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WORKING REMOTELY WITH CHILDREN

Last week, we have received the news that Schools in the UK will be closing. While the health of the population is clearly the priority at this time, working from home with children comes with its own set of challenges.

The following document will give you a few tips to manage your work-day and keep your sanity while children are at home. As this is going to be a relatively long-term change, it's important to find solutions that work for your family to avoid burning out.

MANAGING YOUR WORK-DAY

- **Updating your manager and your team**

Communication is going to be even more important as we enter into this new way of working. For most of us we are just learning to work remotely and get used to our new work surroundings and ways of working.

Every family will require different support so talk to your manager and make a provisional plan around how you will work this week. Each day will bring up new and different challenges so it's important to get clarity on what you need to do and by when. There will always be unplanned work that comes in so keep updating your manager on your progress and be realistic about what you can do.

You also have a new team (your child/children/partner/house mates) so make a plan to catch up on what your day is potentially looking like the night before and in the morning before your working day begins will also be helpful. We all need to work together, make compromises and support each other as much as possible.

- **Not everything has to be perfect**

We know that your personal life doesn't usually cross over to your work life in the way that it will have to over the coming months, and sometimes this means that things won't run as smoothly as you would normally expect. Maybe your children get a little more screen time than usual, maybe your house isn't as tidy as you'd like it to be behind you during a video call. Do your best and give yourself a break about these details.

- **Switch off when you need to**

You may feel like your whole day has to revolve around work or your children. Make sure that you take time out for yourself as well, whether this means going for a run, taking a bath, or just switching off and watching a movie once the kids have gone to bed. Encourage yourself to set some boundaries around work time and home time.

HOW CAN EMPLOYERS HELP

- **Allow flexibility as much as possible**

Although employers are under no obligation to allow staff to work flexibly, we would advise allowing this for the time being as there may be times where employees caring for children are not available during the working day. Having open conversations and putting together a plan where employees can achieve both their home and work responsibilities will be vital at this time. Having flexible hours for parents may be a solution so that they can complete their work obligations.

- **Help your employees to support each other**

An example of this could be setting up a group chat for parents to talk about how they're managing their work around having kids at home, it can be a space where parents share a pool of resources, whether it's meal plans, activity schedules, or lesson plans.

- **Stick to committed timings**

If your employees have created a schedule around their own childcare and agreed it with their manager, it is important that everyone in the business tries to support them in their plans. Something as simple as making sure that meetings take place at the time they are scheduled could have a big impact on how their day goes.

It's also helpful for everyone (with children or without) to keep online calendars updated so that when people need to get time with each other, they can do so with accurate and up to date information available.