

what the  
children  
really think...

# Introduction

Many mothers who work feel guilty and this can affect their working lives and their careers. Female participation rates in the workforce in countries such as the UK and US are now around 70%, which means there are a lot of guilty mothers. And there is an extensive literature exploring the impact of the working mother on her family.

But little has been written from the child's perspective. This project, My Mother Worked, is a small step to address this gap. We asked the children (age group 16–23) of some of our staff to tell us their experience of having a mother who worked and what advice they would pass on to the children of other mothers who work.

Two things emerge very clearly from their stories. First, they are all very proud of their mothers and of having had a mother who worked; and second, they all feel they benefitted from having a mother who worked. It is a joy to read what they say.

We hope that these accounts – from the children of mothers who work at Imperial – will help to assuage any feelings of guilt working mothers at the College might have. We hope they will make **all** our working mothers realise how proud their work will make their children feel.

Our thanks to the mothers and to the children who agreed to take part in this project – and my thanks to Professor Dot Griffiths, former Provost's Envoy for Gender Equality, who did so much to bring this work to fruition.



**Professor Stephen Curry**  
Assistant Provost  
(Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion)



Mother:

Professor Ann Muggeridge

Professor of Petroleum

Engineering, Department of

Earth Science and Engineering

Ann joined Imperial in 1995 six months after her son was born, following a career in industry with BP and SSI (UK) Ltd. In 1998 she started working 3 days a week following the birth of her daughter, returning full time in 2011. Her research is focused on improving oil recovery and other aspects of flow in porous media.



## Daughter: Becky Muggeridge, Masters Student

My mother's incredibly good at explaining what she does in terms that other people can understand, so from a very young age I knew she was involved in what she called "getting oil out of the ground". She came to my primary school to give a talk on it and I remember demonstrations with Coke bottles and straws, something that I'm sure inspired the next generation of scientists within my class.

Looking back, perhaps I did spend more time with childminders compared to other children, but I never thought of that as a negative thing. Indeed, it gave me the opportunity to make new friends and broaden my social experiences. I saw my mother being independent and I think I always looked up to her in that regard. Both my parents were busy people but the fact that my mother was there at the start and end of every day – eating breakfast with us, getting us off to school and being there to say goodnight – was important to me.

If I could say anything to a child whose mother was going to work full time, it would be: don't worry, when you're older you'll understand how incredible it is to be successful in a career whilst also having a family and it might even inspire you to work just as hard. I really admire her for what she has achieved, and on a more practical note, I was able to see her work and know what it means to undertake research, as well as being able to ask her for advice regarding my own research at undergraduate and postgraduate level.

Learning from her is what inspired me to continue my education to a master's level. I am now studying Reproductive Science and Women's Health at UCL and enjoy engaging in conversations with my mother about gender inequalities. Even during my years out of education, I was able to ask her for advice when deciding between industry, research and other options. If I can be even half as successful as my mother whilst supporting a family, I know I will have done something right.

**“I really admire her for what she has achieved, and on a more practical note, I was able to see her work and know what it means to undertake research.”**



Mother:

Professor Lesley Cohen

Professor of Solid state Physics  
and Consul for the Faculty of  
Natural Sciences

Lesley joined Imperial College in 1991 as a post-doctoral researcher, going on to win a Royal Society University Research Fellowship in 1993. She became a professor in 2006 and head of Experimental Solid State Physics (over a hundred and twenty academics, post docs and PhD students) 2008–2014, and a Consul for the Faculty of Natural Sciences in 2016. She gave birth to Georgina in 1998.



## Daughter: Georgina Alford, Sixth Form Student at time of writing, now a civil servant with the Scottish Government

Because I went to the College nursery from a really young age, I spent a lot of time in my mother's office, and in the Science Museum. While I knew she was working in science, I never got a clear explanation of what she was doing. She said it was too complicated to explain, which was probably true! Because of the nursery's connection to Imperial, a lot of the other kids I grew up with had parents who were also scientists, so it wasn't until I went to primary school that I needed an explanation to tell my friends. To this day, the easiest answer is that mum and dad are both scientists, and then if I have to go further, it's solid state physics.

