’ll do something. or in the summer I can go and sit outside and
I don’t feel guilty for sitting outside for 2 hours, you know I’ll have the
phone on, obviously I don’t count it but the over all way of things, I work
really hard, they get twice as much out of me, really long hours and also I
don’t mind working at night, if I’ve got something to do, and then on other
occasions I’ll take it easy, it’s just the periods when you’re working hard
for weeks on end, and you know you’re doing it. it’s none stop, there’s no
stopping to it, but I don’t have, I don’t feel guilty when I get chance I’ll go
and sit down

Overall, what do you think the impact is your family of having a dad
who’s based at home?
I think it’s really good because they get to see their Dad a lot more than
a normal dad, you know I can send them off to school in the morning, I can
even take them to school. to nursery, if that means I’m back for quarter
past nine in the morning after dropping them off, you can do that, if you’ve
got a job and you have to be 20 miles away by nine o’clock in the morning
you can’t do that, and I get the opportunity to see my kids when they come
home from school. I get the opportunity to take my kids, I get the
opportunity that if I do get a break during the day I can go and sit down and
do a jigsaw puzzle for half an hour during the day. so I do get to see… I’m
a lot more family-orientated than I would have thought most working men
would be

And just to recap then, overall what do you think the impact of
working from home has been on your career?
It’s two fold, firstly I think that the good impact is because I work
harder that’s recognised and especially in this new role I’m doing, I’ve got
high recommendations of the work I’ve done, and that will do me in good
stead, very highly recognised right across the UK for the job I’m doing,
mainly because I put he effort in and I’ve got the opportunity to put the
effort in. I don’t know if this is true or not, but I suppose it sticks in you
head, because I’m not working in a main office, although I’m recognised
for an excellent job, am I missing the opportunities that could come to me
because of doing an excellent job? - because I don’t get to see them, you
know my ears not on the street to hear about it, the only way I’m going to
hear about it is if somebody tells me on the telephone. I’m not going to
hear about it in the corridor or see a company notice on a board, cos I don’t
get company notices and stuff like that. so that’s the two, there’s two sides
to it anyway

And overall then the impact on your life generally of working from
home, has that been positive or negative?
S – Again I’m sorry to give two sides of the coin here, but there’s definitely two sides of the coin. Positive side is I get to see my family more. I like to think I get more flexibility. If I need to take an hour off during the day and I can put an hour on at night time, if it’s important I can pop down the shops or something like that, or start work a little bit later, so the flexibility and seeing my kids is good. The negative side, which doesn’t seem to worry me, I don’t worry about it but definitely a negative side. I just don’t get to see anybody. I’m very isolated, I don’t you know. it’s… you understand how important it is to see work colleagues, all I get to see – and I love them dearly – is my wife and kids, and because I’ve got kids I don’t go out either, very often, you know down the pub, so it is quite a lonely existence, although you know you’re on the telephone, but you never get to see faces and faces are quite important.

K – So how would you change things? Would you ever go back to traditional office-based work?

S – Em. No – that’s the strange thing - so there’s something in there that sticks in me, I can’t see myself like getting up at 8 o’clock in the morning, I’ve got a good example, I was offered a job near York. very well paid, extremely, you know more money than I’m on, you know good car, good career progression for me, it meant leaving the company but it was good. so yeah you get to see people, you’re on more money, you get a BMW and everything - but I turned it down, because you know although I’m very ambitious and want to get on, that meant getting up, leaving home at 7 o’clock in the morning, getting home when the kids have gone to bed at 7 o’clock at night, so that’s when the balance kicks in. you’re quite prepared to forego that, there’s a limit to… I’m very ambitious but there’s other factors cutting into… yeah if I had the choice about working in an office or working from home. I’d work from home, but the change is, somehow. I need to get some more contact with the outside world – love working from home, but you need some outside contact as well

K – So is telework an effective way for parents to reconcile work and family life?

S – Say that again...

K - Is telework an effective way for parents to reconcile work and family life?

S – Yes, definitely very good for family life. it is, you know for balancing it, you can get away with a lot more, where other parents have to struggle, I’ve got the flexibility to do more. It has its disadvantages as well

K – So my overall research question is ‘how does home-based telework impact upon the professional and parental identities of men and women?’

S – Right

K – Have you any idea what the findings might be of that? How has it affected your professional and parental identity?

S – Yeah ok, let me just read the…(he takes the interview guide from me and reads it)

K – The top one

S – How does home-based telework… Ok, professionally. I think because your productivity is greater for the company, that’s a very good thing and you can be recognised for that. just by doing work, you know in an office you might ask somebody to do something and they might get back to you 2
days later, I might be able to respond within half an hour, and that’s really
good for the company and good for yourself, because in a good
organisation you get recognised for that

(A pause while Sam answers a ringing phone)

S – Yeah professionally you get a lot in a good company you get respected.
K – So that’s your identity as other people are seeing you?
S – Yes, my identity as other people – and the downfall to that is you’re
faceless, so I’m somebody who, I’ve got a lot of people I know but I’ve
never met, they might think I’m good but because I’m a faceless identity,
they can think I’m wonderful, whether that helps my career or not is a
different thing, it’s a key thing there. Parental identity, for a male, moving
over to a position a lot of working men have not had the opportunity to do,
my children get to see a father identity much more than somebody working
who’s not tele-based, teleworking based, home-based so that’s a good thing
for the future, balancing family life, I think it’s historically the male, the
man goes out to work and earns the money and doesn’t get to see his
children much, and whether that... children get to grow up ok with that, but
at least my children will grow up with a more father figure and
understanding and I have a close relationship, I’m saying that anybody in
an office doesn’t have a close relationship... I’ve just had the opportunity
to experience it that much more, I see my kids growing up that much more,
does that answer your question?
K – Pretty much, I suppose the other side of that question is how do you
think that question do you think that would be different if you were a Mum
instead of a Dad? Do you think there would be a difference?
S – Yeah, cos I’m still, the difference is, although I have the opportunity, I
think that a mother may find it a bit harder to work from home, I can,
although I have problems, I can still work from home, come into this room
and think I’m at work, the balance - I can separate that easier than a mother
working from home – I don’t know, I’m just saying what I think, it could
be true
K – That’s fine, that’s what I’m after
S – Although there are still commitments and if I’ve got time I still hoover
or maybe do the veg for dinner, I think if a mother were at home she’d be
trying to do more than she could actually do, I think she’d find it harder to
balance
K – Has telework changed how you think about yourself and who you are?
S – Em
K - It’s quite a deep one
S – Er... it is a very deep one, I’m just trying to see... if I chose to... yeah,
it certainly changed... you become far more resilient and you work hard,
but it’s quite sad because you work harder which is a good thing
but you loose as well because you do get isolated, and I can handle that,
that’s something that’s changed I don’t get that interaction with the outside
world, so yeah it has changed it doesn’t bother me - or I don’t think it
bothers me - but you certainly loose a big chunk of interaction with other
people
K – And has it changed how you would categorise yourself? Do you think
of yourself more as a father or more as a territory project co-ordinator?
S - Em. Bit of both really. I do see myself as a father. it’s hard to balance.
I’m glad I’ve got that opportunity. yeah. I get that opportunity and also I
can commit more to my role as well, just think the roles a bit faceless
K - Do you think it’s changed how your kids or your wife think about you
or how other see you?
S - The boys know that Dad’s going to be there when they get home so
that’s really good for them. Working from home. I think a lot more,
because you’re in that position, the downfall to that. I think your wife and
children expect a lot more from you because you’re there. ‘Dad’s at home’
or ‘my husband’s at home’ so ‘oh he can just do this’. so that’s quite hard.
so they do see me different, they don’t actually see me working, going off
to work, cos think they’d think of me differently. come back and ‘oh
Dad’s been working hard, give him a chance’ – Dad works harder at home
but I don’t think they, that’s not expressed anymore. ‘oh you’ve been at
home all day’
K - Pretty much at the end of the interview. what I try to do know is scan
the camera around the room
S - Yeah sure
K - So this is upstairs, it used to be a spare bedroom did it?
S - Yeah that’s right
K - And is this how you’d ideally have the office set up?
S - Well it’s how I set it up, what in the sense of other people setting it up?
K - Yeah, I mean. is this ideal? - So you chose you’d have a corner unit?
S - Very ideal yeah
K - Great
S - It’s quite big
K - So you’ve got – oh blimey are those like antique skis in the corner?
S - Antique skis yeah
K - Fantastic. You’ve got your little notice board, they’re mainly work
notices are they?
S - That’s right yeah
K - Those fantastic skis and you’ve got an old printer on the floor there
S - It’s actually brand new
K - Oh sorry, sorry
S - Didn’t have space for it up here. got lot of kit…
K - Great. Got another printer there. this is just to kind of get an idea of
how you’ve got it set up. You’ve got a great mug there that says something
about ‘my dad’s an England fan’, great, great. And you’ve got your slim
screen computer. and is the bookcase mainly work related?
S - It’s mainly personal actually. there are workbooks in there
K - And you’ve got the old stereo up there, lovely. So that’s pretty much
the end of the interview, is there anything that you’d like to add, any
further comments?
S - Er let me think… Working wise when you’re working from home. any
personal business, banking and stuff. you get a better opportunity to do as
well, I’ve got my own computer there. I’ve got network banking so if I
need to do anything personal business wise, you get a better opportunity to
do that
K – Yeah, that’s another dimension of it I suppose. Thank you very much for taking part in the project, could you give me some feedback about how you felt taking part?

S – I think it’s important that working from home is understood and I think for businesses it’s got a lot of cost-savings for them. I don’t know if they realise it’s got a lot of productivity... for personally they get a lot more out their staff from working at home, and again the psychological thing of isolation is, needs looking at as well. I still want to work at home but whether you should have visits or somebody come to see you or you know, the opportunity that you get out at least once... every six months is good

K – (laughs)

S – But no, it’s good, I’ve enjoyed it. I wanted to do it, I’ve been doing it a long time as well, I like to share my experiences

K – Quite an authority on the matter now

S – I get to see somebody to turn up, I get to see somebody new... shows how sad I am– ‘can I come to see you?’ ‘yes of course you can, anytime!’

