

Working, Childcare & the Pandemic

A year ago we were all told to go home, shut the doors, and hide from the outside world while a highly contagious virus spread across the globe. Schools closed, offices closed, parents juggled and working from home became the norm.

A year on, and we are just starting to see light at the end of the tunnel. The vaccination roll out is looking to be a success, and the UK has a 'road map' to open us up and return to 'normality' and there is a feeling of cautious optimism about the future.

As an operator of childcare and provider of workplace nursery partnerships, we wanted to understand what more could be done to help parents support their families in the here and now to enable them to return to the new 'normal' with the ability to focus, concentrate and feel happy balancing work and family.

There is no shortage of reports that highlight the huge economic and social burden caused by the pandemic, and our survey in many respects supports what's already been written; repeatedly hearing "hybrid working", "financial wellbeing" and "rebalancing work and family" but what does this really mean practically and what impact may this have on us all as we move forward?



All those who helped with this survey are parents within our nurseries – real parents, facing real challenges now!

Read on to see how working parents have been affected and how they can be supported.

Parent Work Patterns

Employment status:

44% Employed Full Time

38% Employed Part Time

3% Self Employed

4% Seeking Employment

2% in Education

Working hours:

28% work 40+ hours

27% 31-39 hours

14% 24-30 Hours

13% 16-23 hours

9% below 16 hours

Let's Talk Wellbeing

Financial Wellbeing

With furlough continuing to help pay the wages of millions of people who may otherwise have lost their jobs during the pandemic, it is no surprise that financial wellbeing is on all of our minds. Childcare costs are one of a families' largest outgoings, **36% of our parents are looking for a change in their childcare requirements due to the pandemic, and almost HALF cited that this is due to no longer using grandparents** as part of their regular childcare, meaning parents' costs are likely to rise.

Whilst parents can claim Universal funding (15 hours) and, those who are eligible, extended entitlement (30 hrs), for most families this support only helps after a child turns 3; yet childcare is at its most expensive in the first 2 years.*

Add to this that **fewer than 1 in 5 women are returning to the workplace after Maternity Leave** (People Management) due to lack of support and the costs of childcare, employers are failing to retain the talent of individuals whose working career can potentially span decades.

Unsurprisingly **91% of parents** surveyed would be interested in the opportunity to access childcare at a subsidised rate through an employer Salary Sacrifice scheme.

The **average price of 50hours of care per year for a child under 2yrs in nursery is £13,100.**

Offering a salary sacrifice scheme through a Workplace Nursery Partnership means parents could be **saving as much as £5500** per annum, whilst being cost neutral to their employer.**

* Funding is available for 2yrs in some circumstances.

** assumption based on NI & Tax savings at 42%.

Emotional Wellbeing

A quote that has been well used this past year is **"We may all be in the same storm, but we are not in the same boat"**.

On asking our working parents how they felt they coped during the pandemic, 14% of parents coped all of the time, with the majority (82%) coping between 50-75% of the time. It's worth noting that parents 'coped' and were not 'thriving' during this time. Additionally "Burnout" is a very real concern. Research by **Public Health England** suggests **"the pandemic has transformed our lives in ways that have impacted negatively on the mental health of nearly half of the population"**.

It is unsurprising, therefore, that wellbeing is high on an employers' agenda. A poll by MHFA England has found that a **quarter** of employees reported having had no wellbeing check in during the pandemic (Personnel Today) and, as of Jan 2021, with 41% of employers still utilising the **furlough scheme** (GOV.UK) it is evident that things need to change and the mental and emotional needs and wellbeing of employees should be looked after, and a priority.

How are working parents being supported? The impact of the pandemic on individual's emotional wellbeing will vary from person to person as they navigate a reality that can include loss of employment and/or reduction in income, loss of a family member or friend, **loss of independence, isolation, anxiety, and fear of what the future holds.**

Employers can do more to offer additional support, from a simple 'well-being' check-in to aiding them in the here and now. This will help their employees return to work and thrive again.

Impact on Ability to Work

82% of our respondents were female and 70% stated they had to change their working hours during the pandemic to either accommodate a new family routine or to manage childcare and home schooling

Our results clearly support other reports available; all illustrating that women have seen the biggest impact and bear the brunt now and in the future. How can employers play a vital role in supporting them post pandemic?



