

Working from home with children (January 2021)



Chartered
Institute of
Housing

With schools closed and those of us who can work from home doing so, parents across the country are again juggling working and looking after children at the same time - all within the confines of their own home. It is without a doubt a tough juggle! Balancing the responsibilities of work, home-schooling and family life, particularly at this time of heightened anxiety and stress, can feel overwhelming. Below are some tips from the CIH team.

1) Communication is key

Talk to your employer and, if you are the employer, talk to your employees who are in this situation. We are all in this together and most people understand that this is going to be a particularly tricky situation for working parents. Communicate with colleagues so they know what's going on. For example, you might not be replying to emails as quickly as usual, but you will reply. If there times you will definitely be available for conference calls and times you definitely won't be available let them know.

Talk to your employer about furlough if you need to. The government has recently updated its [furlough guidance](#) to confirm that the scheme can be used where employees are unable to work because they are caring for children while schools are closed.

If you have a partner talk to them. 'Tag-teaming' through this is a must. Negotiate so you both understand what the work things are for each of you that can't be moved.

Talk to your children. This is a confusing and uncertain time for them too. Their usual routines have gone and they are being asked to spend more time in their homes than they have ever done before. Talking to them in an age appropriate way can help them understand the situation and also understand that you still need to spend time working.

2) Have a routine

A routine doesn't need to be set in stone, flexibility is important, but we all work better with some kind of structure, especially children. Get the kids involved in drawing up a daily family routine and then have it up somewhere where you can all see it. Equally though there will be days when it all goes out of the window - and that's ok too.

3) Separation of roles/ spaces

This can be difficult, but if it is possible to have a quiet space to work this may help you work better and also help children understand that this is your 'office' and maybe therefore help limit constant interruptions. This also can help you 'switch off' from work when you aren't working.

4) Exercise

Exercise is great for everyone's mental health. Burning off energy early in the day with kids can be the key to providing some quieter time later so you can get on with some work.

Guidance for:

- England
- Wales
- Scotland
- Northern Ireland

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Even in small spaces there are loads of games you can play to use up all that energy and there are plenty of resources out there on YouTube too like [PE with Joe Wicks](#) and [Cosmic Kids Yoga](#).

5) Have a shower and get dressed!

This might sound like a basic one but the day can slip by before you have done these things. This is part of establishing routines and will really make you feel better than if you are sat at your computer at 11am still in your pyjamas.

6) Make the most of the resources out there

The web is teeming with free resources to help from free access to busy games for younger children on [orchard toys](#), to [BBC bitesize](#) providing lockdown learning support for all stages of the curriculum, to Facebook groups dedicated to ideas to keep kids busy at home. Make the most of what is out there - you don't have to come up with it all yourself.

7) Get the kids involved in the household chores

Fitting in housework on top of everything else can feel impossible and build resentment. Get the kids involved - younger children especially can be surprisingly keen (with some encouragement)! And lower your standards - some things are going to have to give in this scenario and it can't be the kids or work. Work out what the absolute 'must do's' are in your home and cut yourself some slack on the rest.

8) Don't beat yourself up - you are not alone

No one is expecting you to be the perfect teacher in this situation. This is a tough scenario and it's important you are kind to yourself. Relax the normal rules around TVs and iPads - these are extraordinary times and they won't last forever. If your child watches TV more than normal so you can work, this is not the end of the world. If you only get 1 of the 8 tasks set by their teacher through the virtual learning platform done with them today, but you still manage to read them a bedtime story - you are doing ok.

9) Cherish the small things

As working parents in our 'regular' life we all wish we had more time to spend with our kids. The circumstances are difficult of course, but we have a great opportunity here to slow down and reconnect. Have fun! Play board games, bake cakes, dig the garden with them (if you have one), watch the birds, snuggle up and watch movies. If your children are old enough they will remember this extraordinary time. They will remember it as a time when their parents stayed at home and played with them!