

Modern Families Index 2024 Report

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Who took part?

Our survey population:

- 3,000 working parents, with at least one child aged 0-17 years, were randomly selected from across all UK regions and industry sectors.
- 1,521 identify as male, 1,479 identify as female. No participants selected 'Other' or 'Prefer not to say'.
- 73% work full-time, 27% work part-time (29 or fewer hours per week).
- 36% also have a caring responsibility for an adult or elder.
- 76% are in an opposite sex couple sharing a household.
- 11% are in a same-sex couple sharing a household.
- 12% are a single parent household.
- 80% identified as White, 7% as Asian / Asian British, 6% as Black / African / Caribbean / Black British, 5% as Mixed / Multiple ethnic group and 1% as Other ethnic group.
- 36% are aged 18-34, 59% are 35-54 and 5% are over 55.



If you've got just two minutes,
here's what you need to know...



The 3 Rs of successful family-inclusive strategies for employers:
The Risks, **The Reality** and **The Retention Tools**

The Risks



The risk of employees leaving their employer and seeking new employment is higher this year, at 42%. Many look for better family support in a new employer.



The Reality



Working parents and carers are finding their employers less supportive of family than they were last year and feel less able to get help with family issues at work. Over 9 in 10 carers of adults say that caring impacts their work. With an ageing population this issue is not going away.

Over a quarter of respondents were concerned about their or their partner's **mental health**, while two-thirds of parents have some concerns over their children's mental health.

Women are most impacted on almost every level. Three in four bear most of the family mental load and are less able to progress in their careers while working flexibly. Additionally, fathers in same-sex partnerships are the demographic most likely to leave their jobs in 2024 (67%).



The Retention Tools



Tools for retention are clear: flexibility and childcare are key demands. The evidence here shows employers what is impacting their employees' employment decisions. Supporting their children and families is key and employers who can actively do this will reap the benefits.

The Risks:

Many employers are focusing on productivity, and encouraging employees back to central workplaces to collaborate. It is now more important than ever to support family life. Without this, the findings here predict attrition and loss of productivity.

The flight risk has risen: **Over two fifths (42%) are now likely to look for new employment in the next twelve months** (45% amongst men, 38% for women). The increase on last year's 38% was among women. In 2023, it was 45% for men and 30% for women. Family support is a reason for leaving for 34% of women in this survey who are considering quitting.

After pay, seeking better family support is highest on the list of reasons for leaving: **It's a top reason for nearly a third (32%).**

What are your main reasons for seeking new work?	%
Higher pay	42%
Better support for family life	32%
I want a change	30%
Career progression	29%
Better benefits	28%
I am feeling disengaged	21%
Better organisational culture	21%
Practical reasons (e.g. commuting)	19%
Other (please specify)	1%

Carers are highly likely to seek other employment: **63% of those caring for a disabled, unwell, or adult child are likely to look for new employment (vs. an average of 42% in total responses).** 57% of those looking after a disabled or unwell partner and 56% of those caring for elderly relatives see themselves looking for new work. This is not a statement about leaving the workforce but expressly about seeking new work with better conditions.

EXIT

Childcare breakdowns lead to unplanned absences: **67% of working parents had to take a day or more off for childcare at short notice in the last 12 months (same for men and women).** The average was 4 days, and 32% of those reporting this type of absence needed to take 5 or more days.

Men were more likely to use annual leave (54%) and women to use unpaid leave (51%). Worryingly, nearly a fifth (19%) used sick leave to cover this.

However the absence is described, it impacts both productivity and other work colleagues.

Concerns about childcare availability: **Nearly two thirds (65%) of parents are concerned about availability of places if the new funding being introduced in England creates more demand.**

Under the new funded places, 58% plan to increase their hours in early education and 48% plan to start using early education as a result of the funding.

With the new funded places for children from 9 months, 59% see themselves as more likely to return from birth or adoption leave.