Over time, my view of what she does has changed. When I was younger I was more aware that she just worked incredibly hard and I have a memory of asking her why I didn't have any brothers and sisters, and why I went to nursery aged 6 months – unlike my cousins. Now I simply have the most enormous respect for what she's doing and what she's achieved. It's incredible how

much she does and the way she manages to balance everything. She's taught me how to be independent and stand on my own two feet, a really important life lesson.

If I were talking to a young child, I would say that for one thing, it makes you independent. If they were worried, I would just tell them to talk it through with their mother and as they get older they will really start to see her as a role model – and begin to see the real benefits of having your parents out a lot of the time! My mother has given me a real inspiration in how I want to live my life, and it's particularly important for boys to see their mothers working – it makes for a much better attitude towards women.

But my main theme would be that your mother's doing what she does out of love for you and love for her work: she wants a career but she also wants to provide.

**“Your mother's doing what she does out of love for you and love for her work: she wants a career but she also wants to provide.”**



Georgina Alford



Mother:  
Anusha Sri-Pathmanathan  
Department Operations Manager

Anusha joined Imperial in 2002 from her role as Operations Manager at ASN Management Services – with her sons aged 11 and 9, she was looking for more flexibility and time at home. Starting as a Finance Clerk and working 5 days a week, she quickly realised that she would need to commit more fully and rose to Departmental Administrator and then to her current position in 2007.



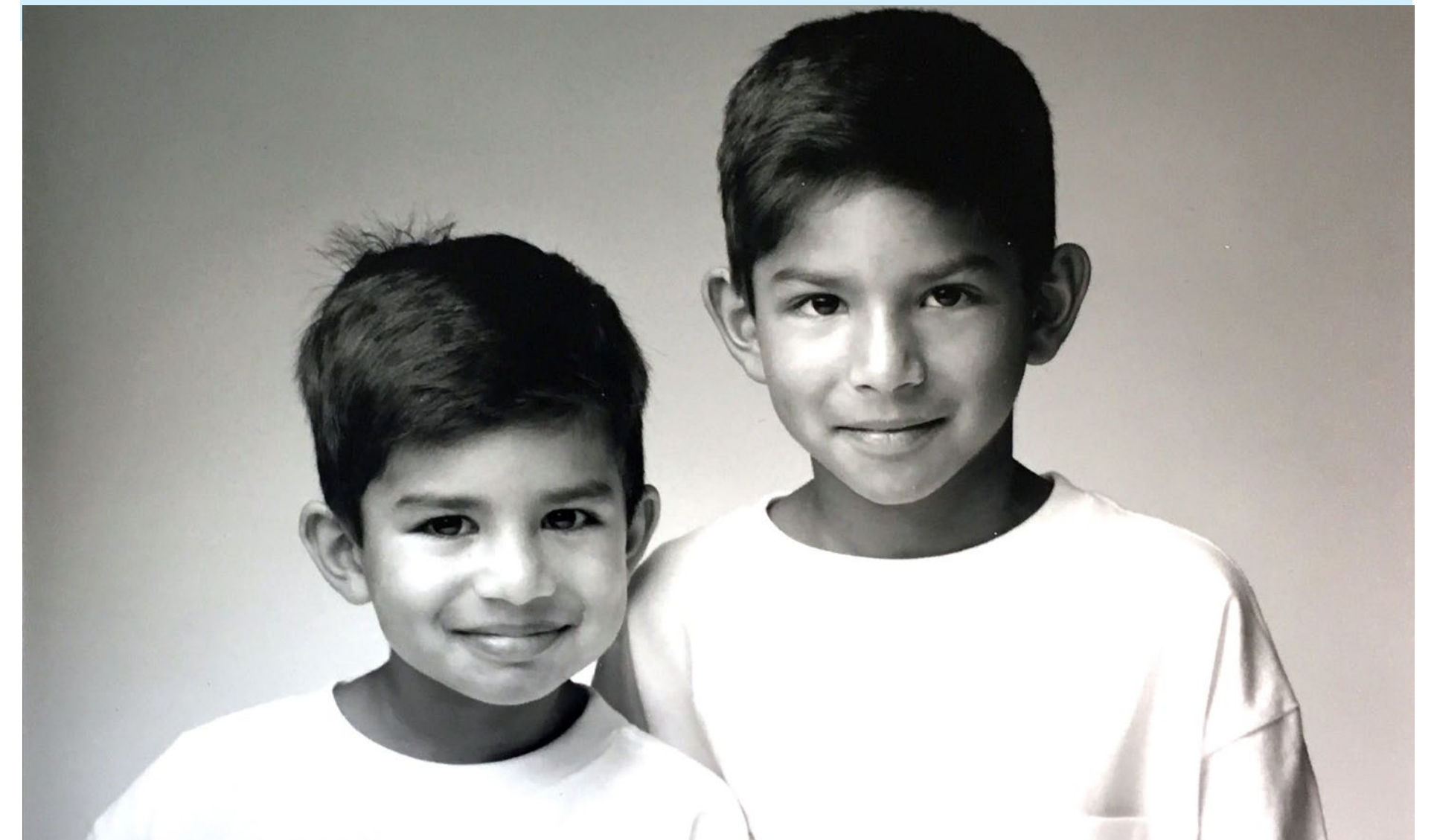
## Son: Nyran Sri-Pathmanathan, Graduate Banking Trainee

