



# **Family-Friendly in the New World of Work**

## An Employer's Guide

# An Employers guide: Family-Friendly in a post-pandemic, hybrid working world

In our transformed world of work, there's a real opportunity for employers to prioritise work-life fit. The post-pandemic mindset, and talent shortages, mean people bring their whole selves to work more than ever. The focus is on inclusion, equity and belonging, wellbeing, community, climate. Family is up there with these big themes.

Leading employers understand the need to support today's multi-generational workforce, across the lifespan. A parent-friendly and carer-friendly employer is better at keeping and attracting talent, and gains commercial advantages.

Being family-friendly in the hybrid world pivots on having ways of working that work for everyone. That includes removing obstacles and reducing stress for busy people, while helping them

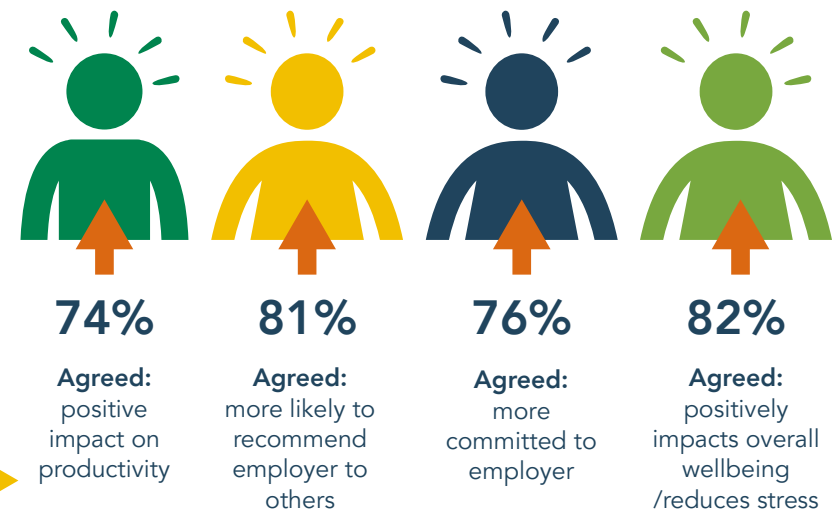
to perform and progress. It means supporting your people to deliver their work, and feel well, even as their life circumstances change and develop. For parents and carers, a big part of this is managing care and family life.

**With our post-pandemic awareness, family-friendly means understanding that for your working parents and carers, their wellbeing is directly linked with the wellbeing of their loved ones'.**

Bright Horizons' 2022 *Modern Families Index Spotlight* supports much other evidence of a Great Rethink or Reset with individuals questioning the direction and purpose of their working lives. Around 2 in 5 are looking to change jobs. Their top asks are flexibility and family supports.



Bright Horizons' 2021 *Work+Family Snapshot* research showed over three-quarters of employees are more likely to recommend their employers when family supports are provided. That jumps to over 8 in 10 when they have actually used that support.



# Our Model for Family-Friendly Employers in the Hybrid World

Our 3 Circles will help you plan your next steps as a family-inclusive employer. We provide tips here (select the circles on this page) to bring them to life for you.