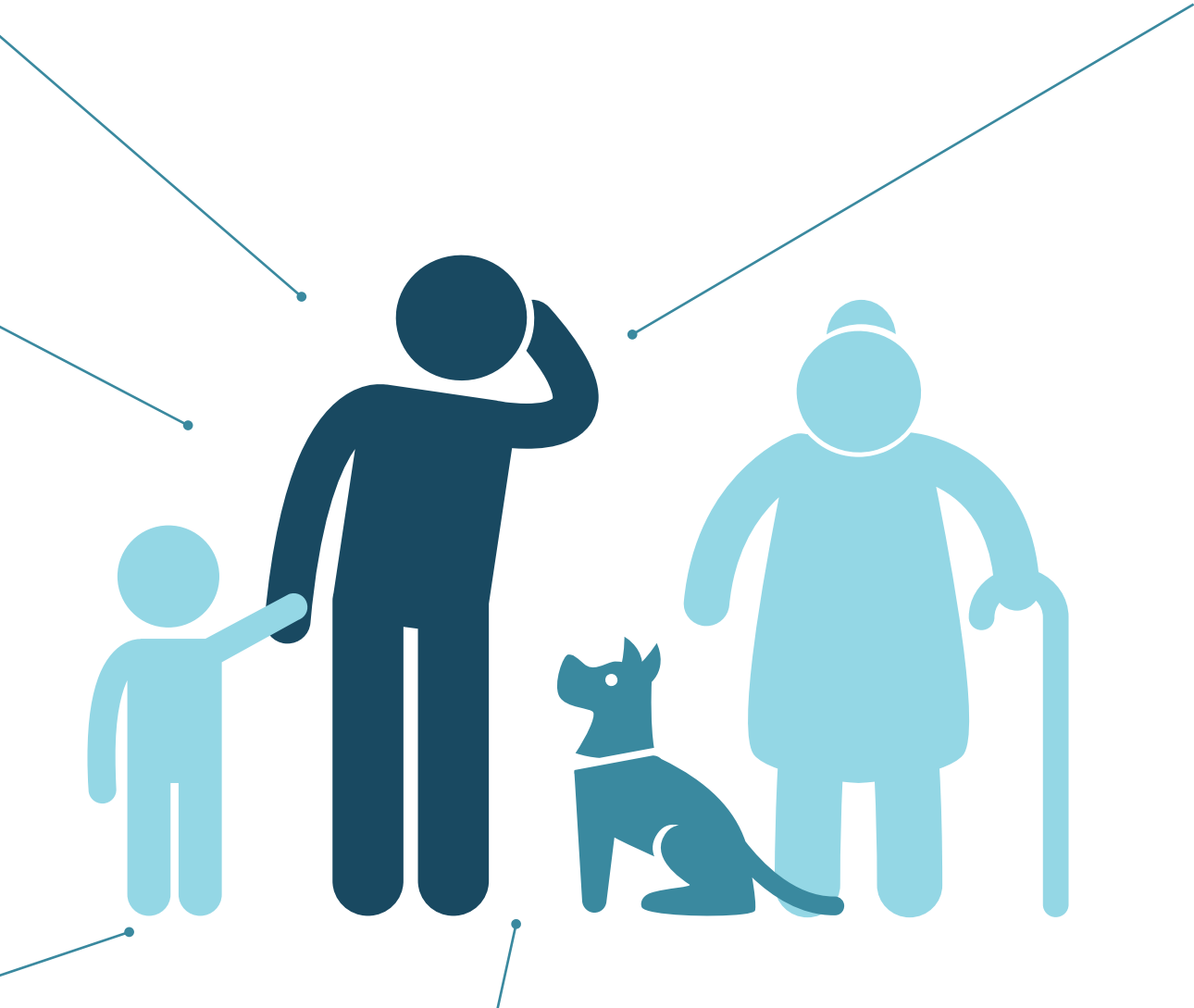
The Reality: For Parents and Carers

Those with caregiving responsibilities – whether for children, adults, or even pets – find themselves under significant and increasing strain due to the challenges of finding high-quality, affordable and available care and the demands of ongoing caregiving. These factors contribute to heightened stress levels, alongside pressures and limitations on their careers.

Childcare breakdowns: 2 out of 3 working parents have needed at least one day off for childcare at short notice in the last year. 32% of these have needed 5 days or more.

