

GLOBAL MOBILITY, MATERNITY LEAVE AND THE PANDEMIC

Over the last twelve months, like many people, my life has been one of huge change. On 14 February 2020 I moved to a new house, on 18 February 2020 I started maternity leave from my role as Head of Global Mobility at DLA Piper and on 26 February 2020 I had a baby girl at 37 weeks by caesarean section.

JUST OVER THREE WEEKS LATER, 23 MARCH 2020, THE UNITED KINGDOM WENT INTO LOCKDOWN WITH AN IMPOSED “STAY AT HOME ORDER”.

Just over twelve months later and I have just finished my first month back at work.

I have worked in the Global Mobility Industry for twelve years and during that time, like many Global Mobility Professionals, I have seen copious amounts of change. Given that employee travel was one of the first and biggest restrictions put in place by many governments to deal with the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, this has caused an unprecedented impact on the Global Mobility Function. The Assignments and Transfers which have taken place during the coronavirus pandemic seem to have been more complex and time consuming than the typical requests that Global Mobility Professionals manage, alongside virtual and remote workers bringing new challenges.

IN THE MIDST OF A WORLDWIDE PANDEMIC, WE HAVE ALSO HAD BREXIT AND A CHANGE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM IMMIGRATION SYSTEM TO NAVIGATE THROUGH, AS WELL AS THE OFTEN DAILY CHANGE IN TRAVEL RULES AND RESTRICTIONS.

It is a lot to happen in twelve months and while it is a little short-sighted to ignore the fact that the future of the Global Mobility Function will continue to evolve at a fast pace even without the coronavirus pandemic. I feel that critical changes in the Global Mobility Function will have arose due to the huge lens of sustainability and the desire to reduce carbon footprints, albeit not at the rate of change currently faced.

Coming back into the Global Mobility Industry during this time is not without its challenges, for my part, I think the pause in worldwide travel gives the Global Mobility Professional the real opportunity to continue to drive forward the importance of tracking their employees, to rethink and redevelop the “who”, “why”, “when” and “where” of Assignments and Transfers.

THIS IS THE OPPORTUNITY TO REFLECT AND ADD VALUE TO THE GLOBAL MOBILITY FUNCTION BY IMPLEMENTING PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS BY ENSURING THAT THE GLOBAL MOBILITY FUNCTION AGENDA IS ALIGNED WITH COMPANY STRATEGY AND REFOCUSING ON EMPLOYEE WELLBEING.

As ever during a time of change the Global Mobility Professionals from across the world have been supporting each other through many knowledge sharing initiatives, roundtables, webinars and virtual meetups. The Global Mobility Professional has had a number of challenges to contend with over the past twelve months with still more to come. However, I feel that the Global Mobility Professional is well versed in dealing with such complexities and supporting each other and employees through difficult situations.

Yet it will be interesting to look back and learn from the challenges we currently face when things get back to the “new normal”.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Louise has worked within the Global Mobility Industry for twelve years and was an expatriate herself when working for IBM's Global Mobility Team based in Budapest. Louise joined DLA Piper almost nine years ago with the primary aim to create a Global Mobility Centre of Excellence and develop the Global Mobility Program.

LOUISE JONES

HEAD OF GLOBAL MOBILITY

UNITED KINGDOM