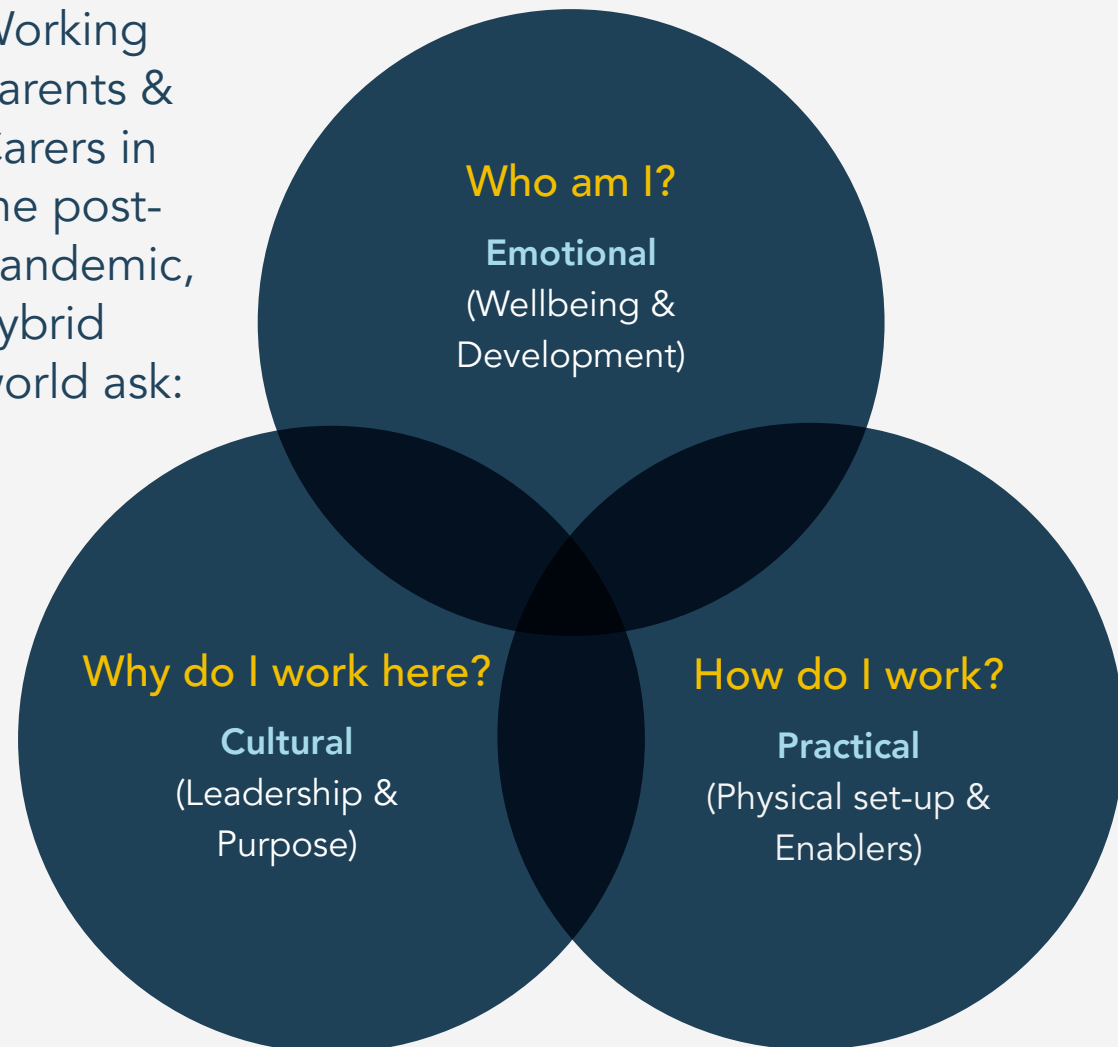
Through our partnerships with the world's most forward-thinking employers, and having coached thousands of busy professionals and line managers, we know these three areas are essential for action in making work+family work:

- Practical enablers
- Cultural aspects
- Emotional / Developmental support.

In the hybrid working world, successful employers need to get the practicalities right more than ever, while also re-engaging people and rebuilding culture in new ways.

Three key questions are now top of mind for employees at this time of Reset: How do I work? Why do I work here? And even: Who am I?

Working  
Parents &  
Carers in  
the post-  
pandemic,  
hybrid  
world ask:





# Cultural Leadership & Purpose

## Why do I work here?

A lot of thinking and reflection has gone on during the pandemic and recent upheavals. Expectations have changed and more direct conversations are taking place in the workplace. Employees, as well as employers, are also facing up to the cost of living crisis and climate crisis. In such changing times, it will matter more than ever to be an employer to be proud of, and one that recognises and supports the rest of life outside of work. And in the hybrid world, we all need to find new ways of building culture. It's a long-term commitment but the immediate actions are below.

