



How to Win at Work+Family: Survey findings and take-away tips

At the end of 2012, My Family Care and We Are The City collaborated to conduct a survey of city workers with family responsibilities.



With well over **460 responses**, the survey gave an interesting picture of how we feel about the various key people who make up our **'Work+Family Team'**; the stakeholders we need to manage proactively in order to find the balance that works for us.

To find out more about the profile of the respondents see the 'about the survey respondents' section at the end of this guide.

Having it all...

'Having it all' can hang like a heavy weight around our necks if we focus on what doesn't work, and we mostly notice how we fail.

Here we are looking for small wins in important areas, or - sometimes - big wins that come from a leap of confidence, assertiveness or clarity. People often report how, when they dare to do something differently, or ask for help or input in a more specific or honest way, things suddenly fall into place.

That said; there is no 'magic wand, and plenty of challenges.

The tips below provide pointers, some of which will be more relevant to you than others. Hopefully, taken together, they will give you some starting points.



Managing your Work+Family Team

Winning may well depends on all these stakeholders:

- Company
- Manager
- Colleagues
- Clients
- Domestic Partner (where relevant)
- Dependants
- Care providers
- Self!

We offer a few brief bullet points on each, for you to decide what works best for you.

Your Company

It's clearly a two-way street but in this guide, we are focusing on what you *can* do. Commonly-raised concerns about the company include:

- Lack of flexible working, or policy but not practice
- No home working
- Senior people have no interest in those with family life
- Full time hours in a part-time role
- Senior 'hidden working from home' - i.e. not stepping up to being role models
- Presenteeism and long hours
- Meetings at short notice/inconsiderate times
- Inconsistency of flex
- Invisibility of part-time workers
- Stigma and career stagnation attached to flex

To give it more life, some comments, in pairs, from the same person (positive and then negative)

📄 Officially, it's all in favour of flexible working and part-time working and job-sharing is supported. The policies are all good and that's helpful - with the company (which is very large) I don't have to fight to work part-time.

⌘ In practice, it doesn't work so well. I have been told that I am 'too senior' to work part-time, and the expectation is that a woman at my level does not do so, or at the very least only takes Fridays off (I do a 3 day week). The corporate talk is good, but on a job basis the management don't always walk the walk, and if you fight it you look unprofessional and incompetent beside all the full-timers.

📄 Part time working. Very flexible arrangement. Instead of a 4 day week I do an 80% week - so I work every day, but finish early 3 days a week which allows me to do 3 school pick-ups each week. Can sometimes work from home to fit around children's Christmas shows etc., without having to take holiday for this.

⌘ General attitude is that part time = part commitment. Have a wonderful and interesting job, but not sure it's a career with many prospects with my current arrangements.

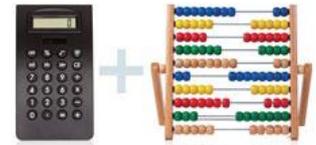
📄 Have twice annual children's parties where employees can bring their children 'to work'. Children appreciate this, and seeing that it can be 'fun'.

⌘ Not enough holiday or provision (understanding) for when children are unwell or need emergency care. Management can be unbending with respect to 'flexible' hours, even if it's not regular. Solution: More flexibility around hours worked, and the ability to work more from home.

📄 I am able to take time off when it is needed to cope with family issues alongside leaving early and arriving a bit late when needed, providing I make up the time. This is not a companywide policy but an understanding that I have with the Partner that heads up my team.

⌘ Sometimes meetings are arranged early and it is not possible for me to do the breakfast club run and get to work for the meeting. Also at times I am expected to hang around to get some work signed off which is not possible, I have to leave by a certain time to pick up the children from afterschool club.

My Family Care's best practice building blocks for success:



- Become really clear about what success means in your role: what are the expectations of managers, clients and others. What few key things must you do to achieve this and what do you need to let go?
- Try to link what you do to the company's reason for existence. If you are delivering and directly adding value then it's easier to ask for what you need to get things done.
- Having got clear on your contribution, train yourself to prioritise in strategic ways. Where distractions, obstacles and challenges occur, suggest alternatives or even gracefully say no sometimes.
- Build and display Confidence: ensure your successes are known by the right people.
- Show your professionalism and commitment by ensuring you have contingency plans for emergencies where possible; though we all do have genuine emergencies of course sometimes.
- Truly flexible working (with give and take) may well support your profile more easily than rigid part-time working. However you work, try to factor in being at certain key events: be selective.
- Do you want to become a change maker? Have you thought of yourself as a role model for others? What would it take to step into that role? Could you offer your experience to write or speak, network or contribute to social networks on combining work and family within your company, or even on behalf of your company?
- Practical support: check out, use and tell others about any practical support available in your organisation that helps employees manage their lives, such as backup childcare, eldercare, where to find healthy eating options outside core hours, etc.