K – Brilliant, I’ll conclude it at that then, thanks again.
K: Could you just say your name and job title for the tape please?
T: It's Tina Keane and I'm a Solutions Manager
K: Could you tell me what your job entails?
T: Basically what I do is I look for, when customers want something that's not normal practice in Mailcom, I look for different ways to actually supply what they're looking for, maybe they want it early, maybe they want it sorting before they get it, maybe they want it screening or opening before they get it and I look for a way that we do that and cost that up and put it in a proposal to the customer. Also work on tenders, which is a lot to do, basically it's project management so that you've got a lot of people who are expert in their own field, you bring those people together just to find a solution for your customer, whatever it is they're looking for.
K: And how did you get into this field?
T: How did I get into that? I used to work in sales in Mailcom before that and I worked as a new business manager and I worked as a contracts manager, and while I was working as a contracts manager I was heavily involved with... the customers I was looking after were trailing postal voting at the time so I spent a lot of time identifying ways that they could get what they want and still use normal products within our network and so because I did that, that got me interested in actually providing solutions, so there on after, a couple of reorganisations, a couple of restructures and I went into the solutions team.
K: Have you always worked for Mailcom?
T: No. I've worked for Mailcom about 11 years now.
K: And what was your background, kind of from school?
T: From school I went to work a retail outlet, just a local village shop then I ran my own business, I had my own village shop, did that for quite a few years, and then when I had my second child, it was just too much like hard work, looking after 2 children and running my own business, so I decided that I'd stop work, didn't like not working at all, so I went part time and I worked for Drinksco and I worked for Lo-Cost and then I went to be a delivery woman, and that's how I ended up working for Mailcom.
K: So you said that you pretty much work from home full time and you haven't got a physical office that you go to, but how long do you actually spend working at home as opposed to going out on the road, at clients office...?
T: This is really, really, really hard to put a time on that, cos one week I might be at home every day and then for 3 weeks I might not spend any time at home at all, so it is really difficult say how much time I spend in the house working.
K: That's fine. And are you satisfied with your role at the moment?
T: Oh yeah, I love it.
K: Have you got any aims for a future or career, or to move on?
T: Well, because of the role that I'm currently doing, I've only been doing it for about 18 months and I really, really like it, so at the moment I'm happy what I'm doing and maybe in another years time I might think about at going into product development or something like that rather than just solutions.
K: What kind of worker do you think you are? A difficult question.
T: (laughs)
K - Any words that come into your head...
T - I think I'm, you know because I work from home. I over-compensate
for the fact I don't go into an office, and instead of working like most
people would - 9-5, an hour for lunch, twenty minute break in the morning,
twenty minute break in the afternoon - I tend to start working at 8 o'clock
and when my husband comes in at half past five I'm often still working and
it's rare that I've actually knocked off had any breaks at all - this is a rare
break for me and I'm taking advantage and having a coffee!
K - And what does your career mean to you?
T - More now than it used to, because I wasn't really interested in having a
career, I don't think when the kids were little, but now they're older. I'm
really enjoying it and I'd be upset I suppose if I lost it now, because they're
going to have left home and I'd be left at home with nothing wouldn't I?
But now I've got some sort of career and future ahead of me
K - Do you think your career's been affected at all by the fact that you
work from home?
T - No I don't. It's difficult for me to say that, because you're asking me in
respect of: I worked in an office, would I have been noticed more? Would I
have done more things? - I've never ever worked in an office, so it's very
difficult for me to say what would have happen had I been in an office
environment, I might have got lost amongst the ether!
K - So you live here with your husband and two kids, are they quite young
still?
T - No I've got one 18 and the other one's 14
K - Right, and at the moment how's childcare and schooling managed?
T - Well they just manage themselves now. But I've always worked, when
they were younger, when I've worked from home, they've always in the
position that they could come home from school and go to school
themselves, they've always been at that age. well saying that I've worked
from home for 5 years, our Mark would have been 9 wouldn't he? So he
could, you know what I mean, there's been no problem with him going to
school and coming home, and because I've worked while I was at home if
I've had to take them to school cos it's been raining I've taken them to
school because it's been raining, but I'm not a very good mother I don't
think
K - Why's that?
T - Cos if I were busy and it were 3 o'clock, coming home from school
time, and it were raining, I'll just think 'oh they'll get wet'! I don't think
'oh it's raining I'll have to go and fetch them'
K - I'm sure that doesn't make you a bad mother. So how about the
domestic work in the home, how's that organised?
T - Better now that they're older. I pay my son once a week to clean,
which he doesn't do as thoroughly as he could do, I used to pay my
daughter. that was much better, girls are more conscientious, but now he
does it for me, he only does it once a week, but I can keep on top of it then.
now that they're older it's easier anyway cos we've not got toys all over
everywhere. I used to find it really difficult and we used to live with papers
and magazines and people's socks all over the floor but I've gone beyond
that thankfully
K – So you had some time – you weren’t actually in work when the children were born then?
T – I did when my daughter was because I used to work for myself. I used to take her to work with me, but when they’re that age they’re too small to make too much mess when they’re on there own aren’t they? But when they were little I worked part time then.

K – So, I think you’re touched on this already. but if you just want to expand on what kind of parent you think you are?
T – Cruel – that’s what they tell me. I once said to my son, I sometimes feel awful because it’s difficult to strike a balance, because when they come in when I’m at home, they think that I’m at home as Mum. I’ve moved up, my work, into the bedroom now, because I used to work in the dining room and when they came in it was ‘Mum this’, ‘Mum that’. ‘Mum the other’. so now I’m in there they don’t tend to see me, so they don’t tend to assume that I’m at home and they don’t start talking to me, cos they are of an age where they do understand, I mean they’re not little kids, but I once said to my son that it’s difficult for me to strike a balance and I feel guilty because they come in and I still can’t give them the attention, but the fact that I’m not in office or I’m not out of the house and about doesn’t mean I’m not working, and that makes me feel guilty that I’m neglecting them, and he said to me ‘Mum, you’re working, you’re earning some money, of course you’re not neglecting us, you’re providing what I need’

K – Aw, he sounds very mature, and what do you think you’ve learnt since becoming a parent?
T – What have I learnt since becoming a parent? – If I had my time back again I wouldn’t do it! Em. I’ve been a parent so long I can’t remember what it was like before, so it’s difficult for me to say. I’ve learnt that I’ve not got as much patience as I used to have, but I’m getting that back again, cos there’s been a time where, you know, slightest thing and I would have been – and you know that’s because I’m trying to work. I’m trying to keep a home running, trying to keep kids, you know trying to keep everyone happy, but now they’re older, it’s not such a pressure

K – Do you think your role in your family’s changed since you’ve been working from home? I mean I suppose you’ve always worked from home, have you, for the time they can remember?
T – I’ve been here a lot when they kids have been, you know even when I worked part time, it’s not been very often that I’ve not been here when the kids have been here, do you know what I mean, my Mum only lives a few doors down so she’s looked after them when I’ve been at work, but yeah I think the fact that I’m at home does change things, cos they’re there, wanting attention, and some people might think, ‘oh I’ll go and put washing out’, or ‘I’ll go and start getting tea ready’ but unfortunately I’m not like that, I overcompensate working from home, so I would make them have their tea later rather than do that. cos I don’t feel… somebody’s paying me to do some work and that is what I’m doing, I work for them

K – So you’ve worked from home pretty much for 5-6 years, and who kind of instigated that your role was going to be based from home?
T – What do you mean?
K – Did you decide that you’d work from home or was that just part of the job?
Tina

Well when I moved from actual operations in Mailcom, you know in the actual mail centre, I applied for this job which was working from home. well they said it was working from home tagged to an office. but they never gave me one

K - So why did you decide that you wanted to go for – was it the fact that it was working from home that attracted you to the role?

T - No it was the role that attracted me to the role, work from home was just a by-product of that really

K - And did you have to think about that, did you think that that would change things for you or…?

T - No not really, I just wanted to do that job, because it was promotion at the time, so I just went for that job

K - Did you discuss it with your maybe family, your husband, the fact that you might be based from home?

T - Not that I remember, I just hoped I’d get it, it’s a promotion

K - Can you remember what people thought when you said you’d be working from home?

T - Yeah, people were very envious of people that work from home I find, but there’s certainly nothing to be envious about – you know, you’re not socialising with other people, you don’t have that… especially, you know like at Christmas, they all go out for a drink don’t they, but you never get invited because you’re not part of their little clique

K - So was it not as good as you expected it to be?

T - I don’t think I particularly had any expectations, because I overcompensate I find it’s harder work than if I just went to an office and worked 9-5 and came home, because you don’t leave it at work, it’s always there, and sometimes at weekends, because I work from a laptop, at weekends I think ‘ooh I’ll just do such and such’ and that, already done, and I do find that I work at weekends, when I shouldn’t really be doing it at all

K - What were your opinions of other people who were based at home?

T - I don’t think I really knew any, so I didn’t have any, I probably felt the same – ‘oh the lucky sods’

K - And now do you have an idea what a typical home-based worker might be like?

T - No, I only know what I’m like I know a lot of other people who work from home, but you only know what they tell you, don’t you, I don’t know if they’re working, skiving, or whatever

K - How do you keep in touch with your colleagues and your clients?

T - Phone, email, we have what they call work time listening and learning sessions, which is a conference call that we do once a week, I have one to one sessions with my line manager once a month…

K - Is that actually in person?

T - Yeah, that’s in person that one, but I have to go to Leeds for that which is like an 80 miles round trip to go there and back. We have team meeting. we’ve got one next week, we try to have those - I think we’re going to have them monthly. but we’ve just started them. then it was Christmas, so we had one in November, then we didn’t have one because everybody was together anyway at Christmas cos it was a master team meeting – so we
have master team meetings and smaller team meetings but we only have
the master team meetings once a quarter
K – Have you had any issues of feeling isolated?
T – Isolated, no I haven’t, I’m not a person that needs a lot of direction.
you tell me what you want doing and I will find a way of doing it. I don’t
need someone to hold my hand and push me and explain what the next step
is and the next step is, and I don’t really need anybody to motivate me,
because waking up in a morning is good enough for me
K – Do you think you’ve got more control over your work now you work
from home?
T – Got more control over my work? Well cos I’m doing a totally different
job, I can’t compare it as if – if I’d been doing this job in an office and then
came to do it at home I could compare it, unfortunately I can’t help you
there
K – Fine. Do you think you’re a better worker now?
T – No I’ve always been a good worker
K – You’ve mentioned already things that you seem to have more, you
seem to be more of an intensive worker since working from home
T – I’ve always done, I’ve always been like that, cos before I worked for
myself and that’s like 24 hours a day, seven days a week, you can’t leave
it, can you, to somebody else when you’re working for yourself? And I’ve
been brought up like that really
K – Was there a learning curve that you had when you started working
from home? Did you have to develop any strategies to manage working
from home?
T – Yeah, I think discipline, because I do overcompensate and trying not to
work from 7 while 9 is quite a major learning curve that you having to go
through, only that sort of thing, disciplining myself not to be a workaholic
K – Overall what’s the impact been on your family of having you working
from home?
T – Em, I think it’s been a good impact really, because, although I am
working and although I try and not let them interrupt me, I am here should
there be any emergency, but I’m really fortunate in that I’m never really ill,
my husband’s never ill, and my children are never ill, so had they been,
they’d be maybe ill in bed and I’d be at home and able to look after them,
but I’ve never ever had to do that
K – And then talking about career again, what’s the overall impact been on
your career of working from home?
T – Em. I think it’s been a good impact really, because, although I am
working and although I try and not let them interrupt me, I am here should
there be any emergency, but I’m really fortunate in that I’m never really ill,
my husband’s never ill, and my children are never ill, so had they been,
they’d be maybe ill in bed and I’d be at home and able to look after them,
but I’ve never ever had to do that
K – So overall, the impact on your life, has it been positive or negative?
T – Oh positive
Interview 10: Tina

K – So overall you’re satisfied, is there anything that you’d ever change – would you ever go into a traditional office role do you think, or a different kind of work?

T – Em, I can’t rule it out, cos I wouldn’t want to be not working, but I don’t know how I’d react, cos I’ve never ever worked in an office ever – that’s why I don’t find that programme at all funny. The Office. I don’t know what they’re laughing at, apparently if you’ve worked in an office it’s really, really funny, but I never have and I really can’t see the joke.

K – Do you think overall that working from home is an effective way for parents to reconcile work and family life?

T – Em, I’d like to say yes, but I’d say yes based on, judging everyone to be like myself, but I think if you’re a mother and you’re working from home, I think if they are ill, you would neglect your work to look after them, rather than have a days holiday, which if you’re going to stay at home and look after your children or devote that day to them you should have that days holiday, but having said that if they only want 2 hours of your attention, you can tag 2 hours on to the end or on to the beginning and still work that, and providing people are prepared to make sure they put the hours in there’s nothing wrong with that, but maybe it’s just an issue of trust isn’t it – I’m trusted to do it, so yeah it probably is an effective way then – talked myself into it!

K – My overall question is ‘how does working from home impact upon the professional and parental identities of men and women?’ do you have any idea what the findings might be?

T – No. I think it would probably bode better for men because men at home aren’t seen the same as women at home and that’s probably historically, socially, women are seen to be the person who does the housework, the cooking, the washing, the ironing, the looking after of the children, the nursing, etc. etc. I mean when hubby’s ill everybody has to rally round and nurse hubby, nobody tends to nurse Mummy if Mummy’s ill, thankfully I don’t get myself in that position, but men don’t have to look after running up to school, they don’t have to be the one that sees to children who are poorly, or doing the housework – they might do – but they’re not perceived as doing it, so if they’re at home working, they’d be perceived as being at home working and working but women would probably be perceived as being at home working but doing their housework and their other chores they have to do – it’s a shame we have to have two jobs isn’t it? They only have one job, men

K – Do you think working from home (Tina’s home phone rings) sorry do you want get that?

T – I’m not bothered, I don’t normally answer it

K – That’s it then

T – I’m at work! I don’t answer it, I just leave it!

K – Has working from home changed how you think about yourself and who you are?

T – No I don’t think so, I’ve always known who I am really. No I don’t think so, it’s difficult to go back a long time and say definitely or definitely not, but I don’t think it has no

K – You seem to know yourself quite well

T – Yeah – I’m 44! I’ve been living with myself for a long time.
And how would you categorise yourself, as a mother firstly, or as a Mailcom manager firstly?

