

# PARENTAL BURNOUT



The Back-to-School period is a mixture of excitement that the long holidays are over mixed with anxiety as parents rush to buy uniforms, stationery, and the latest must-have accessories. Balancing a busy work schedule with school timetables and extracurricular commitments can be a stressful time.

Working parents have to adjust their routines in order to ensure they support their children practically and emotionally, it is often a hidden struggle that is not acknowledged by employers. The Office of National Statistics state that 75% of mothers and 92% of fathers work in the UK so it is likely that your business employs parents who are juggling after school care, holidays, illnesses, homework, revision, exams, sports clubs, and the added pressure of a creating a costume or art project.

Prioritising employee well-being has long been a focus for businesses that care, but a study conducted by Action for Children revealed that a staggering 82% of parents in the UK experienced

indicators of parental burnout. Most parents felt overwhelmed, tired, and stressed so if they are feeling this way, it goes without saying that they will not be performing at optimal levels at work.

Businesses need to be flexible to avoid parental burnout as it is more likely that they can do their job more effectively around a schedule that fits around their other responsibilities. This doesn't mean that parents get preferential treatment over those who don't have children, but employers should be supportive and adaptable to parental responsibilities. For example, could they start an hour early so that they can do the afternoon school pick up? This would save on expensive childcare costs whilst still meaning that they are able to work their contracted hours. If this is acceptable, perhaps have a companywide policy that there are no meetings between 3.00 and 4.00 to ensure nobody misses out on important information.

Managers need to understand a parent's personal circumstances where appropriate. According to the

Workforce Institute at UKG, managers impact staff's mental health (69%) **more** than doctors (51%) or therapists (41%), and the same as a spouse or partner (69%). Children are prone to picking up colds and viruses so instead of parents taking sick leave, could you arrange for them to work from home so that it doesn't affect their productivity and delay important projects by not being in the workplace?

September 16th is National Working Parents Day so it is the perfect time to be more supportive of their work-life conflict and be more reassuring about the challenges that parenthood can bring. In a National Panel Survey by Harvard Business Review, out of 2,500 working parents, nearly 20% had to leave jobs or reduce working hours solely due to a lack of childcare. Parental burnout is real so you need to address it. If you want to attract and retain the best talent, a childcare policy is essential to allow parents to pursue their careers whilst nurturing their children.