

Working from home with children

- If you are able to, share the responsibility with a partner and create a schedule. Set clear expectations of when you will get some time to focus.
- Keep your routine in place, get up and ready for work as if you are heading to the office and school. Have everyone in the house showered, washed, dressed and breakfasted at your usual time. This is more likely to keep you all motivated, productive and feeling more positive. Take breaks as you would if you were in the office or at school.
- Chunks of time will be more productive than dipping in and out. If possible, try to find blocks of time rather than half-working, half-parenting throughout the day.
- These are exceptional circumstances and customers, colleagues and clients will be in similar situations. If you need to take phone calls, explain that you are working from home and there may be background noise from children. People respect authenticity and openness. Sometimes it can inject a bit of humour too.
- If your children still nap in the day, try making the most of these nap times to get some work done. These are not always easy to schedule (and won't always go to plan!) so flexibility is important, but make the most of the quiet time if you get it.
- Don't schedule meetings (if you can avoid it) for times when your children will be expecting normal routine such as breakfast and lunch - have a bottle ready for babies before meetings.
- When you need to focus on parental duties let your team know they might not be able to reach you. Move away from your phone/workstation and be fully present with your children at that time. Have your phone on loud so that people can contact you if they absolutely need to.
- Organise food and play activities the night before, it will give you more time throughout the day to focus and get work done. Preparation is key.
- Communicate clearly with your children and explain to them, in simple terms, that you are working and how they can help you. Explain why work is important. Try to set clear boundaries.
- Be as open and honest as possible with your line manager. If you are struggling to achieve deadlines and settle into a routine at home, speak to someone and please remember that you are not alone. We have to consider reasonable adjustments for you in these exceptional circumstances.

- Line managers and HR teams will have sensible conversations with everyone, seeking to find a way to keep businesses going and maintain productivity, whilst also looking after the wellbeing of employees and their families. This is a new situation for everyone to navigate.
- Consider relaxing screen-time restrictions for your children. There are some great educational apps and TV programmes out there, which are fun and engaging for children whilst also support their development (& distract them whilst you take that phone call).
- If children are expected to use technology to complete schoolwork from home, and you do not have enough computers for everyone to use at the same time, create a computer time schedule for the whole family.
- Think about your internet speed. Your video conference calls might have to take precedence over your kids streaming Netflix - can you download programmes the night before so they can watch offline?
- Consider working in shifts that best suit your body clock. Perhaps you are a morning person, whilst your parenting partner is a night-owl? If you're both night-owls, could you set up an evening office and work together? Both morning people – could you set your alarm for 5 and get a few hours in before the kids wake up?
- For younger children, try setting them tasks to complete whilst you get a piece of work done. For example, 'have a go at building the biggest train track you can and come and tell me when it's ready' (it might give you enough time to respond to an email).
- Use it as an opportunity to talk about the importance of teamwork, particularly with older children. You can role model effective leadership in a challenging situation, it is a great learning opportunity for your children. You can talk about our responsibilities to others.
- If you're feeling parent-guilt/work-guilt – talk to your friends and colleagues who are in the same boat – they are probably feeling the same and it helps to talk and feel like you're not the only one! Do the best you can and try to accept that this is an unusual time, so be kind to yourself.
- Share your funny 'working from home whilst parenting' stories with your colleagues. Humour can be a great stress-reliever. There are some great memes out there already.
- Try to enjoy meals together as a family (or at least dinner). It's important to still have some family time where you can all be together, without one or both parents trying to work.