Right, when I'm on me holidays and out of working time, then firstly I'm a mother, if God forbid something happen to them or they were ill or they needed me in some way that nobody else would do. I don't mean picking them up from school, I mean if they broke an arm, a leg, or they're ill or whatever, then I'm a mother firstly, obviously. But generally, 5, 5 days a week, I'm a Mailcom Manager first, that's probably not what people want to hear but it's true - if I were at work in an office that's what I'd be doing, and that's what I try to say to myself, that's what I'm doing.

Do you think it's changed how your kids see you, the fact that you're working from home?

Yeah, I think they think I'm idle. I know they think I'm idle, they tell me they think I'm idle. Cos they think that I might spend 75% of my day on the telephone, so what they say to me 'All you do Mum is talk on the phone all day', and I say 'Will you just hoover up' - 'Why don't you do it? You don't do anything else', you see what I'm saying? And then I might be on my laptop, which I'm writing emails and things like that, and you spend a lot of time thinking when you're trying to find a solution for something, and they think that's not working, so they think I do nothing, apart from that you see my husband does all the cooking, so when he comes in at half past five, he'll come in and he'll make me a cup of coffee, because I'll be still upstairs working away.

Do you think it's changed how he thinks about you then?

No, I think he thinks that I can do things for him because I'm at home, like for instance say the insurance of the car want renewing I can just ring up and do that, because I'm at home and he's at work, but having said that he's always thought I could do things like that for him. that's not changed, and he doesn't like using the phone, so anything using the phone he passes to me anyway, so no, it's not different I don't think.

What about anybody else, maybe your extended family, how they think about you because you're working from home, do you think that's affected that?

I don't think they think any different of me, because they know me and they know I work quite hard, but they say things to me like 'Did you see such and such on morning TV?' and I say 'No' - 'Well you were at home weren't you?' - 'Yeah but I don't watch morning TV - I'm working'. I mean to be honest I don't put TV on til - well the kinds come in and they put it on - but other than from that it doesn't go on until about 7 o'clock at night.

Does anyone from work or your customers realise even that you work from home? Has it ever been an issue?

Em, when I worked in sales it was an issue I think, because the people that worked in the telesales centre couldn't get their heads round the fact that they thought that you were doing exactly what they were doing but you were doing it at home, and in actual fact I was probably going out and visiting customers, so they might send me an email at like 9 o'clock in the morning and be moaning and groaning or shouting and balling cos I hadn't
responded by half past ten, whereas I might be on a 2 hour drive to Newcastle to see a customer and I wouldn’t be able to access any emails, so in that circumstance I would have been far better if they’d just rung me up and asked me whatever it was they wanted, because they would have got an answer whilst I was driving up there.

K - That’s pretty much it, unless there’s anything you want to add, any issues that have come up for you?

T - No

K - Finally then, if it’s alright can I scan the camera to see your working space?

T - Er, you can but I don’t work in here

K - Is it upstairs?

T - Yeah

K - Is that alright then?

T - I’d rather you not

K - Oh alright then, if that’s a problem that’s fine. Is it set up in a spare room?

T - No, it’s in my bedroom

K - Oh that’s fine then

T - I used to do it on the table in the dining room and I’m quite happy if you want me to fetch my laptop down so you can do it in there?

K - No it’s fine, just to talk about your current working space then, why have you got it like that? Is that an ideal situation for you?

T - No, I would much rather have an extra room where I could go, and I keep trying to get my daughter to leave home, so I shove my son into her room and... if she goes to university then I will seriously consider doing that, but we were going to move it up into the loft because we moved here around the same time I started working from home and we were going to do that but I ended up with, first of all I had a little space in the conservatory and then in the winter quite cold and in the summer it’s far too hot and you can’t see the screen, so I moved into the dining room, but because I was in the dining room and we tend to use the back door for coming in and going out - they come in, see me and straight away think they think that - or they come in shouting when I’m on the phone which is worse especially when you’re talking to a customer, so my husband suggested that I move up into my bedroom so I now use my dressing table and I’ve got, I keep my printer, photocopier, that still remains in the conservatory, but my business line has been put through up into my bedroom, so I’ve got my business line plugged in up there, and I just put my laptop into my business line.

K - Well thank you very much for taking part, could you give me some feedback about how you felt taking part in this project?

T - How I felt taking part in it?

K - Did you mind being videoed? - I know it came as a bit of a surprise

T - It did, cos I’d read it actually on the first email and it said maybe videoed and I thought I don’t have to do that

K - It’s a bit of a sneaky way of doing it

T - I’d forgotten about it actually

K - Well thank you very much you’ve been a very good interviewee

T - No problem at all
Interview 11: Ken (Ke)

K - Could you say your name and job title?
Ke - Ken Lear. Computer Analyst
K - And Ken, what does your role entail?
Ke - My role entails, it’s sort of analyst come researcher area really. I’ve recently been involved in, it could be from a technical nature or a general business nature. Technical wise a couple of projects I’m working on at the moment is looking at options for image capture, using scanning devices, bar-code reading devices, stuff like that, extracting the data, reading the data, and feeding it into databases for use within systems. The current work I’m involved in is governance processes and relationships, so that’s more of capturing what is happening within the organisation at the moment, with regards to how business strategy aligns with I.S / I.T. strategy, so it’s varied, it varies.
K - And how did you get into that kind of role?
Ke - How? That’s a very good question. It started off as an evaluation team, really hardware and software evaluation team, my role was then an evaluator and as we’ve had reorganisations and stuff like that my role’s changed away from, how can I say… specific I.T. stuff, how can I say, it’s more business involvement, so it’s not I.T. for I.T.’s sake, it’s a case of, we look at the business requirements and I suppose through our experience and knowledge, try and map solutions or options with those requirements, we don’t just go out and evaluate things for evaluations sake, and over the years it’s got less hands on, less getting involved in the nitty gritty, the bits and bites, it’s more dealing with business people, finding out what their problems are and you know just providing consultancy really and that’s what it boils down to now.
K - Is that your background then in computers, or in business? Kind of from school, did you go straight into that?
Ke - No, not at all, no. What do you want to know?
K - Just a little bit of history would be…
Ke - No, never got involved in computing until ’86. September ’86 an opportunity came up to join the mainframe support group, general clerical type stuff and then within I think 6 months a job came up in I.T. support, P.C. support, I had no experience, no training, it was just get stuck in, hands on, and that was it really.
K - So you spend on average 3 days a week working from home, and is that 3 solid days and the other days you’re on the road or in the office?
Ke - I would probably say 2 solid days, the other days probably mixed up… you see Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, my wife works, you know from 9-5 or whatever, so I have to, at the time… we’ve got no parents or helpers around, pick up the kids or whatever, so I drop the kids off 9 o’clock, and I’ll pick them up again at 20 past 3 and carry on working from home, so yeah as I say two solid days at home.
K - And do you meet a lot of clients who are outside of the business you work for or is it mainly internal customers?
Ke - It’s internal customers, yeah.
K - So a lot of time would be spent, when you’re not in the home, going and overseeing their projects and things?
Ke - Yeah that’s right. There’s a couple of projects I’m involved with at the moment, where I’m setting up meetings with suppliers, particularly
Interview 11: Ken (Ke)

around this image capturing system is trying to see what the options are
and going to see demonstrations by these companies
K – Are you enjoying your job at the moment?
Ke – Love it

K – Great, have you got plans for a future career, any progression or...?
Ke – It’s difficult in the organisation. I’ll be honest, about 5 years ago I
deputised for a boss of mine, who was a grade or two above me. I did the
job, covered it for think 2 years, had 5 people working under me, I mean I
thought I did enough to get promotion you know. I think I’ve asked once
since then, but at the end of the day I’m quite happy doing what I’m doing,
if it comes it comes, you know it’s no skin off my nose whether I get
promoted or not.
K – I was wondering if you could tell me what kind of worker you think
you are? Just anything that comes into your head
Ke – I think I’m conscientious, hard working, I mean I meet
deadlines, Rye
never been pulled up for going over budgets, if someone gives me a job to
do and they want it doing by a specific time or date or whatever, then I’ll
bend over backwards to meet those timescales
K – What does your career mean to you?
Ke – Oh blimey, what does career mean to me? Job, work, I don’t know,
it’s a difficult one that, what does it mean to me?
K – For example some people will say ‘well I just do it because I have to, it
brings in the money’, does it mean more than that to you?
Ke – I don’t really think it as that, I don’t know I have felt a couple of
times, I don’t know when it would be, when I’ve felt fed up with the job
and all the rest of it, and maybe I felt I was just going through the motions,
but I don’t really know, I can put my finger on it. I just enjoy what I do,
enjoy the people I work with
K – Is it one of the more important things in your life?
Ke – Apart from well obviously the family, but if you haven’t got a job,
haven’t got money coming in etc, I think it’s part of the same, obviously
the family come first, the kids come first and all the rest of it, I’d say it’s
quite important, yeah
K – That’s fine, they’re quite tricky questions these, I do apologise. The
next question then is do you think you’re career’s been affected by the fact
that you work from home?
Ke – No
K – Not in any way you can think of
Ke – No, not at all, I mean, I don’t know what other people think at work,
say from Monday. Tuesday, Wednesday I have to leave early. or I don’t get
in as early as most other people, I don’t know if they think ‘he just goes
home and doesn’t do any thing’ or whatever, has an early day or stuff like
that. whether that has any effect, but again it depends on what you’re
doing, if I’m involved in a project that needs me to be there 7 / 8 hours a
day, then that’s going to cause a problem and we’ll maybe have to look at
childcare and stuff like that, I don’t see it causing any problems
K – And you live here with your wife is it?
Ke – Yes
K – And you have 2 children. Are they of school age?
Ke – Yes, 7 & 10
Interview 11: Ken (Ke)

K - And so currently how’s childcare and schooling arranged?

Ke - Again that’s, if my wife’s working, generally I’m available to take
them to school and pick them up, that’s the beauty of having LIW status
K - So they don’t go to any, they don’t go to a …

Ke - No after school clubs or anything like that

K - They don’t have a nanny or anything like that

Ke - No, and we’ve got no family around to rely on anyone. we’ve got
friends we can rely on, you know if I’m in a meeting and it goes on until
gone 3 o’clock, I ask friends just to take them for an hour or so, but we try
not to do that if we can possibly help it K - And such as today. your son’s
ill and you’re able to keep an eye on him cos you’re at home

Ke - Yeah, and that was a case of dialling in, obviously making sure I
didn’t have anything in my diary and saying to Gareth ‘yeah you can stay
at home’

K - And how about domestic work, how’s that organised?

Ke - Well generally if my wife Sarah’s working I’ll do the cooking. I sort
the kids out, my youngest, Kayley, she’s 7. she goes to gymnastics 3 time.
twice during the week, around 5ish so I’ll get her to that. Gareth does
things in the evening, football and that

K - How about the housework more generally?

Ke - We share

K - Pretty much 50/50?

Ke - Oh yeah

K - And did you have time off work when your children were born?

Ke - Yes, it would have been the statutory week or whatever at the time

K - And what kind of parent would you say you are?

Ke - (laughs)

K - Again any words that come into your mind to describe that

Ke - Caring, loving, I don’t know

K - That’s great, what do you think you’ve learnt since becoming a parent,
if anything?

Ke - What have I learnt? Oh dear.

K - Have you changed much since you’ve been a Dad?

Ke - I don’t think I have, what can we say? Well one of the things with
children is learning, well we don’t go out that much, as we did pre-kids, we
tend to spend more time with, obviously I like to spend more time with the
kids, we spend more money on the kids, so we don’t spend money on
unnecessary things I suppose at the end of the day, so we’ve learnt how to
deal with that. Tolerance I suppose, yeah, my wife would probably say
quite a lot about what we’ve learnt

K - That’s fine, and do you think that your role in the family’s different
because you work from home? So I suppose you’ve been working from
home for 7 years, so for the youngest one she won’t have known any
different and perhaps not even for your older child, do you think it might
have been different if you were traditional, office-based worker?

Ke - Well we were originally, pre-kids, the wife and I, before we got
married. we lived together for a while, and both had jobs in London,
commuted to, lived in Southend at the time, I’m not one of those who say a
woman should be in the kitchen or stuff like that, I’ll do the ironing...cos l
used to live on my own so I know exactly what it's like. No I don't think it's made any difference.

K - So you've worked from home for 7 years. And who kind of instigated that then, was it just part of the job that you got?