'1 in 4 said they were considering taking a step back in their careers or leaving the workforce entirely.'

McKinsey report

Two thirds of working mothers said they were the 'default' parent during lockdown (taking on the bulk of childcare and home schooling).'

Women's Wellbeing at Work - APPG

Female Talent

Women have been disproportionately affected throughout the pandemic, and the struggle of juggling between work and children is not a new story for women in the workplace. More needs to be done to ensure that women can return to their careers, post the pandemic and beyond.

Employers have a moral responsibility to enable women to return; we believe this starts from the moment an employee announces they are pregnant, all the way through to their return. Employers should celebrate and not dread pregnancy announcements, they should support, provide practical guidance and give comfort and reassurance to enable women to make the right decision on their career and childcare choice.

Employers should play a genuine role in making the journey joyful and aid in the return; one way of doing this is supporting financially.'

Employers can offer a workplace nursery scheme, allowing employees to pay for childcare through salary sacrifice, helping parents financially in the **here and now** when the financial burden can be at its greatest. The monthly cost of childcare during their early years is often more than a families' mortgage!

Working Remotely During the Pandemic

Half of our parents were able to work from home all of the time from home, with a quarter some of the time, and a quarter unable to work from home.

We asked our parents how likely it would be for them to continue to work from home:

42% stated very likely

8% were unsure - awaiting company announcement

47% somewhat likely

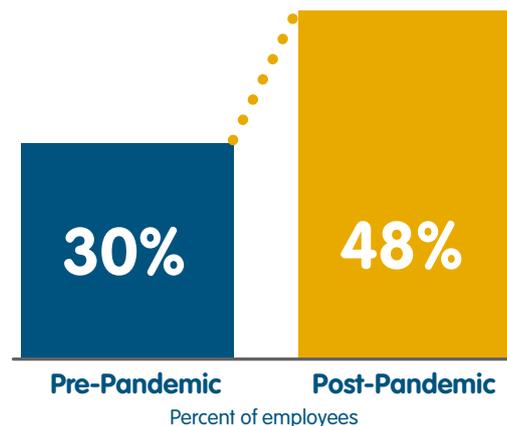
3% unlikely due to company / type of work

Whilst the numbers clearly demonstrate that many parents successfully implemented an agile working week, and may continue to do so, the indicators for childcare were strong with **64%** reporting their need for childcare remained unchanged. So whilst we may see a more agile workforce, combining office and home working, its evident that childcare still needs to be **reliable, regular and trusted**.



Agile Working

Whilst many parents have liked having more control over their working schedule, despite the boundaries blurring between work and family, Gartner latest report shows that nearly half of employees will work remotely at least some of the time, a shift from 30 to 48%.



93% of our parents would like to return to the office in some capacity, and only <1% said they would prefer to work from home all the time.

Pre pandemic would this have been the case? Irrespective of where parents are based, and whether it be juggling a long commute or a zoom meeting with a toddler on your knee, working parents require a large proportion of the day to concentrate and focus. **Working with young children around can be distracting, frustrating and detrimental to all; not allowing anyone to be their best self.**

Collaboration, Innovation, Creativity, Problem Solving, Coaching, Advice & Feedback are just a few areas that have been 'flagged' as being better in person and despite the powerful communication apps available, there are times when human interaction, in the same room is just more effective!

As expected we saw a la lot of variance in the personal preferences of our parents in terms of the what they would like the balance between the office and home working to look like, but the top 3 results showed...

16% preferred 3 days office & 2 days home

20% preferred 2 days office & 3 days home

23% could not work remotely

We asked parents whether their working hours were affected during the pandemic, 70% stated that they neither increased or decreased their hours, however, only 28% of respondents had not altered their work routine, meaning that whilst working parents hours did not change, they did have to **adjust them to accommodate childcare, the business or family routines.**

Your Childcare Network

There are many childcare options available to parents and all have their merits based on family circumstances and budget.

We know through our own parents that grandparents play a role in providing some childcare, however we also know this is driven by demographics.

In the UK two-fifths of grandparents are providing regular care for their grandchildren (AgeUK) and through our survey 36% of parents reported a partial change in childcare need, with over half citing this was due to no longer using grandparents as part of their regular care arrangement.

