



Live Well, Work Well

Health and well-being tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance professionals at RS Risk Solutions Ltd



WORKING FROM HOME WITH CHILDREN PRESENT

Many families are facing a stressful summer due to rising holiday child care costs. The average holiday club now costs £148 a week—more than double what parents usually pay for an after-school club in term time—according to the charity Coram Family and Childcare. Per school-aged child, this amounts to almost £900 over the six-week school break. During the current cost-of-living crisis, some parents may be unable to afford such considerable costs.

Child care provision has been impacted by rising inflation. Many providers are experiencing higher utility bills, food prices and national insurance contributions, leaving them with no choice but to raise prices. To make matters worse, some child care providers were unable to stay afloat during the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently—even if parents can afford inflated child care costs—they may be unable to find availability.

As such, if you're a parent, you might have to work from home with children present. Although this may seem less than ideal, it's still possible to remain productive. Consider these tips for maintaining a happy and healthy home while sharing your workspace this summer:

- **Set boundaries.** If you haven't already, make sure you have a designated space to work from. Having a clearly defined working area can help children visibly see when you're busy. With younger children who require constant supervision, consider relocating your home office to the family living area. Regardless of location, try to create a workspace system that signals your availability, such as a child-friendly

thumbs up/thumbs down “do not disturb” sign. Better still, involve your children in the sign's creation. This way, they may find it easier to comprehend the purpose of your workspace and respect any boundaries you've implemented.

- **Manage expectations.** Your usual working pattern may not be conducive to juggling work and family duties. Speak to your employer about working flexibly over the summer period. Fitting in your usual hours may be more manageable if you can stretch them over a longer period. After managing your employer's expectations, don't forget your own. It's natural to have days where you're less productive. Try to look at what you've achieved over the course of a week, rather than analysing individual days.
- **Prioritise workloads.** When arranging work tasks, put them in order of importance. Specifically, try to complete the most difficult tasks at times that are calm for you. This may be when your children are watching TV, or in the mornings when they're asleep. Additionally, arrange video calls at times when interruptions are less likely.
- **Communicate clearly.** Speak to your colleagues to let them know when you plan to start work, take breaks and finish. By keeping



them informed of your availability, collaborative working can continue. Moreover, relay your working pattern to any older children too. This way, they'll know when not to disturb you.

- **Take regular breaks.** Far too many people work themselves into the ground by worrying that taking breaks makes them look less committed. However, regular breaks can refresh the mind, improve productivity and reduce the risk of burnout. Schedule breaks during the workday with your children, such as walking around the garden or eating a meal together. Don't forget to build in some "me time" too—engaging in a little self-care or meditation can help keep your brain healthy and happy.
- **Be kind to yourself.** Don't feel guilty for not being able to attend to your children all day. Try to focus on quality time over quantity. Often, spending just 15-minutes of quality family time can buy you an hour of uninterrupted work when you're done. The most important thing is to persevere—keep trying until you find a schedule that works for the whole family.

Conclusion

Due to the current cost-of-living crisis, many parents may struggle to afford holiday child care costs. And while working from home with children isn't easy, it's possible with the right strategies. Through setting boundaries, managing expectations, prioritising your workloads and communicating openly with your employer, you can continue to be productive this summer.