Ke - Well it was me, I didn't ask for it, I just said 'Any chance of having an extra telephone line in', so that I could dial in, get my emails before I came into work and all of a sudden it just spiralled into Location Independent Working, I had to have all the health and safety, sign all the necessary forms, make sure I had the proper screens everything like that, ISDN was put into the house, so I never, I don't think I ever officially asked for it, I was just the guinea pig for the group at the time.

K - Why did you decide you might like to work from home?

Ke - Why? Just convenience really, the flexibility, rather than coming into work to get your emails you know, all that aggravation of trying to get parking, well it's the same now quite honestly. Trying to get parked in any of our buildings, if you've seen the list of people who want to get a parking space it's a case of having to wait for someone to die or leave the firm, it's just flexibility really.

K - So who did you discuss your decision with? You went to your employers and say it might be good...?

Ke - It was my line manager yeah.

K - And what was their reaction to that?

Ke - I think they just said fine no problem, there wasn't that much discussion quite honestly, I think the way the business was running at the time, there was no constraint on budgets you know funding and stuff like that, I think that now, now they're not so hot on giving people LIW status because of the reasons of budgets and costs and stuff, I mean I've no idea how much this costs the company, don't get any bills, no idea at all.

K - And thinking about other people's reactions to your decision to work from home, first of all at work, your colleagues, and maybe your clients, did they have any issues with you coming home, working from home?

Ke - No, not that I can think of, no.

K - And did you discuss it with your wife, that you might like to work from home?

Ke - Discuss? No. It was a case that I'm doing it and that's it.

K - Yeah, and did she have a good reaction to that or...?

Ke - Oh yeah, yeah, no problem.

K - Great, and probably at that time, as I've said before your children were a bit too small to discuss it with them, were they?

Ke - Yeah.

K - What was your wife's reaction when you started working from home then? Did she find it as perhaps useful as she thought she might?

Ke - Well I think at the time, because she didn't have a job, Sarah's one of those that, because some people have to do I know, but we had opportunities for her to stay at home with the children until they were, you know Gareth was able to go to nursery school and stuff like that, so for those years she stayed at home you know, and she's currently got, well she has had part time jobs ever since really, so she was home a good part of the time when I was home really, it didn't affect work or relationships or
Interview 11: Ken (Ke)

anything like that, it was no problem at all. nice to be home actually every
now and again
K – Yeah, do you think your kids kind of appreciate having their Dad at
home more than perhaps a traditional Dad would be?
Ke – I don’t know, I’ve never asked them I don’t think. they probably do.
they probably do I should imagine
K – Is working at home better or worse than you expected? – Did you have
any expectations?
Ke – Er. I would say at first it was quite, quite difficult at first. because the
situation, I don’t think houses around, I don’t think the house I was living
in, it wasn’t built, designed to have location independent working or
whatever, a separate room, so having the room I’d built was great. The
problem was it was right next to the lounge, with the TV and stuff like that.
that was quite a problem you know having to shut that out. That was quite
an issue at the time and of course the wife was at home quite a bit at the
time, watching morning and afternoon TV, and she’d have people round,
which caused you know, which was a bit of a pain. But er, I suppose since
we moved here, she’s been working, I think that’s improved, the fact that
it’s quite, you can get on with your work, I mean that’s one of the beauties
of working from home, there’s no constant noise, no phones ringing, you
can get on with your work, depending on what your doing, if you’re going
to write a report, this is the best way to do it
K – Before you started working from home did you have opinions of other
people who worked from home?
Ke – Not really, I thought I’d like to, basically I want that as well, yeah
K – Great. And now that you work from home do you have any idea what a
typical home-based worker might be like?
Ke – Not really, I can’t, any different from me really, I mean I know a few
senior people who’ve got the same status and I’ve spoken to them about
their environment, and a lot of them have got big houses, have got a
separate room away from anything else. better environments than this I
would say
K – How do you keep in touch with your colleagues and clients?
Ke – Telephone, email
K – Great, and have you had any issues of isolation, not being in a
traditional office?
Ke – I think when I was working last year, I had to work quite a lot from
home, I was probably going in once every couple of weeks, so that was
quite strange when you go into the office see the colleagues, bit of a
strange feeling. and you ask what’s been going on for the past two weeks
and try and play catch up you know with what’s going on I the office, I
don’t think I’d like to do it for a long period of time with out going into the
office, I mean I would make a point of going into the office anyway. yeah
it would drive me up the wall staying here all the time
K – So you have missed the face-to-face contact?
Ke – Yeah, oh yeah
K – Do you think you have more control over your work. now you work
from home?
Ke – I think I’ve always had it. I mean the beauty of the job that I’m in.
involved in is autonomy really. you’re given a task and job to do and you
Interview 11: Ken (Ke)

249 do it, I mean you keep your boss up to date with what’s going on, meet
deadlines, keep up to date...
250 K – And do you think in any ways you’re a better worker now you work
from home? More focused or efficient?
251 Ke – More focused yeah, more productive I’d say, you get through so
much work, well for a start in the mornings if I’m working here. 8 o’clock.
252 well half 7 sometimes, the computer goes on and generally just carry on
working through, I’d say I probably have a break once in the morning,
lunch, once in the afternoon, if I’ve got deadlines to meet, I’d probably just
carry on and carry on to the small hours if you wanted
259 K – And what was the learning curve of coming to work from home, did
you have to develop any strategies to manage it? For example some say
that they need to shut the door and tell the kids ‘right, Dad’s at work for the
next so many hours’
263 Ke – Oh I have to yeah, there’s stuff like that or if I’m having a
teleconference, making sure everybody who’s in the house is aware that
I’m working because sometimes the children come and say ‘are you
working Dad?’ at half past three want me to play football in the garden or
something, but no.
268 K – Must be tempting though
269 Ke – Yeah very
270 K – What’s the impact been overall of having you working from home on
your family?
272 Ke – I think it’s quite positive, it fits in so well with home life, work life. I
can’t think of a better way of working quite honestly
274 K – And the overall impact on your career? Has that been positive,
negative, or pretty indifferent?
276 Ke – Indifferent I’d say, indifferent.
277 K – And then overall, the impact on your life generally, has that been
good?
279 Ke – Yeah.
280 K – Great. Is there any you’d change, or would you go back to traditional
working ever?
282 Ke – I really wouldn’t like to go back to it, traditional way of working,
going into the office every single day, no, I wouldn’t no, would not like
that at all
285 K – One of my research questions is ‘is telework an effective way for
parents to reconcile work and family life?’, would you think it was?
287 Ke – Yes
288 K – Great. On to these questions about identity then. The overall research
question I’m asking is ‘how does home-based telework’ – so how does
LIW – ‘impact upon the professional and parental identities of men and
women?’, so your identity as a parent and your identity as a career person.
292 Do you have any idea how it’s impacted on your parental or professional
identity?
294 Ke – Who’s this from the eyes of?
295 K – From yourself, how you feel about yourself?
296 Ke – I don’t know
297 K – It’s a hard one
298 Ke – It is
Interview 11: Ken (Ke)

K - Just basically whether working from home's changed how you think about yourself and who you are. Or perhaps to look at it another way, how other people might see you.

Ke - Other people, I mean picking the kids up, I always get the little jokes about, you know ‘working hard today?’, and all that sort of stuff. It's just the little comments you get, I suppose they think I'm swanning around at home not doing sweet F.A. but other than that it's, can't really think of anything else.

K - Thinking about how other people see you then, do you think there is a bad perception of Dad's who stay at home rather than working in a traditional office?

Ke - I don't think there is a bad perception, a lot of the people, when I go to school, it's generally wives, obviously the mums, who pick the kids up, they have husbands or whatever that work from home. Because they see me more than most, it must look... I don't know. I don't know.

K - That's fine, has it changed how your wife and kids think about you?

Ke - No, don't think they know any different.

K - How would you categorise yourself firstly, as a Dad firstly or as a computer analyst firstly? It's a tricky one.

Ke - Er. It's a tricky one that. Will I say Dad first? I'd say Dad first really. Now why would I say that? Mm. Probably because, I don't know, because of flexibility I suppose, you know, I can concentrate on my kids, as well as being at home.

K - Great, that's pretty much all the questions I've got for you Ken, thank you for being so frank and answering them like that. Have you got anything you'd like to add about the experience of working from home and how it's affected either your family life or your career?

Ke - No, I just think it... if I didn't have the option of working from home, if I didn't have all this equipment here, we'd find it extremely difficult to manage—We would manage but having to farm the kids off to after school clubs and stuff like that—we did it originally and in some respects it's good for the kids to have a social bit and play and stuff like that, but I think we're quite a close family unit, I like and see my kids as often as I possibly can, I want, what I didn't get, I want my kids to have all the things that I didn't have when I was at home, I didn't see my parents, they were working all the time, I try and do as much as I possibly can with kids really.

K - Great. The final thing that I'd like to do, if it's okay, is to scan the camera around and see your working space.

Ke - Yeah.

K - Ok, so we're in the dining room right now, which is a downstairs room at the front of the house, in the corner, are these your working files there Ken?

Ke - They are at the bottom.

K - On the bookshelf next to your CDs and things and then your kind of in this little cubby hole, under the stairs there, and you've just got room there for your laptop and one of the big old fashioned printers you were saying.

Ke - That's right yeah.

K - And some papers on a pine, kind of desk there.

Ke - Just below, at the back of the desk's the ISDN lines, the box is there.
K – And we were saying before, but if you could just expand on this, is this an ideal set up or not?

K – No, no

K – And when you worked from your previous home, it was a bit more ideal?

Ke – It was a purpose built – it was my room yeah, it had all my stuff in it. It was only 8 by 6, but no one else invade that space, that was the office

K – So ideally are you aiming to do something similar to that here?

Ke – Yes

K – So that’s your plan for the future?

Ke – That’s right

K – That’s great. Thank you very much for taking part again

Ke – Thank you
K - Could you state your name and your job title?
A - Anthea Barlow, Sub-editor
K - And could you describe your job to me?
A - What I do, I work for various sections of the newspaper, national newspaper, weekend section, personal finance on the weekend section, the foreign desk, and the daily sections, features sometimes. I work all over basically, they send me copy at certain times of the day when they need help and I edit it

K - Great. How did you get into journalism?
A - Probably always wanted to. Two ambitions, wanted to be a journalist or a teacher, nearly went into teaching but then opted for journalism cos I though it was more of a challenge, it's harder to get into, I thought it was harder to succeed in but I was probably completely deluded there. What did I do? I started working when I was at uni, for a local paper doing voluntary work, eventually when I left college went work at United Defence in technical publications which was incredibly tedious but I worked with a woman who really gave me lots of guidance. a lot of good advice. and I ended up working on various publications in London. So it was an unusual route, I could have opted for a more practical route course run by Express Newspapers, the Wolverhampton Express and Star group. did a 4.5 year course I think it was, you had to pass, compete with lots of others for that course, and I didn’t do it, I didn’t want to live there for that length of time, it was sort of like an old-fashioned apprenticeship, which would have been a great all round experience, but you really had to commit yourself a long time. I went an unusual route in.