Its too soon to know what impact this will have on the demand for childcare but its likely that formal Early Years Childcare may see a rise in demand; whilst this is great for the industry that has seen occupancy affected hugely due to the pandemic, this does mean a possible rise in childcare costs for parents.



60% of working parents surveyed have no alternative childcare, and no back up, friends or family support nearby, meaning formal childcare is a necessity.

How can employers help?

It is evident that childcare is an essential component for many working families, and likely to be more so in the future. Given employees fragmented network and lack of support, and irrespective of agile working, employers can assist their employees with nursery fees by implementing a workplace nursery partnership, offering employees savings between 32-42%. This can be cost neutral to employers and helps parents save thousands in the here and now.

To find out more about how this works please drop us an email wnpn@tiniesdaycare.com and we can share the success we have had with other companies.

* We have stated nursery fees at point of publication, the tax exemption is not available to all forms of childcare.

The Future of Nurseries

Our Nurseries

As a nursery provider we wanted to understand if the changes that have been brought about by the pandemic will change the way parents will use our nurseries in the future; whilst this is based on our parents, we suspect the industry would see similar results.

72% of our parents said that their current childcare is closer to their home with 28% closer to the office, yet, **53% said it is likely they would use a crèche or nursery at their office** if it was available. We know from our own parents that they choose childcare first and foremost for quality, but naturally location plays a big role. We know that the decision is often demographically driven and linked to a family support network. That said, with **60% of our parents stating that they have no support network nearby, positioning your childcare has never been more important as agile working becomes part of the new normal.**

52%

of parents would be interested in a nursery near the office

What Changes would you like to see?

21% change opening hours

6% option of weekend care

17% more flexible booking times

Do parents want to change the Nursery Day to reflect their working patterns?

58% said "No"

Virtual Nurseries

Whilst workplace nurseries have been around for a long time, traditionally they have been onsite at the office.

We are working with a number of clients who are positioning a Workplace Nursery, either within our own nurseries, or through one of our partner nurseries, between the office and the home. This not only gives an employer the ability to grow the scheme with demand, but helps employees in need in the here and now when they financially may need it the most. Retaining talent, increasing returnee rates post maternity leave and being an employer of choice, are just a few of the reasons to consider it.

It is evident that with agile working and a lack of local support network, we know that trusted reliable childcare is essential. Whilst the location of an office Workplace Nursery will not suit all, to allow a hybrid approach to the office and home working, a nursery positioned between the two offering employees considerable savings may be a good option.

It is good to understand how we may be able to support our parents in the future, whilst continuing to deliver safe and educational childcare.

Helping Working Parents in the Agile World

For working parents, access to reliable and affordable childcare is as important, post pandemic, as it has ever been – Employers can help!

82%
respondents
'Female'



93%
want to return to the
office in some capacity

WORKPLACE NURSERY

25%
of working mums
considering taking a
step back or leaving
workforce entirely

64%
of parents still require
reliable, regular childcare
even when working
from home

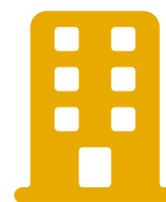
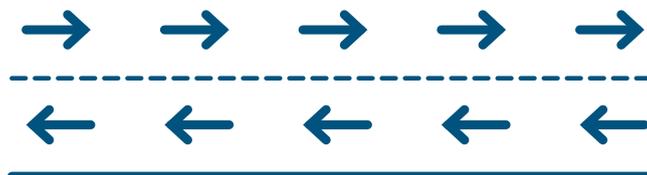
70%
of parents changed their
working hours during
the Pandemic

91%
of parents
would like
savings on their
childcare costs

44%
no longer using
grandparents as part of
their regular childcare



HOME



OFFICE

Find out how you can help working parents through a Workplace Nursery, saving £000's on childcare. Call now on **020 7384 0322** or email wnpn@tiniesdaycare.com for more information

Want to know more about making childcare savings?

We have helped parents save **THOUSANDS** per year on their nursery fees through a Workplace Nursery Partnership.

Simply introduce us to your HR Department so we can share how it works and help evaluate if it is right for your business, or if the business can meet the eligibility criteria.

We then source you the right partner nursery to deliver exceptional care.



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