## Your actions include:

### Flexibility

- Set a cultural expectation of flexible hours as well as hybrid location, from senior to junior roles. In front-line roles, explore other forms of flexibility such as more control over work schedules.
- Measure performance on agreed outcomes and impact, not presenteeism. Get clear on what the deliverables are and allow flexibility on how these are achieved. Track to ensure people working more remotely still get the exciting projects.
- When you survey staff experience or ways of working, segment the data to reveal satisfaction among different groups. Include parents and carers in the groupings.
- Watch out for the downsides of agile working: remote working can merge into 'always-on'. Some working parents

and carers (and others) need more boundary hours to work alongside caring (or life in general).

- The Modern Families Index shows people with eldercare commitments highly value flexible hours and locations, and they are particularly likely to be looking around for new opportunities.

### Career

- Be an employer to be proud of. Re-state your mission; be relatable. Be clear how working with you contributes in the current world. Remember that parents look ahead at their children's world, strengthening the focus on sustainable employers.
- Be real and visible about diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. Set targets for representation. Stay focused on levelling the Gender Pay Gap. Voluntarily report ethnicity and disability pay gaps. Sign up to employer charters, stick to them, and share experience across sectors. Track who progresses in your organisation - do they represent your fully diverse population?
- Check for systemic bias against part-timers. Job shares are one way that senior high-impact roles can be done part-time: do you have a job share register? Consider alternative career routes, that allow a plateau then acceleration, temporary flexible working or new ways of progressing: some typical career paths collide head-on with parenting.
- Have Returnship programmes in your talent strategy to bring back those who may take career breaks for caring.
- Talk actively about internal skills development and succession planning, increasing transparency and accessibility.

### Managers

- Provide training on managing hybrid, remote and dispersed teams inclusively. Help managers work with their teams to co-create guidance on managing meetings, so people in the room and online have a voice. Encourage managers to balance between one-to-ones, audio & visual meetings (some audio-only calls, while walking, help a lot).

Encourage all to differentiate between social catchups and structured agenda meetings with outcomes – both are needed and can be part of the same meeting if well-organised.

- Empower managers to build trust and autonomy. Autonomy is one of the drivers for people seeking new employers post-pandemic. This includes a culture where it's acceptable to negotiate deadlines. Challenge any assumptions and biases in managers about different ways of working, but listen to their lived-experience too.
- Foster leadership awareness of the need to rebuild culture with new ways of working. Have forums where a range of internal influencers can educate senior managers on what culture means to them. It likely includes upbeat, developmental in-person gatherings as well as scope to focus off-site.
- Give specific training for managers on enabling working parents & carers. Offer checklists for empowering conversations during moments that matter.
- Create opportunities for managers to share learnings and best practice. Hold managers accountable with DEI targets but also nurture them and recognise that managers with strong interpersonal skills are the new work-place superheroes and they will retain your key talent.



# Practical

## Physical set-up & Enablers

### How Do I Work?

Many people now have at least two places of work, and care is understood to be part of the business infrastructure. With this knowledge, there are many actions employers can take.

### Your actions include:

#### Technology and its use

- Most employers have now resourced home-based workstations. The key is to encourage good habits of ongoing use.
- Back-to-back online meetings should not be the all-day norm: use shorter meetings with breaks.
- Asynchronous online project management systems can cut through the culture of constant meetings.
- Many employers are looking to streamline some of the many digital systems in use, so find one-stop shops where possible.
- Keep open a conversation about switching off messages and emails outside core hours. Those who email out of hours should use a header or signature underlining that the matter is not urgent (unless it really is).

#### Care day-to-day & Back-up care

- Remember working hours and childcare need to work together. You can expect remote workers to have childcare as part of being ready to work though be tolerant of time out for school pick-ups and drop-offs and occasional interruptions in the after-school period.