Childcare is needed for career progression: Over 3 in 4 (78%) would need to carefully consider their childcare options before a promotion or a new job (80% women, 76% men). This has risen year on year (2021 71%; 2022 74%; 2023 74%; 2024 78%). This is even higher among younger parents. 81% of 18–34-year-olds consider childcare before career advancement.

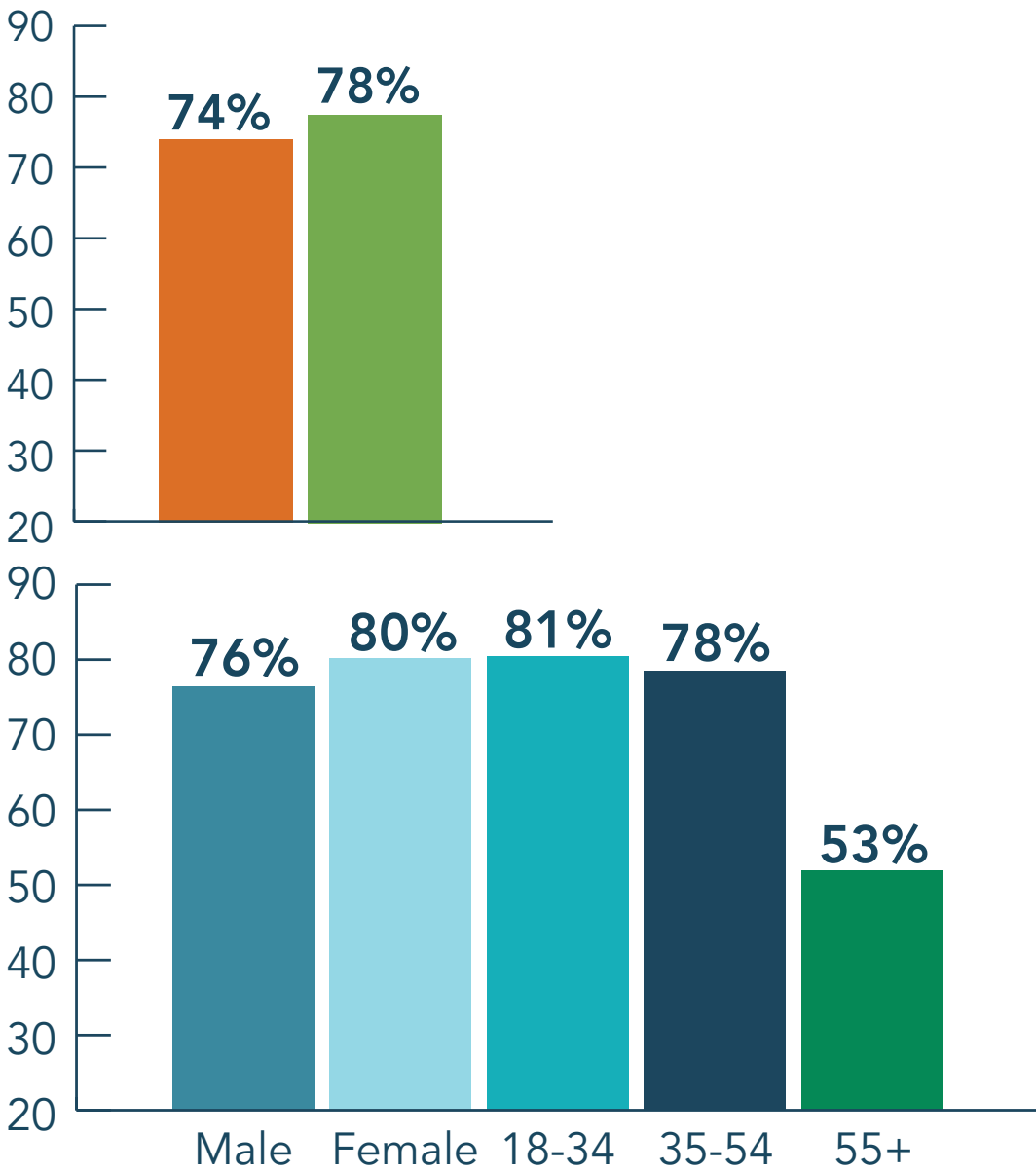
Carers under pressure: 91% of adult carers acknowledge that caring has some limiting impact on their work or career. Over a third (34%) say caring changes the hours they are available for work and just under a quarter (23%) need to fulfil caring responsibilities during working hours. 3 in 10 (30%) say it affects the quality of their work. 3 in 4 (75%) of those with adult caring responsibilities need to carefully consider adult care or eldercare options before a promotion or a new job. This is highest in the 35-54 age group (80%), and the associated mental load for this demographic makes it hard to maintain quality of their work (30%).



