Emma Russell in The Lawyer: 'Women and the Pandemic: Having a Baby During COVID Made me Look Afresh at the Challenges Law's Mums Face'

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Having a baby inevitably has a significant impact on your career as a woman, regardless of what stage in your career you are at, whether it's your first, second or fifth child, whether you are emailing clients on the ward following delivery or not returning to work for another 12 months. Equally, COVID-19 has ushered in a "new normal" forcing us all to re-evaluate how best to protect our own and our families' wellbeing while continuing to provide financially.

For me, experiencing both these extraordinary events at once represents a chance to look afresh at some major challenges that we have been grappling with as a society for too long. Namely what a good work/life balance looks like and how to deliver flexibility that works for employers and working mums. I have been grappling with this since I had my first baby (now 11).

It is important we talk about working mums specifically, not working parents in general. Though there is clearly cross-over, the issues working dads face are not the same, and we do both mums and dads a disservice by treating them as though they are. The key to solving workplace inequalities is to address the issues which challenge women, recognising that a part of this is the role men play in the household and as parents.

My daughter arrived a month into the first lockdown. As the only UK partner in a small and flourishing practice, I felt that for myself and my team I needed to carry on working in some form during my maternity leave (unofficially four months) and maintain client work shortly after my daughter was born. This would have been challenging without COVID-19, but the shift to working from home has created new positives as well as negatives.

Excerpted from *The Lawyer*. To read the full article, click here.

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