I would have been in about Year 4 when my mother started working but at the time I probably wasn't too aware of what she was doing. I know now she's an Operations Manager and dealing with a huge variety of different matters, and I think she's worked her way up.

If I'm being honest, when she started working I probably found it a bit annoying – just little things like not getting lifts when I wanted them and things like that. On the other hand, I totally accept that she had to work to earn a living and provide for me. People have to work and she would always make proper arrangements with other mums. As I got older, my view changed. Because my mother was out, I became more independent. If I wanted something done, I did it myself. A lot of my friends were really reliant on other people long after I was doing things on my own.

If I was talking to a child who was in my situation back then, I'd tell them that sometimes their mother might be home a bit late, sometimes they might have to make alternative arrangements or go to one of their friend's houses but there's nothing to worry about. I wasn't bothered by it at all, really. Perhaps I was lucky to have a good family network around – my grandmother helped out massively and was there when we got back from school so I always had a sense of continuity – but on balance, I think having a working mum is a good thing.

**“A lot of my friends were really reliant on other people long after I was doing things on my own.”**



Nyran (left) and his brother, Shaan





Mother:

Julia Easton

Technical Operation & Safety  
Manager, Department of  
Mechanical Engineering

Julia joined Imperial College in 2012 as Faculty Safety Manager in the Faculty of Natural Sciences where she primarily managed Health and Safety in the Departments of Physics and Mathematics. She moved to the Department of Mechanical Engineering in 2016 to take up her present position. Prior to working at Imperial she worked for the Science and Technology Facilities Council initially on the ATLAS project and latterly in an operational role.



## Daughter: Iona Easton, Senior Solicitor (Corporate and Banking)

My mum's background is in mechanical engineering, with a research focus – when I was growing up she worked on the Large Hadron Collider at CERN and on several projects at Rutherford Appleton Laboratories. It's only latterly she has moved into services and support at Imperial, when I was heading off to university to study law. If her current position seems a little less exciting than what she was doing before, this is outweighed by the overall impression we get of her current role and working environment now – Imperial seems to be a very positive working environment, and for us, if she's happy and finds fulfilment in the work she does there, then we are happy and incredibly supportive of that. Personally, I have also found it useful as I managed to use it as my first stepping stone for my career, gaining work experience at Imperial focusing on health and safety law whilst doing my undergraduate degree, which I found invaluable for my subsequent applications post-university.

She has always talked about her work at home, which I feel has had a very positive impact on my siblings and I. We have always been struck by the sense that she's interested in what she's doing and that she finds it stimulating. Consequently I have grown up with an engrained sense of purpose, and it has been instilled in me that there's a lot to be gained from having a career.

As a direct result of this, my siblings and I have always thought that firstly, to have that role is really good for her, and secondly that working was something we absolutely wanted to do ourselves. As a child you want to emulate your parents, so initially my desire to forge my own career was probably largely because of that, and whilst as I got older my particular career choice became more personal (I soon realised my strengths definitely did not lie with the sciences), the same work ethic and desire for success in a professional capacity remained.