Pet care also needs to be considered: Of those who work flexibly, around 1 in 8 (12%) work flexibly to meet pet care requirements. This is over 1 in 7 (15%) in the under 35s. According to the [PDSA](#), 53% of UK adults own a pet. Among these owners, 4.1 million dogs and 3.7 million cats have been acquired since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020.

Those who consider childcare before a new role

Total 2023 Vs 2024



(Split by Gender and Age)

The Reality: For Mental Health

The challenges UK workers are grappling with reflect a complex landscape where economic, familial, and professional demands overlap. From cost of living worries to workplace challenges, there is a growing concern for the health and wellbeing of children, women, carers and senior leaders.

Employer support is not felt as strongly as last year: There is a drop in working parents feeling their employer is supportive of family. 72% in 2024, down from 77% in 2023.

Two-thirds (67%) feel confident discussing family-related issues with their employer, down from 71% last year.

72% feel confident their employer will take account of family responsibilities and treat them fairly, down from 75%.

Respondents saying ‘My manager cares about my work and home balance’ is 67%, down from 69%, and ‘My organisation cares about my work and home balance’ is at 65%, down from 66%.

Notably, these figures have always risen in recent years.

Cost of living anxieties continue: 53% women and 36% of men are worried about the cost of living/household bills.

Alcohol Concern:

Overall, around 1 in 12 (8%) of participants disclosed concerns over their own alcohol or other addictive substance use.

However, 20% of respondents who have a disabled or unwell adult child, and 17% with a disabled or unwell partner have these concerns.

When looking at job roles, senior leaders have the highest level of concern around their own use of alcohol and other addictive substances at 15%.

Parents are worried for their children’s mental health: Two-thirds of parents (71% of mothers, 64% of fathers) have at least some concerns over their children’s mental health.

Key groups impacted by burnout and higher mental health concerns:

Overall, 31% of mothers compared to 19% of fathers have concerns around burnout for either themselves or their partners, making this a quarter (25%) of the workforce on average.

Burnout by group:

- 39% in the education sector, including higher education
- 36% in roles described as ‘operational / admin / clerical / no managerial responsibility’
- 34% in government and public sector (not NHS)
- 32% NHS/healthcare
- 31% with a child aged 0-2

Mental Health by groups:

Over a quarter (28%) of respondents were concerned about their or their partner’s mental health.

Groups who had the highest level of concern for themselves or their partner:

- 36% operational / admin / clerical / no managerial responsibility
- 36% with a disabled or unwell partner
- 36% female single parent
- 35% male same-sex couple
- 34% who earn less than £20k and 34% £20-40k

Sectors with the highest levels of mental health concern for themselves:

- 34% government and public sector
- 34% real estate
- 33% hospitality, travel and leisure
- 33% manufacturing, consumer product and FMCG



The Reality: For Gender and Diversity

The findings highlight distinct challenges for different demographics. Women shoulder the majority of the mental load at home, leading to higher burnout and a less manageable work-life fit. Additionally, they express lower confidence in discussing family-related matters with their employers compared to men. Other groups also report important concerns. Enhanced family support is seen as a critical need, not only for women but also, for example, men in same-sex partnerships and people from some minority ethnic backgrounds.

Three-quarters (74%) of women say they carry the mental load for parenting, compared to 48% of men. That’s an uplift of 54% of mental load for women compared to men. Women also report higher burnout and poorer work-life fit.

We asked whether participants are finding their work-life fit easier or harder than pre-2020. The good news overall is that 40% say it is now easier, and 40% say it is similar. 17% say it is harder. However, women are less likely to say it is easier (38% against 40%). Women are also much more likely than men to say it is harder now (21% vs 14%).