K - Lovely, so at the moment how do you split up your working time? How much time’s spent in the home?
A - What I do is, I tend to work Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, after the children have gone to school, so basically I come home, clear the dishes, do bits and bobs around the house, and then log on and I’ll work up til 1ish. On Thursday and Friday I work most of the day, I pick the children up at three, they used to go to a childminder but don’t see the need to do that now, they come home have a snack, I finish off my work, so it's a fairly shortish day, occasionally I’ll log in later on in the evening, not often, and sometimes on a Monday, don’t often work on a Monday, it depends I’m flexible when they need to do it

K - Are you happy with your job at the moment?
A - Yeah, very convenient

K - Great. Have you got any aims for a future career?
A - Em. There’s loads of things that I could do. I could leave journalism completely, possibly go into to teaching, I do still enjoy – I help at the local school, so I do still really enjoy that side of it and whilst I’ve never done it professionally, I go in as a parent helper, probably won’t to that cos the pay is so awful, I’m paid quite well for what I do and it’s very convenient. there’s no travel, as the kids grow older, possibly go back to work in London, possibly work as a reporter for the paper, doing writing, but that would require me to be out and about and not tied to home quite so much

K - What kind of worker would you say you are? Quite a broad question.
A - Ycah. em. Quite disciplined, which is unusual for me because I'm not. in my life, I’m not disciplined at all, my other life, home life etc. Em. Very
introduction: anthea

51 conscientious, which again is unusual, but in my work I am. I’m very
52 conscious of the fact, at the moment, I’m allowed to work from home.
53 unlike most journalists, on the editing side of most newspapers. I don’t
54 know of many at all who do what I’m doing, so I’m in quite a lucky
55 position, I’m paid very well, and so I always feel that I have to earn that,
56 that position and the money. so I work quite hard
57 K – What does your career mean to you?
58 A – Quite a lot, I think a lot of girls grow up and they’re taught to be
59 ambitious, and to get exams and so on, go to university. especially these
days, everybody’s expected to go to university, then have children.
60 Especially these days, more and more women have careers, lots and lots of
61 my friends have been to university, given it up and they’re at home full
time, or they’re doing a lot less challenging jobs to fit in with the family. I
62 don’t think women should really have to do that, it’s a choice, but it sort of
grates on you a little bit, that women are told up to a certain point to work
hard and use their brains, then have to put that on hold for so many years, it
doesn’t quite follow, so I’m quite keen on women being able to do both.
but at the same time I’m not really for when you’ve got a family, working
full time, there is that sort of paradox I suppose, that sort of conflict.
67
K – Do you think your career’s been affected by the fact that you working
69 from home?
70 A – Yeah, definitely, you can’t do what I do, the nature of my job fits in
really well, but there’s no promotion involved, there’s no advancement of
career, that side of it’s put on hold
72 K – so you live here with, is it your husband, and you have 2 children is it?
73 A – Yeah
74 K – 2 children, lovely, I think you’ve touched on this briefly already, but
how is current childcare or schooling arrangements managed?
76 A – Holiday times, I’m lucky, I do get a lot of holiday at the newspaper.
more weeks than most companies would give, so I can cover most
78 holidays, we also have a childminder we’ve used since they started school,
so generally only use that on the full days I work, Thursday, Friday, we
have the option of using the childminder, try not to use her now during the
week, but I used to, so I take the kids to school each day pick them up each
day and I work around it really
80 K – How about domestic work in the home, how’s that balanced?
81 A – I probably do most of it actually. Because I’m part time I feel I should
do more than my husband and you’d be surprised at how easily men fall
into that little pattern, they work full time so they do less, and that’s
happened for years really, probably particularly since we’ve had children,
so I do most. I do the shopping, I do the cleaning, he’ll do anything that I
ask him to, but at the same time - God you don’t want to be a Mum to your
86 husband do you? – telling him what to do, but generally I’d say I do most
88 things and I’m sure he’d agree
89 K – Did you have a bit time of work when your children were born?
90 A – Yeah about 10 months off for both
92 K – And what kind of parent would you say you are? Another broad
question
A - I'm very homey in my thinking. I'm quite a conscientious parent, without wanting to be, we're a very close family. Quite tricky that one, how to say it without trying to flattering yourself

K - Go ahead

A - (laughs)

K - I mean if you think you're a good parent then...

A - Family come first before my job and my career, and you don't realise that until they come along, I mean you sort of realise that, even my husband was saying that work pales into insignificance really, compared to your family, so they come first. So I am very family-focused. It dominates my thinking, everything, so that's the sort of parent I am

K - So did you, sort of, work from an office base whilst you had your children?

A - Yeah I did, to start with, what happened, I went part time after my first child, and work was fairly good, I used to work nights in a newspaper, which was sort of all night until 12, 1 in the morning, newspaper deadlines go on and on and on, for various editions, but when I had my child it wasn't very good, so they let me work shorter day time hours, which was very good, and they went to nursery on the days I worked, they went to the nursery where my husband worked which was in Leamington Spar, and that worked quite well until it was time for the children to go to school, so I faced, one of us, myself or my husband, we felt, needed to be near where were going to school which was where we lived, so choice I had a choice: work for the Finance News, leave the Finance News, or get them to agree to let me work from where I live and fortunately they did

K - Great. Does your organisation, is it quite a common practice to have people...?

A - No, very rare, I was the first one, I don't think I was the first one, I think a few people had worked from home in the past due to illness, so they hadn't been able to travel to work it's been too difficult on them physically and mentally, I think I know someone who suffered with depression, so she was allowed to work from home a couple of days a week - temporarily, but when I faced this sort of dilemma, either leave the Finance News, stay at the Finance News, I went to them and I asked them could I work from home, I knew it would work as long as the technology enabled it to work in practice, and at the time I had a manager who basically was very open, didn't think about the political ramifications of it at all and he said 'well we'll look into it, if it can be done you do it', since then a lot of people have wanted to do it and they've been very reluctant to let them

K - Right. Do you think your role in your family's changed since you've worked from home?

A - No, no I don't think so, even on the days that I worked, before when I worked in London, I would still organise everything around the kids, they'd go off to nursery, but I would get everything ready. I would ensure they were eating the right foods and so on and for when they came back from nursery everything would be laid out for them. so all my husband had to do was ferry them there and back, so although they weren't with me all day on a couple of days a week then, I was still there in the background, even though I wasn't there physically. so I don't think my mental outlook
Interview 12: Anthea

K - So you’ve worked from home for about 3 and a half years, and that was pretty much instigated by yourself.

A - Yeah.

K - You arranged that through work. So what was the key reason you decided to work from home? I think we’ve touched on that briefly already.

A - I felt it important, if you have children, at least one of you is with them most of the time, but I didn’t want to give up my career, but I was prepared to give up my career, when I asked the newspaper ‘could I work from home’ I did say ‘if you say no I will leave’ and I would reluctantly, so that’s it really, I mean I wanted to primarily look after the children myself, most of the time.

K - So you discussed it with your manager from work, and you discussed it with your husband as well?

A - Yeah.

K - And what was his reaction?

A - ‘Wow, fantastic, if they’ll let you work from home wouldn’t that be brilliant? You manage to be the mum and have a career, bring all the money in as well’.

K - Excellent, so it was seen as quite a good...

A - A very positive thing, yeah.

K - Great, and did you discuss it with your children themselves?

A - No they were small, no they were too small.

K - Ok.

Is it what you expected? Is it better or worse in any way?

A - No, exactly as I expected, a lot of people in work, and I do go in to work probably every few months, and people always say to me ‘I couldn’t do, I wouldn’t be able to get on with the work’ but I was always quite happy being on my own so I’m quite happy working on my own as well and surprisingly, with the computer we have a system where you can message people live, continually, it’s far faster than email and it pops, messages pop up at the top of your screen, so I tend to find that I’m constantly talking to people, so I’ve never really, although I’m in the house on my own, I very rarely work with anybody in the house, occasionally I do, but even when I’m on my own, I don’t really feel I’m on my own, so it’s never been a problem, I’m quite disciplined in how I do it and I treat it as a days work and I always expected it to be like that, I was quite realistic.

K - Before you began working from home, did you have any preconceptions of what a typical teleworker might be like?

A - No, I’ve not even thought about what other people do at all.

K - Right, and you keep in touch mainly through your computer, through email and through the messaging service?

A - Yeah, and I go into work about every three months as well, and I often go on courses and things.

K - Right, so you haven’t really had any issues of isolation?

A - None, but probably what’s helped me avoid that is I’m part time, so I do have other life apart from my work, I couldn’t do this full time, I wouldn’t want to do it full time because I do like talking to people and I like interacting with people and I just enjoy just being with people and
Interview 12: Anthea

being in a working environment, full time I couldn’t do this, and I would feel isolated and very bored frankly.

K – Do you think you have more control over your work more now you work from home?

A – Em, yeah I do, I choose the work far more and I’m my own boss more or less.

K – And do you think in any ways you’re a better worker now?

A – I’m not sure I’m a better worker, I probably get a lot more done because there’s fewer people to chat to and I also feel, I always have since I started home-working, I feel I have to almost compensate for the fact that I’m allowed to work from home, so I do tend to, I’m definitely more productive than people in the office, definitely.

K – Was there a learning curve for you, to coming and working from home? Did you have to develop strategies or…?

A – Not… let me think.

K – Perhaps in the respect of keeping…

A – The only thing I had to learn was to work in a quieter environment, now the office, when I go in now and occasionally would log on. I very rarely do a lot of work when I go into London, but it’s noisy. It’s so noisy and I obviously didn’t notice that at the time, and I do find I need a bit of noise so I have the radio sort of below my hearing threshold, that was the only thing really.

K – And what would you say is the overall impact on your family of you working from home?

A – The children benefit from me being here all the time, they don’t notice the fact that I work very much, but now they’re older they are aware that I work and they like the fact that I work because I talk about it in such a positive way and I think it’s important for them to know that I work and I’m not – when you say ‘just a Mum’ it sort of makes it sounds like that’s not important and it is the most important thing but for them to realise there’s other sides to you as a parent – but they benefit financially as well and also the fact that I’m happy in being able to do both, so really everybody benefits from a happy Mum.

K – And what would you say the overall impact on your career has been?

A – Slows your career, absolutely and definitely, there’s no doubt about it, I wouldn’t ever receive a work bonus, they have bonuses each year since I’ve worked from home I’ve never received one and I would never expect to, purely because you’re out of sight, out of mind, but also because I’ve done the same thing for 3 and a half years and that isn’t seen as progression in the company’s eyes, so em…

K – Do you think some of that’s to do with being part time as well perhaps?

A – Yeah, yeah, when I went part time and I was in London. I went part time. I remember applying for it was a news editors job, one of the UK news editors jobs, and I felt like I’d almost got it, brilliant interview with a couple of the news editors there, and the main news editor on the paper there, until they said, one of them said to me ‘the hours won’t be a problem will they, I know you’re part time now’. and I said ‘well it won’t be a problem if you allow me to stay part time’ and they said ‘well the job is full time’, now I knew that and I wasn’t about to quibble it. I just wanted to
Interview 12: Anthea

see really how far I could get and as soon as I said, I then said 'I would want it part time' and they said 'well there's another news editor who's already part time, we don't really want another' so that was the end of that, so maybe it's more to do with being part time than being a teleworker, but I can't go for the sort of jobs that would interest me because they're office based, and a lot of the jobs in a newspaper is to with talking to teams of people and getting them to do certain things. so maybe it's more to do with being part time than being a teleworker.

K – Sure, so the impact on your life more generally then, would you say it’s been positive or negative?

A – Oh very positive yeah.

K – Great, is there anything that you’d change or would you ever go back to traditional working in an office?

A – I prefer, you sort of miss bits in the office, when I go in occasionally, I miss the sort of buzz in an office, when you’re on a newspaper when you’re reaching deadlines it’s very exciting and you don’t tend to get so much of that at home, em, but I think being away from work you get a lot of perspective, it makes you realise that isn’t such a big deal, and I avoid all the politics in work, so I enjoy that side of being at home, don’t get so bogged down in that.

K – Do you think telework’s an effective way for parents to reconcile work and family life then?

A – It is, but it depends on your job, not all jobs can be placed at home. I'm trying to think of jobs that would be, very few I’d imagine. Lots of sales people I expect and then they’re out and about as well, it depends on the nature of the job. I’d have thought most people’s jobs couldn’t be done at home and they would find it very difficult, and they’d have to face the question that I faced, you either give one up, have one or have the other, or take a lesser job in a different field, which tend to be less intellectually challenging jobs.

K – So for you has it been a good way to reconcile work and family life?

A – Totally yeah, totally

K - My overall research question is ‘how does home-based telework impact upon the professional and parental identities of men and women?’, would you be able to speculate what you think any of the findings might be. so for example how has it affected your identity as a Mum and as a journalist?

A – As a journalist, I think in my bosses eyes, it would be, they know my family come first, my choice to a. work part time and work at home, means I want to keep on working, but I'm not as ambitious possibly as I used to be. My own identity, I don't feel I've changed at all, I've always been like this, you know

K – So teleworking hasn’t really changed how you think about yourself and who you are?

A – Don’t think so.

K – How would you categorise yourself, as a Mother firstly or a journalist firstly?

A – Mother

K – And telework hasn’t really changed that, that’s always been the case?