As someone who is now also starting to consider what my career path might be, whether I will have children and if so, at what stage I would have them, I think it has been tremendously valuable to see my mother juggling work and three children throughout my life – it has given me realistic expectations of what I could expect or hope to achieve in that regard, and certainly means that I do not view motherhood and a career as an 'either/or' scenario, which does still seem to be a prevalent opinion.

Continue reading Iona's story . . .

## Daughter: Iona Easton, Senior Solicitor (Corporate and Banking)

If I were talking to a child whose mother was starting work, I would want to impress upon them that it could be a different experience of childhood from their peers, and it's quite understandable if they have fears and concerns, as they may well see less of her or occasionally feel like they don't quite have the attention from her that they would like. But I would emphasise that this does not have to be a bad thing. I was much more independent than my friends, and took on a lot more responsibility for myself - I was always happy to do things myself, and used to make sure I had done everything I needed to do efficiently (such as my homework) so that when my mum was around, I could spend time with her.

I also found that a knock-on effect of the time pressures on our time together was that we both appreciated the time we spent with each other more. My mum would put a lot of time and thought into this – even if it was just setting up fun science experiments for us at home. It's a paradox: if you're around people the whole time, you don't always notice or appreciate them as much. If you see them less, you make sure the time you spend together is richer.

**“Consequently I have grown up with an engrained sense of purpose, and it has been instilled in me that there's a lot to be gained from having a career.”**



Julia with her family after the 10k Race for Life which she ran with the Imperial College Group



**Mother:**  
**Darakshan Khan**  
Resources Manager,  
Faculty of Engineering

Darakshan joined Imperial in 1991 as an Administrator, before taking up the role Resources Administrator. She has been in her current role since 2005. She has attended many personal development courses and taken part in the IMPACT scheme, a talent development programme for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees. Darakshan is also one of the co-chairs of the Equality, Diversity & Culture Committee (EDCC) in the Department of Materials.



## Daughter: Sumayyah Khan, Sales Advisor at For Art's Sake

Growing up, I did not understand why my mum came home so late or why she works so hard and long hours – now that I am older, I realise that she was working to provide for our family and of our future.

My mum has been working for Imperial College, London since I was only 18 months old, she has been working so hard all her life and now I realise that it is because she is providing us with chances and opportunities to experience the best from life and work hard to get what you want from it. I didn't understand what my mum actually did for a living when I was younger because all I knew was that she had to work to provide for us and now that I am older, I realise that I couldn't have been where I am now if it weren't for the commitment and the

opportunities she has had at Imperial College and the opportunities that opened up with my mum being knowledgeable about the working life and people management.

As a young adult now, joining the workforce for the first time, I see how hard people work to provide for themselves and their loved ones, for better and happier lifestyle for more opportunities than they had themselves. I feel grateful to my mum for working at a level that she does and for giving my brother and I a life full of opportunities and experiences that we could not forget. There are few people like us that are in the position that my mum is in, and I am grateful that she has given us this opportunity to live through it to the fullest – which is why I feel a bit more independent.

Also, I feel more grateful by the fact that my mum is working to increase awareness for minority employees that can increase personal developments across many minority groups. She is an advocate for equal opportunity and diversity in the work force. I try to help my mum as much as I can; via doing things for her around the house so she doesn't have to do it when she's at home, so she can simply relax.

## Daughter: Sumayyah Khan, Sales Advisor at For Art's Sake

If I could give some advice to children now, whose mother is working full time at Imperial College London, I would say that when they are older, they will understand much better about why their mum works so diligently and what it takes to carry a career like this and why it is important. I am grateful for what she has achieved

throughout her career. She is a role model for women at work and she has inspired both my brother and I as well as my young cousins and have taught us to be independent and to create our future with the same diligence and commitment. My brother and I realise that our mum is an inspiration of how we want your life to be.



Sumayyah Khan



Mother:

Louise Lindsay

Director of Safeguarding,  
Secretary to Operations  
Committee

Louise has worked for the College for more than 30 years, starting work as an HR Administrator just before her 21st birthday in 1989. Following the arrival of her two sons in 1998 and 2000 Louise moved to a policy and project role to accommodate health problems for her younger son. Louise was appointed Director of HR in 2009 and moved to a part-time role as Director of Safeguarding in 2020. Louise also is Chair of the SAUL Pension Scheme and sits as a lay-member hearing cases in the Employment Tribunals.



