

SHARE MY TELLY JOB: Case Study

Amy Willetts and Karen Browne Job-sharing Senior Casting Producers



Teresa Watkins, Executive Producer, Secret Life of 4 and 5 Year Olds: “Casting was one of the most senior positions on ‘Secret Life’. I wanted the Senior Casting Producer to be on throughout the shoot into the edit and through TX. Obviously we were working with really young children; there was nothing more important than finding those children and then looking after them.

Karen cast the pilot of ‘Secret Life’ so brilliantly and she was my first staffing decision when we went to series. She said, “It’s a monster, doing that just myself but I’ve solved the problem - I’ve got a job-share”. I immediately saw the potential benefit.

Karen and Amy really spoke with one voice; they were ‘Karamy’! They are very different people, which was one of the huge benefits; you got two people’s views on the job. They hand-held the project and those families right through to TX and in the 3 years I was on the project we never had any family that was disgruntled around TX and that is a huge credit to them and the job-share.

Structure of work week

Every series has been structured totally differently. We have done a series where Karen did the first of the contract because Amy was on maternity leave and then Amy did the second half of the contract.

We have done jobs where they’ve said “Actually it is a bigger job. You couldn’t do it on a 2/3 day split.” or “this will require some weekend work” or “this will require us going up to 5 days while we’re shooting”.

We did extreme handovers on the job every night with an extensive email.

We made sure that any important meetings, any casting meetings, trips to Channel 4 to get sign off for our cast, we always scheduled those for days when we would both be there.

Why was the Job-share successful?

Secret Life of 4 and 5 Year Olds

Karen: Our old exec nicknamed us Positron (Amy) and Negatron (Karen). Amy always sees the good in everything and I’m saying “It will never work”.

Amy: The biggest benefit is you’re getting two people with two brains, thinking all week, mulling stuff over and making decisions together .

People aren’t switching off for the rest of the week when they are not there. You’re getting so much more than you would get with just one person and no-one is burning out.

Snow Sex and Suspicious Parents

Karen: The best example we have when people say ‘job-sharing won’t work’ on a contract is that “Snow, Sex”. It was the hardest cast to do as a job share because the turnover is phenomenal. So being able to do that successfully as a job share proves it can work in most genres of television.