

What DO you do when you go to work Mummy?

Well, erm... well, erm..... it's complicated.

This is how I usually responded when my children asked me what I did at work all day. Honestly? It was the same answer I gave to my parents, my friends and random people passing the time of day with me on my arduous daily commute. I'm pretty sure none of my friends could have articulated what I did for a living. Indeed, when my mother was pressed some years ago, her conclusion was 'I think she's just nice to people' and even that was clutching at straws. I'm not that nice.

And the truth was, it was complicated. Having spent 20 years working alongside financially sophisticated institutions trying to find financially sophisticated answers to their complex investment needs – I can honestly say it never got easier explaining for example, how widening credit spreads can impact the present value of pension fund liabilities.

It never got more interesting as a conversation topic either. And it certainly didn't pacify young children enough to stop them wailing at the window as I left my house at 6:30am every morning to head into the City.

This isn't to say that I didn't love my job. I absolutely did. I have been fortunate enough to work with some of the brightest, most inspirational leaders at some of the largest and most successful asset management firms in the world and in addition, I have built some wonderful personal and professional relationships with both clients and colleagues over the years. But increasingly, I was beginning to feel that I wanted/needed something 'more' in my work– something more aligned to some of the personal interests that had come to infiltrate my daily life.

In 2016, I became actively and personally involved with the wonderful initiative that is the Diversity Project (DP) – a cross-company enterprise with a goal to create a more inclusive, more diverse investment and savings industry. As you might expect, the DP looks to address diversity in all its guises – gender; ethnicity; disability; LGBT+; mental health; veterans; working families; and neurodiversity. As a full-time working mother of two autistic boys, I felt sufficiently passionate about so many of these issues, I was becoming increasingly curious about pursuing an alternative career path, leaving financial services altogether and considering an exit stage left.

Cue: a miraculously well-timed intervention – embodied in the form of two delightful chaps, James Cranmer and Ben Beaton – both Managing Partners at the boutique investment house (and my new home) Triple Point Investment Management. An organisation which specialises in, amongst other wonderful investment strategies, the provision of social housing for individuals with physical and mental disabilities – disabilities such as autism. Having been hugely successful raising money via a Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT), they wondered if there would be appetite amongst my institutional audience, to invest in social housing.

After all, in their words, 'the more money we can raise, the more people we can help.'

But this time, they weren't going to restrict their investment universe to housing for those with disabilities. They had plans to build homes for asylum seekers, for those seeking emergency accommodation to flee unsafe living arrangements and for the homeless. And they wanted to provide safe, comfortable homes for those needing extra care at the end of their lives. Would my investor base be interested in this kind of investment which provides long term, index-linked, secure income streams and at the same time, delivers an extraordinarily positive outcome for individuals and society at large? I think so, yes!

So, of course, I would help them with their distribution strategy and I would find them a suitable candidate to build out their institutional business but it would not be me. After all, I was ready to leave the industry behind.

But as I spent more time with Ben, James and a number of other colleagues from across the business, I could feel myself becoming increasingly fascinated with the organisation. Whether by accident or design, I happened to be sitting with the property investment team on a day they took a call from a distressed mother who was desperately looking to find a home for her autistic son (aged 18) and his three friends.

As is often the case with young autistic adults, whilst there is some State provision for them throughout their school years, when formal schooling ends these young adults either have to move back home to parents (who are often ill-equipped to manage) or it falls onto local authorities to try and find homes for them, either in institutions or for the lucky few, into some kind of specialised, supported housing.

Sadly, for the lady on the call, whilst her local authority could find a home for her son's three best friends, there was no space for him. Consequently, he would need to move to a neighbouring county, a 90-minute drive from his home, to live with people he'd never met before. A scenario this young man could neither comprehend nor contemplate. His mother was in no doubt that he was suicidal. In desperation, she called Triple Point to see if the housing team could help find some suitable accommodation for her son and without hesitation, they made a commitment to find a home for all four of these young men, together.

For those sceptics who think there is no place for private equity investment in social housing, I'd invite you to take a seat at my desk for a week.

I soon realised that outside of providing social housing, Triple Point were also involved in the provision of ambulances and neo-natal care units to the NHS, they were engaged by the Government to help implement innovative heating solutions to help the UK meet its target of becoming carbon neutral by 2050 and they were providing vital funding to small, innovative businesses looking to raise capital to provide solutions to educational, health and environmental challenges.

It was then I realised that this was a business where I could not only add value by engaging with asset owners looking to invest at scale, but a business where I could explain to my friends, my family and most importantly my children – what exactly it was that I was doing

all day. I was sold. More than that, I was all-in with Triple Point. To be honest? They had me at 'homes for autistic adults.'

There is a lot of talk about 'impact investing' within our industry these days - with seemingly every financial institution desperate to demonstrate their ability to deliver a positive impact on our society or environment. And thank goodness for that. Demand from Government, from investors and indeed from the regulator to require more of investment managers – to go beyond just providing a financial return and to show clearly how that return is being achieved – means we will all benefit.

However, in order for a company to make a genuine impact in the area it operates, it is vital these investments are made against the right cultural backdrop. A culture where the dominance and coherence of its shared values underpins the development of its strategies and business models. If that company espouses integrity and purpose as its unifying culture - in the same way it does at Triple Point - reflected in how its leaders and employees interact and behave - it is far more likely to have a lasting impact for its stakeholders, clients and wider community.

At a time like this, the need for that has never been greater.