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# Having a **BABY** *and* **WORKING** from home during **COVID**

For most of us, the pandemic has been a time of change. Many switched to working from home with little or no notice; we were mandated to stay inside for most of the day and could not see the friends and family we rely on for support. But for three of the attorneys at McKinney, Bancroft & Hughes, there was an extra challenge in the form of a new baby.

*Erin M Hill, Andrew C D Smith and Kimberley A Rolle explain what it was like to welcome a new addition to the family while living and working through a pandemic.*

## **Kimberley A Rolle**

For Kimberley Rolle, the distraction of working at home with a baby was doubled, with twin boys Jaylen and Jayden born in October 2020.

Now that she's back at work, Kimberley attempts to separate her work and home life. She has assistance with childcare and in order to maintain focus, is learning to let them deal with the situation if the babies cry, rather than going to see what is happening.

The benefits of working from home include saving the commute time, which extra time she makes sure that she uses wisely, and being able to easily check on the babies during breaks.

Kimberley has started going back into the office once or twice a week, but otherwise continues to work at home. She says, 'At McKinney we like to say we're a family, we're a work family, and at the height of the pandemic we were able to demonstrate this by accommodating the specific needs that everyone had, including those with newborns.'

Her tip for those who may soon be working from home and juggling their job with childcare is not to be too hard on yourself. 'It's not easy. It's an adjustment to work from home and it's an adjustment to be a working parent. You have to acknowledge the changes and find your new stride.'

*Kimberley A Rolle is a partner of the firm whose expertise is primarily focused on commercial law, real estate and corporate law. She is Chair of the firm's Corporate and Commercial Transaction practice group and Vice Chair of the Real Estate and Immigration practice groups. She has also served as Director of the Securities Commission of The Bahamas and as a member of the Disciplinary Committee of the Bahamas Real Estate Association. Email: karolle@mckinney.com.bs.*



## Erin M Hill

Erin's son Adam was born in May, 2020 with her husband on video call for the birth, as mothers-to-be were required to go through labour and delivery alone at that point. While it wasn't what either of them had expected in the previous months, and wearing a mask during the whole process was difficult, Erin says that her medical team were wonderful. 'The hospital staff, the doctors, the midwives, the nurses, the patient care technicians, they were all fabulous. They all did a great job of keeping everybody as safe as possible.'

When they took Adam home the next day, they didn't go home to the usual throng of friends, aunts, siblings and cousins that might normally have been coming around to help out and hold the baby for a while so that she could have a moment to herself. Lockdowns meant that they were alone for the months that followed, with the exception of an occasional visit from her parents.

When Erin's maternity leave ended, they found an in-home carer to look after Adam while she returned to work. With homeworking still compulsory, Erin found benefits in being around more. While she still has a strict routine, she is able to spend her lunch breaks with her baby. She has also made sure that his routine means he can stay up a little later in the evenings to spend time with her and her husband, who is also an attorney.

The initial transition to home working was made easier by the fact that the firm had made a big push in previous years to ensure that as much work as possible could be done electronically. This meant that the switch to being at home at the start of lockdown was as smooth as it could have been.

The firm have also been particularly understanding of the situation. 'They have been great, I can't stress that enough. It's been a blessing working for them while having a baby during the pandemic. I felt as though my employer understood that the safety and wellbeing of my baby was the most important thing to me. Even though the country has started to open up, I haven't felt pressured to go back right away. If there is something that I can do virtually, I am allowed to do it virtually.'

'I have always felt absolutely supported. They check in all the time. It's a great working environment and it's refreshing to work for an employer who you feel genuinely cares.'

Her tips for working attorneys who are expecting babies are firstly to put as much in order as you can before you leave. She created a master schedule of all of her files and their status before giving different attorneys responsibility for them and introducing them to her clients. This meant that during her maternity leave, although the emails still came in, she was confident that they were being handled and that she wouldn't have to work during such a sacred time.

Once the baby is born, Erin advocates creating a schedule that works for you. She works well at night, so she goes back to work once Adam is asleep to finish the day's tasks.

*Erin M Hill is an associate of the firm well-versed in a range of practice areas, including banking and finance, corporate and commercial litigation, and trusts/private client litigation. She is an Affiliate Member of STEP Bahamas. Erin is fluent in Spanish which is vital to assist with clients from Spanish speaking countries. She is also an ADRgroup Accredited Civil and Commercial Mediator. Email: emhill@mckinney.com.bs.*

## Andrew C.D. Smith

Andrew's son, also named Andrew, was born in October 2019. Despite the restrictions of the pandemic, Andrew has felt blessed to spend time with his baby.

'It's distracting, which is good and bad. I love to play with my son. I love to see what he's up to, I love to see his mind at work, I love to see him around the house.'

'I have been blessed to have a newborn during the pandemic because it has afforded me an opportunity to spend time with him. My mother was not afforded that opportunity. She had to go to work in order to pay the bills and there was no flexibility with employers, whereas I can work from home. Now, I can watch my son grow, I can watch my son develop. I can spend time with him throughout the course of the day. I can just walk out of my study and we can do lunch together.'

'I have enjoyed it, but at the same time, you have to also keep in the back of your mind, yes, you're at home, but you have to remain working. You have to keep that work balance and maintain productivity and focus.'

Going forward, Andrew thinks that a hybrid of working in the office with some time at home would be great.

He has recently started going into the office once or twice a week when he needs to, such as for virtual hearings. He can use the office interface for the hearing and if he is second chair, he can be face to face with the senior lawyer, allowing easier collaboration.

He says that the firm has been very flexible and has always had a family approach since he started there. 'They are a family firm and they appreciate that family is important. There isn't a mechanical work environment. Everybody is concerned about your wellbeing and the wellbeing of your family and concerned about the growth of your family. There is a blend of interest in your professional growth and in your family life. That's been very important.'

His advice for attorneys who might be expecting a baby and will be looking to juggle their lives is to remain cognizant of the fact that there has to be a divide. He found it all too easy to simply keep working as he was no longer leaving the office at the end of the day. He recommends having a divide and keeping a structure between home and work life.

*Andrew C D Smith is an associate at McKinney, Bancroft and Hughes specialising in matters relating to financial services as well as commercial law and litigation. His experience makes him an authority on issues relating to the Commercial Entities (Substance Requirements) Act. Andrew also makes time to engage with the local community and is a member of Phi Beta Sigma, a civic organisation focused on community service initiatives. Email: acdsmith@mckinney.com.bs.*

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