

The Women's Network Steering Group meets four times a year to co-ordinate our efforts and guide future directions. 20 May 2020 saw our first fully virtual meeting "a remarkable feat given that at previous meetings we often lost almost an hour fiddling with connections to bring just one person in by Skype. One of the things that I love most about our Network is that we bring together all parts of the College community: Alumnae, JCR & MCR members, Fellows and non-academic staff. Together we are the women of St John's, and it is our role to celebrate, inspire and empower the diversity of all the women of St Johns. Staring at the little boxes on our screens, listening to stories from the 13 women scattered across the UK, Germany, Ireland and South Africa, brought very moving insights into how COVID-19 is affecting women in very different ways with women. We fell into two broad categories: those overwhelmed and bombarded with extra demands, discovering 'work-life balance' in all its brutal inequity; and others shocked into abrupt, much emptier lives as plans and routines dissolved. Some women found themselves juggling roles of nanny, teacher, worker and student all at the same time; others were suddenly relocated and busy reorganising home life around strange working patterns; contrast this with women stranded without work and facing real confusion about when they could make future plans; women at home with children facing a very different pattern of solitude and looking to the Women's Network to bring some of the intellectual stimulation and solidarity that had disappeared from other parts of their lives; and students at all stages of their careers experiencing massive disruption.

There are so many more COVID-19 tales to tell. We know that some members of St John's have been at the absolute heart of the British response: sitting in COBRA, reporting nightly on the BBC, battling for hardest hit BAME communities in their constituencies, turning up day after day on wards and in laboratories, caring for people and advancing world class research. Whether our experiences are deeply personal or trying to advance wider change - or a bit of both - all of us are finding ways to adjust to the uneven impacts across our own lives and those of our loved ones. We would love to hear from all of you around our network - please do write yours, or record podcasts, and send to women@sjc.ox.ac.uk. We will share them in future newsletters. One of the bizarre levellers of this pandemic is that we have all experienced something that is both the same and extremely different and women have taken the impact in quite particular ways, as the stories from members of the Steering Group show.