Lack of gender equity: Almost twice as many women as men who work flexibly do so to meet childcare responsibilities.

- Of women who work flexibly, 51% say it is to fulfil childcare requirements (27% for men).
- Women feel less able to progress careers while working flexibly than men do (63% vs 71%).
- 71% of men feel confident discussing family-related issues with their employer, but only 63% of women do.

Beyond gender, other groups reporting a harder work-life fit now, compared with pre-Covid, are:

Groups reporting harder work-life fit	%
Part-time workers	22%
Employees from mixed / multiple ethnic group	22%
Unskilled manual workers	24%
Professional/technical roles e.g. lawyer, accountant, programmer	21%

Men in same sex partnerships will vote with their feet if family life is not supported:

Fathers in same-sex partnerships are the group at the highest risk of leaving their jobs in 2024 (67%, compared to 42% on average), and their top reasons for leaving were:

- 35% would leave to seek ‘Better organisational culture’
- 35% would leave to seek ‘Better support for family life’

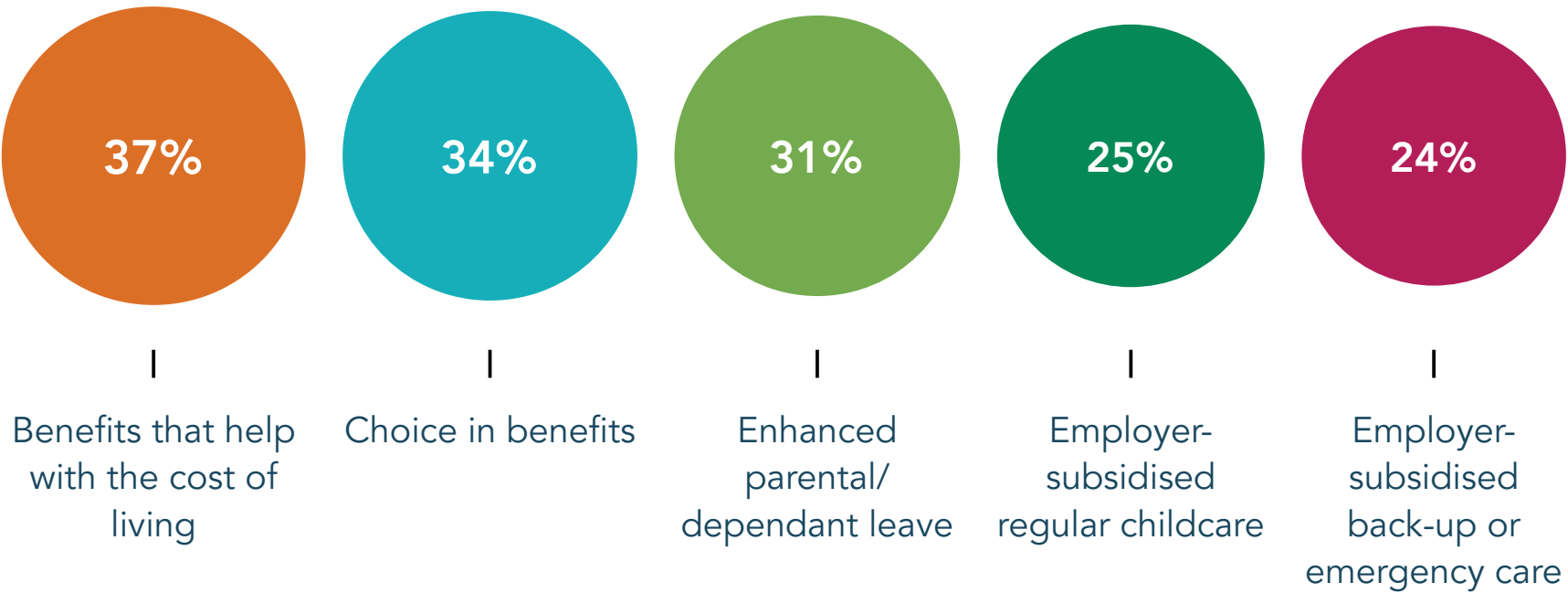
Black/African/Caribbean employees value support with family life:

When we asked for participants’ main reasons for seeking new employment, 32% overall indicated ‘Better support with family life’. This rises to nearly half (48%) of Black / African / Caribbean / Black British employees; the next highest being 38% among those selecting ‘Other’ ethnic group.