## Son: Jordan Lindsay, Automation Operator in West End Theatre – currently working on Harry Potter and the Cursed Child Interview given aged 19. Now aged 24.

When I was a lot younger, I did not really understand my mum's role at Imperial – I just knew that she worked in a building that had a free hot chocolate machine! It was probably when she got promoted that I started asking what she did, and most of the time the answer was either "human resources" or "it's too complicated for you to understand". She was probably right, as even now I still barely understand what the Director of Human Resources actually does.

Talking to my mother about her work, I would say that I'm thoroughly impressed with her and that I can't believe she managed to work so hard at work and then had to deal with me and my younger brother when she got home! Along with the commute she did every day, I really don't know how she did it. So this is an opportunity to say: well done, you did an amazing job!

Talking from my own experience, I'd say to a child in the same position that you may have to accept that sometimes your parents can't do everything for you as they have probably worked very hard themselves during the day. Equally, if they are still coming home and helping you, let them know that you are thankful. I am currently living in London in halls of residence (my first time living away from home and family) and this has shown me even more how much my mum did for me at home, even with her full time job.

**"I can't believe she managed to work so hard at work and then had to deal with me and my younger brother when she got home!"**



Jordan Lindsay





## Son: Charlie Lindsay, Undergraduate Student Interview given as sixth form student aged 17. Now aged 21.

For as long as I remember my mother has been working in Human Resources and I clearly remember the day in which she was promoted to Head of HR.

Even though she was working I didn't feel ignored, and if I had a problem with my experiences I would be comfortable enough to tell her about it. I had childminders for quite a long period of time, but as far as I can remember that was never a problem.

In my eyes, having a mother who works isn't even an issue, so I genuinely can't think of anything to say to someone in my position, and as a child whose mother has always worked, I can't say whether one life is better than the other.

“Even though she was working I didn't feel ignored, and if I had a problem with my experiences I would be comfortable enough to tell her about it.”



Charlie Lindsay



Mother:  
Afrey Edes  
Head of Faculty Services,  
Business School

Afrey joined the Business School after working in retail and business. In the course of her 21 years at Imperial she became the mother of two daughters, now sixteen and eighteen. Her role involves responsibility for Space Planning, Facilities and Operational ICT, and although her daughters are teenagers they still need her support and guidance so the juggling act isn't over yet!



## Daughter: Ellie Edes, Nurse

For as long as I can remember my Mum has always worked, I believe she went back to work after maternity leave when I was six months old. This meant that after school I stayed with a childminder who further became my Godmother and a large positive influence on my childhood; the result of spending time out of home after school as a shy child, I believe, allowed me to become progressively more comfortable and confident communicating independently with both adults and children of different ages.

Although my Mum has always had a demanding job role, I have always felt as though my sister and I were and still are her top priority. She never missed any important occasions such as sports days, school plays,

appointments and just being a general 24/7 superwoman parent. Her hard work and passion for her job all contributed to motivate me to pursue further education, to work in a challenging sector and to be comfortable as a young woman to prioritise my job and study.

My message to a child with a full-time working Mother would be: although sometimes you may feel envious of the children who's Mum can drop and pick them up from school and has the time to make star shapes out of sandwiches... your Mum loves you and is displaying an amazing and positive role model for your future self. Your Mum is working to financially support the family and because she enjoys challenging her brain and making a difference!



Ellie with her mother



## Daughter: Molly Edes, University Student

Having a mother who is the manager of a team at Imperial College has always inspired me to believe I can achieve anything I want to; my whole life I have always told people my mother is my role model because she works hard and always made it look easy (I also always thought she was so cool because she was a manager!). Although my mother had a lot of responsibilities at work, she has always been present in my life and never failed to attend a school play, a sports day, a school trip or even my university interviews and open days. I even remember my mum sitting with me all evening helping me to complete homework for school and never complaining! I don't think I realised how hard that must be until I got older and had to try to juggle things in my own life.

My mother has always included my sister and me into her working life and I remember going in to work with her during summer holidays

and days off school and loving it! The people my mother worked with have known me my whole life and have become like second family to both my mother and my sister. Also, seeing my mother in her work environment and witnessing how happy she was has given me a positive outlook on working life. Although my mother was not able to pick me up from school, I used to love going back to my childminders house and playing with my friends and I will never see it as a bad part of my childhood. It was a positive experience.