A – No. Obviously before I had children, work was very much the focus, but I always knew I would have children, hoped I would have children, and that they would be, they would come first, so its not really changed
K: Do you think it’s changed how your kids see you, the fact that Mum’s at home most of the time?
A: They’ve never known any different, because when I worked in the office they were really too young to notice. It was only when Annabel was 4 and a bit that I started working from home, and also because I was always part time when they were born I was here most of the time any way.
K: Do you think it’s changed how other people see you, your husband for example, how they think of you?
A: I don’t know, interesting one that, I don’t really know.
K: Em. We’re pretty much towards the end of the interview, is there anything else that you’d like to add about your experiences of working from home?
A: Not really, it is a positive experience and I feel I’m in control, a. of my career – even though that’s not progressed really since I’ve been at home, but I’ve always felt really that that’s my choice, so I have felt in control of what I do at home and at work, so it has been yeah totally positive.
K: Great, what I’d like to do now, if that’s ok, is just scan around the office with the camera
A: Yeah, yeah
K: So we’re into a downstairs room here, and it’s the room that we step into just off the main hallway as we enter the front door
A: Yeah, it’s just a small study
K: And is this an ideal set up for you?
A: No not really, it is my office when I’m working, but it’s the main computer in the house, it’s used by the children as well and they use the internet or playing games, it’s used by my husband. His computer’s down there, it’s used for putting photos on the computer and generally bits and bobs of work, writing letters, home finances we do in here, and generally study as well as an office.
K: Ok. That’s great, and is there anything that you would change about this working space, or are you pretty happy that it’s used as a communal area?
A: No I like that, I like it being used by everybody.
K: Ok, that’s great. I’ve got a good panorama of that. Thank you very much then, thanks for taking part
A: You’re welcome.
Interview 13: Sandra

K- Could you say your name and job title?
S – My names Sandra Jones. I work for Redham Borough Council and I’m a Revenue and Benefits officer.
K – Lovely, and what does that entail?
S – I work collecting council tax, arrears with courts, er. liability orders, and summonses, summons people who haven’t paid their council tax work with external bailiffs, sending bailiffs out to peoples houses – not very nice really but you don’t tell a lot of people your work.
K – How did you get into that kind of work?
S – Em, it was just really em, my brother in law asked me if I wanted to go and work at the council for about 6 weeks, that was 12 years ago, to go and sit at the side of visiting officers, who went out and visited people in their homes, and it was a job on that side of the council, but then I got moved up and went onto the recovery of council tax.
K – You been with the council pretty much since you left school then?
S – No, I’ve worked there 12, 13 years I’ve worked. So cos I’m... 46 – I had to think.
K – So before that you were raising your family obviously?
S – I was yes, we had a pub.
K – Oh lovely, right so you’ve been your own boss for a while as well.
S – Yes, I’ve worked at one or two different jobs.
K – What kind of thing then predominantly?
S – We had a pub and I was the landlady, then I worked at – I was a hairdresser – from school I worked in hairdressing and I worked in hairdressing for 9 years, and after that I did stop to raise a family, and we took on a pub, and after we stopped at the pub I finished up going to the council, and work at the council.
K – Lovely, so how long would you say you spend at home as versus to going into an office, if that’s what you do?
S – Per week?
K – Yeah.
S – I work the 37 hours per week.
K – Right and you’re pretty much from home all the time is it?
S – Yeah, permanently.
K – And are you enjoying your job at the moment?
S – I love it. I was very doubtful whether to go for it when it was, they said there was going to be a meeting, whether people were interested in home-working, I always said ‘no’ I weren’t going to go home-working. I thought I’ll go to the meeting and see what it entailed and me Dad wasn’t very well at the time, and I thought right I’ll go and have a see, see what it entails and what was said in the meeting about the different things, and I thought I’ll give it a try, so that’s why I decided I’ll put my name down, didn’t know whether I’d get picked, but I did at the end of the day.
K – Great.
S - And it was only a pilot scheme for 3 months, and I thought if I didn’t like it I could always go back in the office.
K – Have you got any aims for your future career?
S – No, not really. no, cos I’m quite happy with what I’m doing. I’m quite comfortable.
K – Great.
Interview 13: Sandra

S – It runs round my family, it works for me, I’m quite happy at what I do
K – What kind of worker would you say you are?
S – I’m quite conscientious. People think that because you work at home
you’re going to be messing about, but I don’t. I work at home like I used to
work at work, I log on at 8, and I work through, I have half an hour for my
dinner, but do I work through, I don’t switch off and do this. I
work constantly
K – And what does your career mean to you?
S – Well, it gives me my independence, and it gives me my own money. It
gives me money to be able to spend on my family and things. But I’m not
really career minded, I’m just a normal housewife who’s got a full time
job, with a nice family
K – And do you think your career might have been affected by starting to
work at home?
S – No, not really
K – And so you live here with your kids. How many have you got?
S – Got 3 children, 1 lives at uni though
K – Away at uni, ok. How is childcare, schooling, arranged at the moment?
S – Ok, because I’m here for Lee in the morning when he gets up, sort him
out, he sits and watches telly before he goes off to school, and then I’m
here when he comes home at night, whereas when I used to work before
my mum used to be here for Lee, so it’s taken the pressure off of me Mum
K – And how about domestic work, do you share that?
S – Yeah, yeah we do, we do quite a bit on a weekend, I run round with
hoover in me dinner hour, was bathroom round and things, strip beds in the
morning, get it in the washer
K – Is it pretty much 50/50? - You live here with your husband?
S – Yes. Oh no, no, no, the housework I do quite a lot of it
K – (laughs)
S – They do bits but not to call owt.
K – And did you have some time off work when you’re children were born
then? You had a bit of time where you stayed at home...
S – Maternity leave or...?
K – ...and did the Mum bit?
S – Yeah
K – How much time off did you have?
S – I only worked part time
K – I see
S – I only started working full time in the last 12 months
K – Right, right
S – I’ve only ever worked part time
K – And what kind of parent do you think you are?
S – Er, I try to be a nice friendly parent with me children, I try to do a lot
with them. I try to take an interest in what they’re doing, I try very hard to be
approachable, to be there to guide and advise them and just for ’em to be
happy and that’s it
K – Lovely. Brilliant, and what do you think you’ve learnt since becoming
a parent?
S – It’s very hard
K – (laughs)
S - Nobody gives you a hand with this, and you don’t really know if you’re doing it right or not, so that’s one of the hardest things.

K - Do you think your role in your family’s changed since you started working from home?

S - No, I don’t, no.

K - How long have you worked from home now?

S - Since September

K - Since September, so we’re talking 8, 9, 10 months is it?

S - No, September, October... 7

K - 7 months - you’re better at maths than me. And that was instigated by people at work saying ‘we’d like a group of people who can be home-based’

S - They asked, yeah

K - And you went along

S - If anyone was interested and would like to come to a meeting to hear the details

K - So you were quite undecided at first then?

S - I was very, very against it

K - (laughs)

S - No I wouldn’t go home-working, because I thought I’d lose me friends and I’d miss the company

K - So what persuaded you to do it in the end?

S - Because me Dad wasn’t very well, and me Mum came every teatime for Lee, after school and things, and it put pressure on her. and I just thought it’d just ease it for everyone, and I just thought I’d just have a go at it and see if I liked it

K - Yeah cos it was only going to be a short trial

S - It were a pilot scheme at first yeah

K - Who did you discuss it with? – Did you talk to your husband about it?

S - I spoke to my husband and he thought it were a brilliant idea, I spoke to me kids about it and they were ‘oh stay at home Mum it’ll be great’, so yeah we discussed it between us and nobody said ‘I don’t want you at home full time’

K - And how about your colleagues at work, was anybody a bit worried, or were they happy for you?

S - Oh yeah very happy, I just don’t know if they thought it’d be more work involved for them

K - Right

S - They were quite alright about it, you know

K - So was it better than you expected or worse

S - Hmm, it’s lovely

K - Oh good, better than you thought it was going to be then?

S - It’s wonderful, I do find sometimes I do get a bit lonely and I do miss the company, but apart from that I’m absolutely – I’m great

K - Before you started working from home, did you have any opinions of what other people who worked from home might be like?

S - No I didn’t. no, because we didn’t ever really get any feedback from anyone who worked at home, because we didn’t know who did it cos I think we were one of the first boroughs around to do it. everyone was in the process of doing it, but it wasn’t done
K – Do you have any idea what a typical teleworker or home-based might be like?
S – No
K – And how do you keep in touch with your colleagues and clients?
S – By phone, cos sometimes I have to phone the office about work, by phone, we go in once a month for office meetings, so I do leave me self half an hour to go round and speak to me friends who I haven’t seen for a while, so I keep in touch with them like that
K – Yeah, when you go into the office, you have a good chat.
S – Yeah
K – And do – are you ever out and about, on the road, visiting people?
S - No, no
K – And have you had any issues of isolation then? You mentioned you felt a little bit lonely sometimes
S – I do feel a little bit lonely sometimes, but I think I just get used to it, I have me music on, and I just get me head down and just get on with it, so I don’t wallow in it, I just think it was my decision to do the home-working, and I do enjoy it most of the time
K – Do you think you’ve got more control over your work now?
S – I feel as if, er, I’m not under as much pressure and I just feel as if I’m taking control of my work more than whatever I have done. yep
K – Do you think you’re a better worker now?
S – Yes
K – In what kind of ways?
S – Because there’s no pressures on, you’re not, there’s no pressures on answering the phone, dealing with the general public though the phone, I just feel as if the pressure’s off that way and I can concentrate more on what I’m doing rather than having interruptions and things
K – And what kind of things did you have to kind of think about when you started working from home? Did you have to develop any strategies to manage being based at home?
S – No I just think it was a case of being strict on me self, knowing that I was at home, I knew that I’d got to get me head down and get me head round working from home and not thinking oh I can sit and have a chat – I do, I mean, me Mum’ll call occasionally and we’ll sit and I’ll stop and have a drink and things, but it was just getting me self motivated to do that, actually staying and working at home
K – Did I see in the hallway, is that your little set up?
S – That’s the office
K – Lovely, just in the entrance hall. Did you have to do anything to kind of keep your work separate from your home stuff? Did you find that a struggle at all?
S – No, no, no because it was all –
K – Did it fit in well?
S - When the kids, when I first coming to work from home, Lee me little lad ‘oh great we can go on the computer and things’ so I had to sit down and explain to him that it’s all done through work and it was all for work and it wasn’t for their pleasure that the actual computer was coming, and from then I’ve had no trouble, never asked to go on it. never been on it.
Interview 13: Sandra

they know it’s my work and once I log on it’s for me and once I log off that’s it, it’s out of – it’s nobody’s only mine for work
K – So overall do you think the impact on your family’s been positive?
S – Very
K – Great. In what kind of ways? Have your children said particular things?
S – Em. I just think it’s been nice for ‘em cos they know that there’s somebody here 2/7, not just for me children. but for me parents as well, cos me Mum’s been in hospital this week, well last week, so I’ve been able to alternate the hours that I do and work around going to see me Mum and looking after her. But also the impact of being at home, with Lee. when he comes home from school, it worked well with Sonia coming home from university, I’m not always at work – I do work but she knows I’m here so we can still a conversation so she’s not feeling lonely, so yeah it works
K – Great. And overall what do you think the impact’s been on your career? We’ve kind of touched on that already – do you think it’s had a negative impact on your career or positive or...
S – No it’s just the same as when I was in the office, it’s not, it’s not. I just do worry sometimes that we do get a bit left out. feel at bit left out when we’re at home, we get forgot about sometimes, but I don’t know if that’s my insecurity or through not being in the office and sat dealing with everyone and things
K – Do you think the impact on your life generally has been positive then, of working from home?
S – Yeah, yeah
K – So overall would you change anything – would you ever go back to work in a traditional office?
S – I would never say I would never go back to work in a traditional office, but taking er, if I’d got the choice I’d rather stay at home. I’d sooner stay at home, cos I find it’s a lot, it’s a lot less stressful at home, a lot less stressful
K – Overall then is working from home an effective way for parents to reconcile work and family life?
S – Yeah, I think so, yeah
K – Right, the overall research question I’m asking is ‘how does working from home impact upon people’s professional and parental identities?’ and I was just wondering if you had any thoughts on that and how it’s affected your identity as a Mum and identity as a council worker?
S – Mm, don’t know really, I don’t know, I can’t really answer that one because I don’t feel that me family look at me any different, and I don’t feel me friends at work look at me any different. I just think my identity seems the same, although it’s just different surroundings
K – Yeah, and how about how you think about yourself, has that been changed by working from home?
S – I feel as if I’m a better person for it, because as I say I feel a lot less stressed, with the travelling cos I don’t drive, the bus journeys. it takes you an hour to get there, an hour to get back, I can to the hour on the computer. less stress great
K – And how would you categorise yourself first. as a mother or as a professional council worker?
Interview 13: Sandra