- Provide access to online, phone-based advice and also network events to support family, care or parenting. Ideally include access to help in finding childcare for pre-schoolers, help in choosing schools and in sourcing wrap-around care before and after school for onsite days. For adult care, provide access to expert advice on navigating the care maze; financing care; legal matters (e.g. lasting power of attorney) and ideally subsidised access to care providers.
- Put in place subsidised back-up / flexible childcare and adult dependant care (extra help when usual arrangements break down or need to flex last minute). It saves many lost days and also supports a flexible approach to hybrid working.
- Review your family leave policies. Where possible enhance shared parental leave or gender-inclusive leave. Ensure policies use inclusive language for all forms of parenthood, such as 'parent-to-be' which is more inclusive of adoption or surrogacy than 'pregnant'.
- Consider Carers' Leave similar to other types of family / parental leave e.g. some employers match Unpaid Parental Leave (up to 4 weeks unpaid in any year, up to 18 weeks overall per cared-for person), some provide paid leave; 5 days' unpaid leave will come in with the pending Employment Bill. Enable staggered return from family leave or other absence, with phased build up to full-time.

#### Workspaces that work

- Workplaces need to be collaborative spaces, attracting people to make the journey in and benefit from collective thinking and from serendipitous chats.
- Hybrid workplaces also need quiet spaces. Some need to work there as home is unsuitable for work, or because the culture expects physical presence. Office 'residents' won't want a day-long water-cooler moment but rather somewhere to focus.
- Some will be blending get-togethers with online meetings across a day in the office. Etiquette is emerging around

having online meetings with others outside, while sitting in collaborative spaces. Most open-plan offices would not have sufficient meeting rooms to do this privately. Keeping voices down and blurring backgrounds are key considerate behaviours. Using a headset is obvious.

- Help new hires and returners from parental leave or sickness absence to navigate the hybrid world. For new parents, working some KIT days to coincide with onsite all-hands meetings works well. Help returners set-up online meetings with wider stakeholders to help reintegration.
- Onsite perks are popular again whether fruit, games, wellness facilities or childcare. Can you support remote workers with access to online services, or facilities more local to their home-working, including health services?



# Emotional Wellbeing & Development

## Who am I?

Alongside the cultural and practical needs, there is a strong mood of individual reappraisal regarding the place of work in life, and indeed - for many - the overall direction of their lives. Positive employee experience enhances productivity, wellbeing and loyalty, at a time when retaining talent is a first-line method of saving costs.

## Your actions include:

### Wellbeing and Balance overall

- Wellbeing & Mental Health supports are now expected: provide access to online workshops, 1:1 support and internal 'first aiders'. Topics for networking events are increasingly personal such as menopause, fertility or domestic abuse. Make it easy to discuss mental health and to figure out how to deliver work while being honest about wellbeing. Be aware that wellbeing strategies often now have 5 strands: Physical; Emotional & Mental; Financial; Social Inclusion; Environmental.
- Make it possible to switch off and put boundaries around down time. Make sure that remote workers are not working on and on in the evenings (unless that's their preference after taking family time out during the day).
- Bring wellbeing into your mainstream culture with employee blogs, podcasts, group chats for sharing experience and tips; especially gritty real-life stories that normalise the challenges and recognise leadership capability across diverse stories.

- Pay attention to grief and overwhelm. During the pandemic and in current or recent wars people may have lost loved ones, or colleagues, be worried about loved ones at a distance or have taken in refugees. Some have had an overload of worry and despair. Make sure any Employee Assistance Programmes or other helplines are promoted and make it OK to talk, generally. You can't 'fix' everything as an employer, but you can acknowledge it, provide flexibility and support.
- Open the opportunity to innovate. Recognise where there is an appetite for change. Many people want to go 'forward not back' in the post-pandemic world, and with a redrawn political map. Engage teams in any plans you have for new approaches, products, supply chains, distribution channels or other aspects of business, so the purpose is clear and ideas are invited.