If I could talk to a child who is in the same position as I was, I would tell them their mother is working hard for them and is still there for them, and it will not have a bad effect on their life. I have grown up to appreciate my mother more and more for juggling all of her responsibilities for the benefit of our family.



Molly (left) with her sister and mother



Mother:

Julia Gorelik

Professor of Cellular Biophysics,  
within the Cardiovascular Science  
Division at the National Heart  
and Lung Institute, Imperial  
College London

Julia works on the interface between biophysics and cardiovascular Research. She has a long-standing interest in the heart, which led her to develop Scanning Ion Conductance Microscopy (SICM) to measure contraction, rhythm and calcium dynamics of heart muscle cells simultaneously. In 2010, she was awarded an Imperial College Research Excellence Award.



## Daughter: Vera Diakonov, University Student

My mother, Professor Julia Gorelik, is a Professor of Biophysics at Imperial. While I was a child I did not see her very much because she was always working, trying to build a good career. But I do remember when I was very small, probably 6 or 7, I used to go to her laboratory and look at the microscopes and interesting machines. I used to have a lot of fun there, which is probably why I am interested in science now.

To a child who has a mother working in science I would say this: although your mother may not see you so much, she loves you and is working hard to try and make a difference in the world. Your mum is also very inspirational because she is representing women in science and is building a pathway for young children to do science in the future, especially young girls. I hope to go into medicine in the future, and I am sure this is partly due to my mother's work in science.

**“Your mum is also very inspirational because she is representing women in science and is building a pathway for young children to do science in the future, especially young girls.”**



Vera Diakonov



Mother:  
Professor Emma McCoy  
Vice-Provost (Education and  
Student Experience)

Emma's first role at Imperial, in 1994, was a Research Associate working on Time Series Analysis and she is currently a Professor of Statistics working on Causal Inference in Transport Studies. Actively involved in education, Emma is a member of the Royal Society's Advisory Committee on Mathematics Education.



## Daughter: Ellie Pollard, Sixth Form Student

At primary school I always really liked maths and was incredibly proud that my mother was a maths lecturer at Imperial College. Before that I was at the Imperial nursery school and a lot of my best friends date back to that time. My mum used to drop me and my brothers off in the morning, and my primary school was just around the corner. In the summers we went to the Science Museum and Hyde Park.

I think it's really great that my mother worked. I want to work when I have kids and because of her, I can see there is no difficulty in doing what you really love and having kids. It's not an either/or. I'm really proud of her and what she's done – she's a professor now and has set a brilliant example in finding the right balance between home life and working. Obviously I had friends who had mums that picked them up from school, but I never noticed a difference.

When I see my parents I make sure it's quality time – being a good parent does not depend on how much time you spend with your children. I think it may have made me more independent and I certainly appreciate my mother – one of my friends says she sees her mother too much!

It's hard to know what to say to a child in my position because I never knew any different. I'd say that they shouldn't worry. Their mum is always going to be there for them, they'll have more time to spend with their friends and after school clubs are great.

My mother is my role model. Clearly, there are far more male mathematicians than female ones at Imperial and she definitely helped me believe I could do whatever I wanted, which is industrial and product design. It would be great to see more women in STEM subjects.

“I want to work when I have kids and because of her, I can see there is no difficulty in doing what you really love and having kids. It's not an either/or.”



Ellie Pollard





Mother:  
Chrissy Stevens

Senior Research Support Officer  
to the SKF UTC in Tribology, the  
Shell UTC in Fuels and Lubricants  
and the Tribology Group, Mech  
Eng. Dept, Faculty of Engineering

Chrissy joined Imperial in August 1984 as a Finance Clerk in  
Finance (Cash Office) and then moved to her current role in  
January 1987 as Secretary to Head of Tribology Group. She has  
stayed in the role 35 years!



## Daughter: Lauren Stevens, Senior Treasurer at EY

I always knew that my mother worked at Imperial as a professor's PA because I was always quite involved. My granddad, auntie and cousin also worked there, and I went to the nursery so it was always something I knew about. In fact, I know mum's boss quite well – she's worked there for thirty years now for the same man. I loved the nursery and even when I was at primary school, I went to their play schemes in the holidays – I remember the trips to the Science and Natural History Museum. Some of the other children's parents worked with my mum at the College, so it was like a club.