S –Both actually
K – Yeah
S – Yeah cos I switch me self on to me council worker mode when I’m on
me own, the kids have gone to school and I’m, I can switch me self back
on to a Mum
K - And do you think working from home’s changed that at all. or is that
how you’ve always been?
S – Em. No. I used to find that I got home, I’d need to unwind and come
down and really think you know ‘oh I’ve got to start tea and I’ve got to do
that’ and I’d get myself really anxious, where as now I don’t so I just think
it’s made me more sure of myself
K – Great, would you say it’s kind of allowed you to enjoy being a Mum?
S – Mm.
K – Yes it seems like it
S – But I’ve always enjoyed being a Mum
K – Yeah. Do you think it might be different if you were a man and I was
asking you these questions?
S – Yes, Yeah
K – Mm, I wonder, that’s part of what my research is seeking to find
S – Yes I do because at the end of the day a man doesn’t have to fit in
housework, the guidance that a Mum gives – I’m not saying my husband
doesn’t guide the kids cos he’s a fantastic Dad him, but I think kids always
seem to turn to the Mum, learn from their advice and stuff, but yeah I just
think it’s different for a man
K – Hopefully I’ll find out what kind of ways it’s different. cos I’ve done.
so far well I’m hoping I’ll have done at the end of it 7 interviews with men
and 7 with women, so I’m hoping to compare that and see what’s different
really. Em, do you think it’s changed how other people view you, perhaps
people who don’t know you so well, are people aware that you work from
home?
S – Oh no, em, as months have gone on and people have said ‘oh are you
still working for the council Sandra?’ and I say ‘yeah I am but I work from
home now’ – ‘what do you mean you work from home?’ – ‘well I work
from home’ – ‘God, aren’t you lucky, how fantastic, what do you do?’ – ‘I
do the same as I did before, collect council tax’ – ‘how do you do it?’ - so
you have to go through all the rigmarole of explaining how it’s set up and
how it works and then they look at you ‘oh it’s great, must be great that’.
quite a few people seem envious, ‘wish we could do it’.
K - (laughs)
S - Yeah, when people know, they want to know the ins and outs the whys
and wherefores
K – I wonder if more people would like to work from home actually
S – I think so, yeah
K – Do you know that’s gone really quickly – that’s pretty much
everything I wanted to ask, other than if there’s anything you want to add
about working from home, your experiences?
S – No not really, just that I enjoy it and I’m sure that if people were
allowed to do it, cos there’s one or two in our office that can’t do it or have
been told that they’re not allowed to do it cos there’s not enough staff on. I
think there’s one or two would thoroughly enjoy it. No, I just think some
people it’ll work for and people it won’t and I’m fortunately one of those
people that it works for
K – Great, thank you for taking part and could you give me some feedback
about how you felt taking part in this project?
S – Very comfortable
K - Good
S - Very relaxed, I was a bit anxious before you arrived, wondering what
was going to go off, but no problem
K – And the camera was it…you were a bit nervous?
S – Yeah no problem, I’m not really bothered about having the camera
pointed at me and having to talk at it
K – I’ll not be broadcasting it on national telly or anything!
S – No, no problem
K - The last thing I’d like to do is look at how you’ve got the office set up
with the camera
S – Yeah no problem
K – We’re just having a look at Sandra’s working space, which is in the
entrance hall of her house, where all the coats and all the entrance bits are,
do you ever find any problems with it being this close to the front door
Sandra?
S – No, only that I can see somebody coming up the path before they
knock on the door – no I’m only kidding
K – But they can see you unfortunately, they know you’re in – and it’s nice
and easy to collect your post I should think
S – Yeah
K – So you’re right next to the kitchen as well so that must be very handy
for cups of coffee
S – Yep it is
K - And you’ve just got your plasma screen and computer and keyboard,
got your in and out drawers, and a little bit of storage space underneath
S – When I first came home working, I had me desk and me chair and
everything in the front room, and we moved the suite though, because I
didn’t have a spare room, because all this wasn’t built on, but there was a
panic on, where we were going to put the Christmas tree, so my husband
was in the middle of building this, and he got it done for Christmas and we
moved in here, and I had the idea of putting the desk in here and we
weren’t sure if the desk was too big, but it’s worked out fine actually. and
it just feels as if this now is my space, it doesn’t interfere with anybody and
the front room is back to normal as it should be and that is why I’m here,
because all me bedrooms are taken up, we haven’t got no spare bedrooms,
so I just class this as my little working office
K – Lovely, and is this ideal for you then?
S – It works out fine, yeah
K – Great thank you very much
Interview 14: Ruby

K - Could you just say your name and job title for the camera please?
R - Ruby Richardson and I'm a benefits officer
K - And what does that job involve?
R - Well it's basically, people who are on a low income or on benefits such as income support jobseekers it just gives them some help towards their rent and council tax benefit
K - How did you get into that occupation?
R - Sort of fell into it really, it's not something that I aspired to be, I worked for the council, on the council's agency, the have their own agency which not many people know about and what they tend to do is hire people to go out and work at schools as admin, and you know teaching assistants, so I applied for that and the lady who was in charge of that actually needed some cover in the office in the council offices and she hired me and I started that and I did that temporary for about 3 months and this job came up and I just applied for it and got it, it's not something I wanted to do necessarily, it was just that it came up and the pay was a lot better and it was a permanent job, so I applied for it and got it
K - Have you always done something kind of with an administration background?
R - No not really, I've done all sorts, from bar work to working in a factory, depending on what my life's been like at that time and what I've wanted out of a job
K - Sure, and you spend pretty much all your time working from home then, just with the occasional meeting in town then?
R - Training, if we've got training, go into the office for that, meetings we have regular meetings once a month, which we have to go into the office for and that's about it really just training and meetings
K - And are you happy with your job at the moment?
R - Yeah, yeah I'm a lot happier being at home than in the office
K - And have you got any kind of aims for a future career?
R - I don't know, because being at home actually - well personally I feel being at home stops you from moving up the career so to speak because you're that content with being at home and the situation that you have, you sort of think to yourself well in order for me to get me self back into the office it's got to be going some to be, you know to give you that incentive to give up what you've got, because it's not just, being at home. It's not just a job, you can, you fit your work around your life, rather than the other way, when you're in the office your life has to fit around work so to speak, so it'd have to be a very, very, either very interesting job that I'd love doing, or a very well paid job to make me even contemplate stop doing what I'm doing now, it's not the job itself it's that actual home-working experience
K - So it would be good for you if someone came along and said you can have a promotion but...
R - But still stay at home – that would be brilliant
K - (laughs)
R - Whether that would be likely to happen I don't know
K - What kind of worker would you say you are? Any thing that comes into your mind
R - In what sense, what kind of worker?
Interview 14: Ruby

K - Well I suppose some people would say 'I'm very committed', 'I'm a real go-getter' or...
R - That might have been so when I was in the office, I was very go-getter and trying to prove myself all the time, again, because you're always thinking about promotion, but since I've been at home working, you know, that's not necessarily been the case, I'm still committed to my work you know, I do still give 100% when I'm working, it's just, I don't feel that I've got to try and impress anybody, there's no bosses walking around looking and monitoring how you're working, if you nip to the toilet, how long you spend in the toilet – that's all gone really, so I don't tend to be 'go get 'em' but I am committed
K - Are you quite organised, meet deadlines and things?
R - Yes, you have to, in our role we have targets that we need to meet weekly and er, so you do have to prioritise on a day to day basis
K - And what does your career mean to you?
R - Well it used to mean quite a lot, I don't think it means quite as much to me now as it used to, I think that since I've started home-working my views on what's important has changed
K - And do you think your career's been affected by working from home?
R - Kind of already covered that, haven't we?
K - Little tiny fish, who we'll get on the camera in a bit actually, and could you tell me again the age range of your children?
R - Yes, my eldest is 14 in a couple of weeks, and I've got a middle one who's 9 and a little one who's 7.
K - And has any of them got any special needs or anything like that, need extra care?
R - No
K - Ok, so how do you arrange childcare and schooling and things?
R - Well luckily my husband works 12 hour nights on a 4 on, 4 off rota, so he takes the kids to school every day and he picks them up everyday – it's not very often I would actually take the children to school or pick them up – he does that, we sort of meet in the middle, you know we're passing ships at night really when he's working, but then we get 4 shifts, 4 days when he doesn't work at all, so we get to see a lot of each other then
K - Excellent, so how about if one of the kids was ill from school, how would you manage that?
R - Well that has happened actually, and luckily it did happen on a day when Chris wasn't working so there was no problem but if Chris was working I can actually work up to 10 hours a day or a minimum of 4 hours a day, without using any flexi or holidays, so if that was to happen and one of the children wasn't very well, I would actually just work 4 hours and I'd
work that when my husband was available to look after whichever child it was, and the rest of the time I’d just look after them myself.

K – And how about domestic work in the home, how’s that shared?
R – Well in terms of washing up my husband does it all, I’m coming across as very idle here.
K – Oh no, no
R – We have a cleaner so neither one of us does cleaning. We do have a cleaner, but pots we sort of share between ourselves. When my husband’s working I do them, if he’s not he does them, and washing I do, and that’s about it really, everything else is done by the cleaner.
K – Great. So when you had your kids were you working at the time, or did you take lots of time off?
R – No, when I had my first child Joey, he was. I was working full time and I decided when I had him that I would to take some time off and I didn’t work probably for about 4-5 years and I only just gone back into part time work when I got pregnant with Kyle, my second, and I had Kyle and then I straight went back into part time work again, and I had Keely, and I went back into part time work, and I continued to do part time work until I felt the children where at an age – well until they started school really – and then I started full time work when Keely was at nursery school.

K – And what kind of parent would you say you are?
R – A very good one
K – Excellent
R – The best – that’s what my children would say.

K – Are there any kind of words you’d use about your parenting – are you very hands on or...

R – I suppose I’m the one that disciplines the children most, but that was the same for being in the office as it is for home-working, you know it sort of – that hasn’t altered at all – I’ve always been the one that’s disciplined the children and been the one ‘Wait while your Mom... wait while I tell your Mom’.

K – What do you think you’ve learnt since becoming a parent?
R – Oh God – I don’t think you’ve got enough reel in your video to –
K – (laughs)
R – You learn so much, it’s very hard to actually put your finger on what you’ve learned – you become less selfish and less self-absorbed, sort of your children become an extension of you really, you think more of them than you do of yourself, they come first always. You do learn a bit about yourself and your own needs and personality, but I suppose that’s true of all people.

K – Do you think your role in your family’s changed since you started working from home?
R – No
K – Pretty much the same?
R – Pretty much the same.
K – Ok. And how long have you worked from home?
R – Since last September
K – So that would be...
R – June, July...
Interview 14: Ruby

K - 10 months ish, ok, and who instigated that, was it yourself asking for it or was it something that came along?

R - The council was piloting it and they wanted some volunteers to try it out, and I was actually, out of all the volunteers, there was probably 5 or 6 Benefits Officers that went for it, and out of the 5 or 6 Benefits Officers I was the one who was the most negative about the whole experience - I didn't think it'd work

K - Right, why was that then, had you heard other things?

R - No I hadn't heard anything at all – but the others that had volunteered for home-working didn't have any children or their children that they had were a lot older than mine, and I just didn't think it was going to work. I thought the kids would probably not be able to differentiate between when I'm working and when I'm not, I thought they'd be asking me for problems all the time, I thought when they were in the house bickering I wouldn't be able to switch off from it, so I expected - I came in to the home-working experience on the pilot scheme, expecting myself to be back in the office at Christmas when the pilot was over, I was most surprised to find that it was actually wonderful and it worked fantastic

K - So why did you decide to do it then if you thought it was going to be... a bit of a struggle?

R - I don't know really – I was interested in the idea of working from home but I didn't think it was going to be for me because I'd got young children, so I went on it because they need to have that perspective, from someone who's got young children.

K - Yeah

R - I mean the pilot scheme was all about whether it was going to be successful, whether productivity was going to increase, and so forth, and I felt that the pilot needed someone who was slightly negative, who didn't think it would work on it, so I did

K - And who did you discuss it with?