The Retention Tools: More Flexibility, Understanding and Practical Help

When we asked which benefits and services employees would look for in a good employer for working families, these five ranked highest



Consider Parental / Dependant Leave support.

To support you with best practice insights into trends in parental leave, carers' leave and surrounding supports, you can download our latest Parental Leave and Family Support Benchmark

[Find out more →](#)

Explore benefits that ease pressure on employees

[Find out more →](#)

Look into workplace nursery arrangements

[Find out more →](#)

Help with childcare: This is high on the list of factors enabling work and additionally in-person office presence.

49% want to increase their working hours due to funded places – can you help them access local places?

Flexibility of days and hours are the biggest enablers of presence in the office. They are followed by nearly 3 in 10 indicating help with childcare costs and nearly 2 in 10 saying help with holiday care cover. Can you support this?

Empower adult-care givers: Directly helping with care alleviates the pressures. Without support, 28% of carers say they may need to drop work to be readily available for caring responsibilities or reduce their travel for work (25%), or need to fulfil caring responsibilities during working hours (23%).

Support gender and age equity:

34% of women say help with childcare costs would help increase their office presence, as do those of all genders aged 18-34.

14% of 18-24 year-olds would also find that help with pet care costs encourages their office presence.

Don't lose the family-friendly brand: Perceived employer supportiveness is dipping this year, but employee expectations continue to be high.

61% are looking for support from their employer with their children's educational development.

29% of women (and 23% of men) would like support with their child/ren's mental health and 20% of women (14% of men) want help with behavioural support from employers for their child/ren.

About Bright Horizons

What we do

For more than 35 years, Bright Horizons has been supporting the evolving needs of working families and their employers. We create, develop, and deliver solutions that remove barriers to performance, talent and diversity in our clients' businesses and help them succeed in their goals.

We address the wide range of challenges facing parents and carers in the workplace today, enhancing our clients' ability to attract and retain key talent, giving their teams the peace of mind and confidence to do their best work.

How we do it

Bright Horizons' services include workplace and partnership nurseries, coaching and development provision, digital resources, and manager guidance, plus back-up care for adults, children of all ages - and even pets.

We provide our clients with access to live usage and engagement analytics on their programmes, and also keep them updated with ongoing research findings and benchmarking data.

Who we are

- We have operations in the US, UK, India, Australia, and the Netherlands. 1,300 clients globally, more than 400 in the UK.
- We have been recognised as a UK Best Workplace by the Great Place to Work Institute every year since 2006, and actively committed to Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging, and to Mindful Business practices.
- We strive to minimise negative environmental impact guided by our Future Earth green agenda and, through our registered charity the Bright Horizons Foundation for Children, to make a positive difference in the lives of children and families in crisis.

Our family of services includes:



Reliable, flexible **Back-Up Care** options for children of all ages, adults and elders - and even pets - when usual arrangements break down or schedules change. Back-Up care is a trusted Plan B that protects productivity and supports wellbeing.



One to one **Virtual Tutoring** in Maths and English for children (ages 4-16 years) and also school entrance exam preparation. Tailored tutoring helps confidence and achievement, while easing parents' concerns about their child's education and mental health.



Work+Family Space, an easily searchable hub for all matters work and family, and a vital resource for busy workers. Filled with a world of information, tips, webinars and expert advice, there's something for everyone - whatever their life stage or personal situation.



Our innovative **Parental Leave Toolkit** is a digitised coaching solution delivering timely checklists and advice to the individual and their manager at every point in the journey, making a significant difference to return rates. Beyond the parent transition, we've developed tailored coaching programmes for our clients on many major life events.



Workplace Nurseries and Nursery Partnerships provide parents with reassuringly high-quality and convenient care at, or near, their workplace. The ultimate "sticky benefit" and a real game-changer for retention.

Get in touch to discover how we can help your business and your employees:

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