If I were to talk to my mother about her work, I'd tell her that I thought it was a good thing. She had to pay the bills, so she had to go to work. And it instilled values and morals into me: I know that going to work is positive and allows you to provide for your family. It's also

given me an incentive to work and do well for myself. So my experience has shown me that you don't have to choose between being a good mother and having a good career – at the end of the day, you can't be a good mum without providing.

If I were going to talk to a child whose mother was going to start working, I would tell them that their mother is doing it for them so they can have a comfortable life. They should learn from what their mother is doing – getting up in the morning and doing something with her life is a great example to have.

**“It instilled values and morals into me: I know that going to work is positive and allows you to provide for your family.”**



Lauren Stevens



Mother:

Professor Jane Apperley

Chair of Centre for Haematology,  
Faculty of Medicine, Imperial  
College London; Clinical Director  
for Haematology at Imperial College  
Healthcare NHS Trust

Jane came first to the Royal Postgraduate Medical School in 1984, re-joining as a senior lecturer after the birth of her first child in 1992. She had her second child in 1995 whilst building a translational research programme in leukaemia and stem cell transplantation. She became Chair of the Academic and Clinical Departments of Haematology in 2004, and was elected to the Academy of Medical Sciences in 2017.



## Son: James McCue, Working in Finance

I was probably ten or eleven when I clocked what my mother was doing at Imperial. I was interested in what she did – her being away a good deal and coming back late sometimes made me curious. So we talked about her and my dad's work and there were always conversations surrounding medicine. When you have a job like hers, it's hard not to bring it home with you, and as a result I might know more about haematology than is usual!

Looking back, I would say my mother's work gave me, as a child, a really important insight and respect both for her profession and for the NHS. I gained a real understanding and grounding in the importance of delivering free healthcare. I would like to add that my dad was always there to put in the hours for me which really helped, given my mother's workload. Without him taking that role, I think she would have felt that much more

pressured and it would have been harder to have achieved what she did. So he's a special man and when I talk to her about it, that always comes through as absolutely key.

Her work has given me a huge respect for women in general, and women in leadership positions. I suppose I would have understood it later but for me it was engrained from the word go. As a teenager it was incredibly helpful to have that sort of role model – it gave me a work ethic and drive to get on.

If I was talking to a child worried about their mother going out to work, I would say something along the lines of this: they're not going to be away for ever, they're doing something really important and she could be making a great difference to society. But when push comes to shove, if you need your mum, she's going to be there for you.

**“Her work has given me a huge respect for women in general, and women in leadership positions.”**



James McCue



Mother:

Maggie Dallman

OBE, Professor of Immunology,  
Vice President (International),  
Associate Provost (Academic  
Partnerships)

Maggie joined Imperial College in 1994 as a lecturer in the Department of Biology, becoming Reader in Immunoregulation in 1996 and Professor of Immunology in 1999. Made Dean, Faculty of Natural Sciences in 2008, Maggie took up her current role in 2015 and is the academic lead on the College's Outreach and Engagement Strategy and International Relations.



## Son: Alexander Dallman-Porter, Working at a start-up

Growing up, I certainly didn't fully understand my mother's real role in College, although I knew that she was a scientist who did research in a laboratory. I also knew she was the head of her lab because I met many of the people who collaborated with her. I had a vague idea that she taught, and that she had an important organisational role, but not much more.

I always thought what she did sounded very exciting and it really made me interested in science. It was great to be able to meet the lovely people who worked with her in her lab and around College – they all seemed very happy to talk to me. In fact, I felt very at home in College and spent quite a lot of time around my Mum's office, even if this did get a bit boring at times. It might have been nice if either of my parents had been able to pick me up from school, but the fact that they both worked prevented this, and it wasn't too bad – I just spent more time at friends' houses!

If I met a child whose mother was about to start work at Imperial, I'd reassure them that Imperial College is really exciting, full of some wonderful and interesting people, and that they're lucky to have a mother working in such a prestigious and yet welcoming place. There seem to be very many other mums and dads who work there too, so kids are a pretty common sight on campus – the chances are they might even meet some new friends through Imperial!