R - Well I discussed it with me husband, the children, and then again at work with me line manager, and that's about it really, I didn't really discuss it with anybody else

K - What was your husband's reaction when you said you were thinking about it?

R - He didn't think it would work, much in the same - well he didn't think it would work because he thought I'd stay in bed all day and I have no motivation to get up and do work but again he didn't think it'd work

K - What about your kids?

R - They couldn't wait they thought it was going to be brilliant

K - Right, cos they could have Mum on hand all the time?

R - Yeah. Just the fact that I was here, they thought was wonderful. that when they came home from school that they could pop in here and say 'Hiya, we're back, we've had a great day', give me a kiss and then go and watch telly or whatever they want to do

K - And I take it that it's been better than you thought it was going to be

R - Yeah, I wouldn't still be doing it if it wasn't, I would have stopped.

And we did have - the pilot - people who were on the pilot scheme didn't have the option, after the pilot had finished, of deciding whether they wanted to go back into the office or remain at home, whereas once the pilot
Interview 14: Ruby

was over and it was rolled out to the rest of the council, it was a situation where you did it and if you didn’t like it – tough. So I was glad that I did go on the pilot cos I might never of done it otherwise.

K – Mm. So what were – did you have any opinions of other people who teleworked, did you think they might kind of not work from them or...?

R – Not really, no, I thought it would work for everybody else who put their names down for the home-working scheme, I thought it would work for all of the people involved, because they’d either not got any children or any commitments at all other than themselves and their partner, or like I say they had got children but they were of an age where the children wouldn’t be a problem, so I didn’t expect any of the other people on the home-working scheme to have any problems anyway.

K – And now that you work from home yourself do you have any idea what a typical home-worker might be like?

R – I would imagine they’d be very much like me. Depending again on what they’ve got, I would imagine all home-workers work in the same way as I do, in so far as they prioritise what they’ve got going off in their lives that week around how much work they can do on set days, and I would imagine that’s true of all home-workers, I mean I’m only summarising because don’t know, but that’s what I’d say.

K – And how do you keep in touch with your colleagues and your clients?

R – Well like I say we have monthly training - not training days - monthly team meetings, but I’ve got a work line on my desk and I can speak or email if I’m, you know if I need to discuss anything with them.

K – Right. Have you had any issues of isolation?

R – I thought – that was another reason I didn’t think I would like home working – because I did think that I would become very isolated and to me part and parcel of being at work was the social aspect of it, and I did think that I would miss that really, really badly and I haven’t really no, I haven’t been isolated at all, I think just the advantages of being at home just totally outweigh any isolation that you may feel, I mean at the end of the day you can work from anything up to 10 hours a day to as little as 4, so if I was feeling isolated I’d perhaps have a short day and go and visit a friend.

K – Yeah so you’ve got the flexibility in that respect.

R – Yeah, yeah.

K – Do you think you’ve got more control over your work now?

R - No. I think the work is still controlled by the people in the office.

K – So that’s pretty much stayed the same.

R – I don’t think that’s changed in so far as you know. they would still send you X amounts of claims in the morning and top your tray up throughout the day, I don’t think that’s altered at all, the atmosphere’s altered because obviously you’ve not got bosses walking up and down, looking over your shoulder. but the actual amount of work and the way that that work’s given to you hasn’t changed at all.

K – Ok, and do you think that you’re a better worker now?

R – Well my productivity’s increased since being working at home.

K – Right, that’s being measured centrally is it?

R – Yes, that’s measured on a weekly basis.

K – And what was the learning curve of becoming a home-worker for you?

R – I don’t know really.
Interview 14: Ruby

K - Did you have to develop strategies to keep the kids away or...?
R - No, I mean the door, this is my office as you can see and this door's open all the time, when the children have gone to school the house is quite quiet anyway and when the children come home they instantly come in to the room, say 'hello', give me a kiss, tell me what kind of day they've had, which takes probably 5 or 10 minutes
K - So all the things they were hoping they could do -
R - They can
K - They can - oh that's good then
R - And the oldest boy, he comes in first and he'll tell me what kind of day he's had, how much he hates his teachers etc. etc., and then he'll go upstairs and get on with his home work and I don't really see him then until I've finished work, and then the children, the younger two, they come in and they say hello and what not and then they go back into the room next door and either play on the Playstation or X-box or watch television, whatever and they don't tend to bother me then really
K - So what do you think the impact's been on your family overall then, has it been quite positive?
R - I think it's a positive thing, yeah definitely a positive thing. I mean both me and me husband were quite surprised at how good it was and how it did effect, well just the relationship, we were, very much, when I was office-based, we hardly ever saw each other, whereas now we do see each other far more of each other than we did before, and the children they just think it's great, if they do need me, if there was an emergency. I'm here. It's not like they've got to phone the office, wait 25 minutes for me to get through traffic to get to them, I'm here instantly
K - And what do you think the impact on your career has been overall? It's probably something we've covered...
R - Yeah, we have, I mean I don't really, I wouldn't say that I am now a career person, I would say that I am now quite happy to stay as I am and mull along and continue what I'm doing now, the job itself isn't a very nice, I wouldn't say it's a very satisfying job but the advantages of being at home just outweigh that - like I say, I think if I was based in the office I would not be doing that job anymore, but because I'm at home it makes it doable
K - Great, so the impact on your life generally has been positive?
R - Yes, definitely positive
K - You wouldn't change anything then, you can't ever see yourself going back to traditional work?
R - I can't see myself ever going back into an office, no. What I have thought about is becoming self-employed and working for myself
K - Right
R - From home - that has crossed my mind I have to say. Doing something that I enjoyed and being at home, I don't think you could get better than that
K - So overall then do you think that telework or working from home is an effective way for parents to reconcile work and family?
R - That depends on the parent. I would say, definitely. I mean a lot of parents actually go to work to get away from their children and especially Moms I think tend to need that time away from their husbands and their
children to be their selves, and obviously in their situation I wouldn’t advise home-working.

K – And on to these identity questions then. My overall research question is ‘how does working from home impact upon the professional and parental identity of men and women?’ Do you have any idea what the findings might be, or what you think for yourself?

R – Well I think it becomes more morphed if you like. It’s not two separate identities anymore really, you’re not ‘work Ruby’ and ‘home Mom’. It sort of just combines the two, in fact I would say it probably you become more of a… you’re a Mom more than a worker really, and the work sort of fits in around everything else you’ve got to do which as a parent myself I think that’s how it should be really, you know the work should fit around your family.

K – I’m also interviewing men, I was just wondering if you could comment on what you think...

R – I should imagine the men feel the same as the women in so far as they, some people they need to go to work, I think it depends again on how strong a personality a person has got, male or female. If someone has not got a very strong personality and they sort of ‘Mom’ all the time then they probably would need to go out to work and be that person, I personally don’t feel as if I need that. I think I’m quite a strong character and, you know, when people come round to see me whether it be friends or if someone from work comes, I don’t think I’ve changed at all from when I was in the office to now, personality wise I’m still as strong and independent as I was in the office.

K – So it’s not changed how you think about yourself?

R – No, not at all.

K – I think we’ve covered this again, how would you categorise yourself firstly as a Mum or as a Benefits Officer

R – I would categorise myself as a Mom first and a Benefits Officer second, but can I just say I would have said that even if you’d asked me when I was office-based,

K – Sure, sure.

R – I would have still been a Mom first and a Benefits Officer second, because you prioritise with what’s important in your life and obviously my family are more important than any work, you work because you have to, to support and give privileges and treats if you like to your family. If you didn’t get paid nobody would work so obviously I think that’s true of everybody. anybody who says that they put their career first and their a career person because they love their job, I don’t think that’s true, because if they didn’t get paid for it then would they still be doing it?

K – Absolutely, and has it changed how your kids see you and think about you?

R – I don’t think it’s changed how they see me. But I think that they’re glad because I’m there instantly, like I say. When they come home from school, I think they’re happier because I’m at home. They sort of come home from school and they might be 2 or 3 hours before I come home.

K – How about other people, perhaps how your husband thinks about you?

R – I don’t know. I think he’s quite happy as well because we do get to do things. I plan my week’s work around whatever we’ve got on, so if we
Interview 14: Ruby

want to go to the pub for a pub lunch then we can do, whereas if I was office based I’d have been watching the clock thinking ‘I’ve got to get back, I’ve got to get back’ and it spoils the whole idea of going for a nice romantic pub lunch, you know that’s spoiled totally if you’re time watching all the time

K – How about how other people see you generally, knowing that you work from home?

R – Other people in terms of friends and family like me Mom, I think they struggle, they don’t see that I... they sort of think ‘oh she’s at home, I can go round and see her whenever I want and I can call whenever I want’ and they don’t realise that I still have that work to do, so I do have to have some boundaries there and you know if friends or me Mom is on the phone I have to say ‘I’ve got to go, I’ve got work to do and I’ll call you when I’ve finished’ and I do have boundaries there, but I don’t think it’s altered their perception of me at all

K – That’s pretty much it, I was just wondering if there was anything at all that you wanted to add about your experience of home-working?

R – I would suggest that if anybody got the opportunity to try it then do so, because as I said there was nobody on the pilot scheme as negative as I was, I definitely didn’t think that people with young children could work from home, I just thought that the mother in you would sort of get in the way if you like, when you hear your children bickering, you’d have to sort of stop what you were doing and go in and sort it out but that doesn’t actually happen, me husband, who would do that if I was office-based, still does it now, so I would suggest that if people could try it to see if they like it to do so, yeah definitely

K – Great. What I’m going to do next then if this is ok, is scan round the office with the camera.

R – Yeah no problem

K - So we’re in a downstairs room which is just off the front door and was it specifically designed as an office this room?

R – No this was originally my dining room, and we actually decided we’d make it more of a sit in movie type room, and we had our home PC in here so it just seemed to be the logical place to put the work PC

K – Right. And is this ideal do you think, or would there be any other things you would like do to get it perfect for you?

R - I think it’s ideal for me, em, because I think it’s quite a relaxing room. I don’t think it’s fussy, I don’t think there’s that many distractions for you in here. I don’t know I suppose if it was a bit bigger that might be slightly better. cos the room’s slightly small now we’ve got 2 workstations in, so now it is quite small, so if I could make the room bigger that would probably be the only thing I would change

K – Could you finally then give me some feedback about how you felt taking part in this project? – Did you mind awfully having me...?

R – No I don’t mind at all – bit worried about how I’m going to look on camera but that’s about it

K – I can play some back if you like

(Looking around the room)

K – So Ruby’s sitting on what looks like a lovely comfy settee

R – It is lovely and comfy
Interview 14: Ruby

K - With a Winnie the Pooh throw over on there, got all your... is it Buffy and Angel?
R – I’m a big Buffy and Angel fan, I meet all the cast
K – Oh fantastic
R – I’ve actually met most of them
K – Right. So, you’ve got the action figures, collectibles, in the corner in a glass cabinet there as well - fab, and then all the prints
R – All that bumph that you can see down there is all more signed pictures and autographs waiting to be framed and go up
K – Brilliant
R - I’ve got another four of these to do
K – Excellent, so you make these yourself with all the signatures and stuff
R – Yeah I do
K – Fantastic
R - I’ve got another 4 of them to do
K – So, then you’ve got like a fireplace, which... got some nice dried flowers, some pictures of the family and you meeting people from Buffy and stuff?
R – No they’re all friends
K – Ah right they’re friends. right. lovely. Little goldfish and this is like the movie area with the huge... screen telly, all your videos which you’ve collected, ok, is that a few pictures of family next to the telly as well?
R – Yeah it’s the children
K – Then you’ve got this lovely big black leather chair that I was sitting it – has your office given you equipment or is that something you bought yourself?
R – The council’s provided the desk, this desk, this chair and the PC and so forth. As you can see my workstation, well both of them are quite cluttered actually
K – So this one I’m looking at now is like your home PC
R – That’s the home station yes
K – We don’t need to look at that too much, just get a bit of an impression, then you move round and you’ve actually got your work station, office PC as well there then, and that’s got just your worky things on
R – It’s actually just exactly the same as it was in the office
K- Great, pictures of McFly, boybands
R – Jonathan from G4, me children and me husband
K – Excellent, all the great loves of your life then – fab. And I think that’s all I need then, I shall turn it off then.