

Is business travel fair to Shane Barnes?

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SHANE BARNES, a 7-year-old autistic boy, is one of the subjects of a trend story that appeared in the *New York Times* earlier this week. Shane's mom's partner, Chad Watson, just got a promotion that entails increased business travel and more time away from his family. *Times* reporter Michael Luongo does a good job of detailing the difficult decisions that families with special needs children face when a parent is forced to spend more time on the road.

There aren't any easy solutions. Extended family can help, but not everyone lives near their parents or siblings. The *Times* recommends a site called SitterCity, based in Chicago, that works as a matching service for parents and sitters. The site's founder says 30,000 of its members can take care of special needs children.

Mr Watson ended up coming up with a pretty decent solution to the conflict between Shane's interests and the increased travel demands of his new position. When he got the promotion, Mr Watson worked out a deal with his employer that included "total control over dates of business travel with at least two weeks notice prior to travel," according to Ms Barnes.

Unfortunately, not all business trips can be planned two weeks in advance, and not all business travellers with special needs children have employers as understanding as Mr Watson's. The inconvenient truth is that many parents end up having to choose between properly caring for their children and advancing their careers. That's too bad. Being a business traveller and a parent is hard enough. Parenting a special needs child while travelling for business is even harder. Gulliver hopes more bosses will be as flexible as Mr Watson's.