“I'd reassure them that Imperial College is really exciting, full of some wonderful and interesting people, and that they're lucky to have a mother working in such a prestigious and yet welcoming place.”



Alexander Dallman-Porter



Mother:

Sian Harding

Head of the Division of  
Cardiovascular Translational  
Medicine at Imperial  
Hammersmith

Sian joined the NHLI in 1980 and this was integrated into Imperial College in 1995. She became Professor in 1992 and later Head of the Division of Cardiovascular Translational Medicine at Imperial Hammersmith. Her work led to the first UK Gene Therapy trial for heart disease and she has investigated stem cell-mediated cardiac repair. Sian was also Director of the Imperial British Heart Foundation Regenerative Medicine Centre. Though just retired, her first book “The Exquisite Machine: The New Science of the Heart” will be published in September 2022.



## Daughter: Elizabeth Harding, Clinical Psychologist

My mum was (and is) a scientist, working in cardiac pharmacology. She became a professor when I was in my final years of primary school.

It's been very helpful for me, as an adult and as a woman, to have had the chance to see how much a mother can do. Through my mum's work I had the opportunity to experience first-hand the day-to-day reality of scientific work. I also began to learn about the world from an early age, both academically and through the many travel experiences that came along with her attending conferences. Aside from these experiences, I had the privilege of being brought up in an environment where learning was encouraged, as were feminist ideals. These are experiences that have shaped me in important ways, and I'm very grateful to her for giving them to me.

If I were to talk to a child whose mother was about to embark on a career at Imperial, I would say that this is something that they should try their best to take advantage of, even though it might not be clear at this stage why that might be a job that's important or interesting. Having a parent in a STEM profession allows an insight into a career that can otherwise feel, at times, a bit inaccessible. Having a mother in a STEM career adds to this, in that it gives us the opportunity to see first-hand a female role model who can succeed in a traditionally male-dominated field. Whether or not you choose to pursue a STEM career yourself, this is an invaluable experience for young women and men as they are deciding how to shape their careers and their lives.

**“Having a mother in a STEM career adds to this, in that it gives us the opportunity to see first-hand a female role model who can succeed in a traditionally male-dominated field.”**



Elizabeth Harding





Mother:

Professor Joanna Haigh

CBE, formerly Co-director,  
Grantham Institute for Climate  
Change & Environment

Before her appointment in 2014, Jo was Head of the Department of Physics. As well as editing numerous publications she has been President of the Royal Meteorological Society, and a lead author on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society, the Institute of Physics, the City & Guilds, and an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Meteorological Society and Somerville College, Oxford.



## Son: Jim Fouracre, working as a Lecturer in Life Sciences at the University of Bristol

As a child I remember my mother working as a lecturer in the Physics Dept. I'm not sure how aware I was of her specific responsibilities but I think I realised she had research and teaching to do. As I grew older, I think I paid more interest to her research as, working on climate change, it was something that I could understand the significance of. I also remember her being promoted to Reader and Professor, particularly the latter as I hosted a somewhat inadvisable house party when she went away for the weekend with my father to celebrate.

If I were to talk to my mother about her working, I would say that my sisters and I never felt anything but cared for and not to feel guilty! When we were younger our father would take us to school in the morning and our mother would pick us up in the afternoon. As we got older and more self-reliant she would not come home until

slightly after we'd got back from school. I think she felt (and perhaps still feels) slightly guilty for not being more present but we felt loved and not in the slightest abandoned. Rather I feel thankful that she did dedicate as much time to us as she did, despite having such a demanding and busy job.

And if a child in the same position as us asked me what it was like, I would tell them to feel proud that they have such an intelligent and high achieving mother, and that it's going to make their physics homework much more impressive than their friends'. And I'm a lecturer now, so my experience of having an academic mum didn't completely put me off....

**“Feel proud that they have such an intelligent and high achieving mother, and that it's going to make their physics homework much more impressive than their friends’.”**



Jim Fouracre with his parents and sisters



Gender equality matters at Imperial. This booklet is just one part of work going on across the College to tackle existing inequalities. This work, which is organised under the framework of the Athena Swan charter mark scheme, commits us to actions at departmental and institutional level.

To find out more about Athena Swan at Imperial, please go to <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/equality/accreditations/athena-swan/>

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