### Moments that Matter for Parents

- Provide expert coaching and online programmes around key life transitions, particularly becoming a parent or carer. This is a specialist form of career coaching at a pivotal moment. Also Match-up internal mentors or buddies with parental leave takers and returners.
- Empower internal networks and Employee Resource Groups both online and onsite, for knowledge sharing and for insights to inform the business. Provide external speakers or facilitated internal panels. Be inclusive e.g. covering topics on LGBT+ parenting, separation, divorce and co-parenting.
- The Modern Families Index shows educational catchup is a concern for over half of parents. Some employers now provide access to virtual tutoring for parents. Addressing the wellbeing of loved ones supports the wellbeing of employees. Be understanding of the whole life cycle e.g. exam results days (including the need to secure last-minute, alternative university places).
- Continue to promote visible, diverse role models which is more important than ever to highlight in a dispersed workforce – e.g. working parents of any gender sharing

their story on how they make it work.

- Make sure to include fathers specifically in any parent programmes. Lockdown increased hands-on fatherhood for many, building on an existing trend toward shared parenting. Recognise and promote shared caring across families as the norm; be inclusive of all genders and family structures.

### Moments that Matter for Carers

- Carers stood out in the Modern Families Index as especially likely to seek alternative work. They value flexibility of time and location. It can work well for a carer to be able to spend a day or so each week located at their loved one's house: this agility can keep talented people, who are carers, in the workforce.
- Provide expert coaching or online programmes for carers with coaches who can address practical care strategies as well as how to progress career while hybrid and remote working.
- Ensure managers have checklists on what to expect and discuss during life transitions such as becoming a carer for an adult dependant. Go beyond practical and policy points and cover having influential conversations about career development. View this as part of talent retention and leadership development.
- Foster networks: either a families' network or a carers' network, balancing external speakers with internal experience sharing and informal networking. Ensure networks are accessible online as well as in person and have online follow-up chats to share tips.
- Consider a Carers Passport scheme enabling working carers and their line managers to share information on caring responsibilities that impact work, and possible adjustments.

# About Bright Horizons

## What we do

We help to increase our clients' employee wellbeing, engagement and productivity, supporting career progression and improving recruitment and retention of talented and diverse workforces.

## How we do it

We provide holistic solutions to the challenges facing parents and carers in the workplace today. They include comprehensive care services, coaching and development provision, digital resources, family network events, and manager/ organisational guidance. They address the practical, emotional and cultural needs of organisations and individuals. What we offer is good for employers and good for employees. **Everybody wins.**

## Our History

For over 30 years, Bright Horizons has been supporting the evolving needs of working families. Through bespoke family care solutions, we are helping employers to anticipate the challenges facing their employees and equip them with the tools they need to thrive.

From workplace nurseries and hybrid worker solutions to back-up care when your employees need it most, our work and family solutions enhance your ability to attract and retain key talent, giving your teams the peace of mind and confidence to do their best work.

At Bright Horizons, we are always looking forward, creating and developing solutions to help businesses succeed and create a happier, more efficient and profitable workforce.

With operations in the US, UK, India and the Netherlands, we've a wealth of experience in supporting multi-national clients.

## A partner, provider and employer of choice

We look forward to always delivering the best for our clients, families and our own employees.

- We monitor and evaluate our service provision through ongoing employee and client feedback to ensure its quality and positive impact. We provide our clients with access to live usage and engagement analytics.
- We have been consistently recognised as a UK Best Workplace by the Great Place to Work Institute every year since 2006.
- We have a strong commitment to corporate sustainability and, through our registered charity the Bright Horizons Foundation for Children, we work to transform the lives of children and families in crisis.

## Our family of services includes:



Our award-winning Back-Up Care network, which saves our clients over 80,000 days in productivity each year



One to one Virtual Tutoring in Maths and English for children (ages 4-14 years) accessible through the Back-Up Care benefit



Work+Family Space, an easily searchable hub of information, resources and advice on a wide range of work and family topics



Coaching & Development Solutions to help businesses retain and develop employees through life's big transitions, including the parent transition and becoming a carer – supporting your people to thrive at work and at home



Parental Leave Toolkit, our unique digital coaching solution for new parents and the managers who support them



Nursery Partnerships, which can save employees 30% on nursery fees at no cost to their employer



Workplace Nurseries, providing parents with reassuringly high-quality and convenient care at or near their workplace

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

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