Your Manager

Managers have a key impact: our survey showed many positive comments and experiences with managers where there is understanding, acknowledgement and give-and-take. However, where this is missing, the impact is strongly negative. Concerns include:

- Trepidation over addressing issues with managers relating to family commitments as people worry about 'rocking the boat'
- Part time workers feeling judged against full time colleagues
- Communication and being kept in the loop if working part time
- Unmanageable workload, both for those working part time - who frequently feel as if they're now trying to squash their full time job into fewer days and getting paid less to do it - and those who work 'full-time' in companies with long hours cultures
- Expectations that you're always available in evenings and on non-work days
- Managers 'role modelling' extreme hours

To give it more life, some comments, in pairs, from the same person (positive and then negative)

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- 📄 Agreed to take a half hour lunch one day per week to take eldest child to an afterschool activity
 - 🕒 Tries to accommodate requests where possible, but wary of other team members' feelings of my leaving early, as some others do not understand my pressures and needs as do not have children of their own.
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📖 In the event of an emergency I can work flexibly when needed.

⌚ My manager works long hours and expects others to do the same. Members of the team are seen as not pulling their weight if they don't work beyond the standard hours.

📖 I don't stay late or get in early and that doesn't seem to be a problem for my manager, although we have not discussed it openly. I have not yet been proactive re 'managing family and work', I will need to do that in a couple of years when we can no longer justify a full time nanny when both children are in school.

⌚ Not sure what we're going to do then, it's a black hole that I'm not thinking about, yet!!! I have heard, but not tested, that my managers are not really open to working at home/flexible working/ part time work for my role.

📖 We had to get into a position of having diarised, weekly catch ups, as we'd both get so busy (and have complementary working patterns) we'd miss each other. I also have to be clear about my boundaries - choosing very carefully what emails I might respond to on my non-working days. I also have learned to be assertive about what is physically achievable in the hours I have.

⌚ Whilst "part time", she [my manager] stays in town 3 nights and work very long hours while away. I am anxious that her expectations of me are that I can pack as much in.

And sometimes, there's no perceived positive, but aspirations...

⌚ My senior manager does not help me to manage my work life balance.

⌚ I would like to educate my senior manager that women with children have a place in senior roles and that the role of women is not simply to stay at home.

My Family Care's best practice building blocks for success:

- Treat your manager as your best customer
- Be willing to manage your manager; be pro-active
- Clarify and negotiate. Propose solutions (rather than problems)
- Focus on deliverables. Identify how you can manage yourself around agreed targets
- Make a point of demonstrating how your work links to your manager's priorities - are you clear enough on that connection?
- Make sure your manager notices your successes: whether that's a written report or an upbeat comment at the water filter about how a certain project is succeeding
- If you are proposing a formal or informal flexible working arrangement, ensure you focus on commercial realities and make the business case for different arrangements: for example would working at home sometimes enable you to focus more on certain calls, reports, etc.
- In any flexible working application, make sure you cover the contingencies? Identify how the impact on others can be managed, perhaps by some reciprocal flexibility
- Be visible, especially if you are working flexibly or remotely. Make contributions to important discussions: ask for ways of doing this virtually if possible.



Your Colleagues

The whole concept of our **Work+Family Team** underlines how it's much easier to 'win' through our connections with others and through collaboration, than it is in isolation. The truth is, it does take time and a bit of investment up front to achieve this. Building trusting relationships with colleagues can be time-consuming and that can feel like a luxury we can't afford. But when trouble comes, we will need these members of our **Work+Family Team** on our side.

Typical concerns are:

- 'Guilt and worry' is the number one issue cited by respondents, many of whom perceive that they are viewed negatively and seen as:
 - 'Leaving early' if they flex their hours or don't work late
 - 'Having a day off' when working from home
 - 'Having an easy ride' if they work part time or remotely
 - 'Not pulling their weight if allowed to work around caring responsibilities
- *Comments* and remarks from colleagues regarding the above are often cited
- Respondents also felt that they missed out on social events and didn't feel so much part of the team as they had to leave for child or dependant reasons.

To give it more life, some comments, in pairs, from the same person (positive and then negative)

📄 I moved to this company because of its pro family culture

⌘ I always feel guilty!

📄 Agreement to work from home on different days so a member of the team is always around. Communicate with each other around workload etc.

⌘ No issues with colleagues, but there is an impression outside of my immediate team that people don't pull their weight

📄 My colleagues are generally very understanding of my need to work part time and generally ensure that any queries they have for me / work they need me to do is given in good time for me to complete when in the office. If I'm off unexpectedly due to child sickness then I always log in from home when I can to ensure people are kept aware of my hours and when I will be able to complete work.

⌘ Occasionally I get emails chasing me for work not completed even though they have received an 'out of office' message on the day they sent the request. When they copy my manager on these requests, or go to her directly even though it's not that urgent it makes me feel bad as she is so busy already and I feel it reflects badly on me even though there is nothing I can do about it.

📄 Communication is key through technology - email, soft phones, and mobiles

⌘ The constant 'sniping' about my working from home day being a 'day off'

📄 I work full time in an office so childcare hasn't been too much of an issue. There is good understanding among colleagues of the pressures.

🕒 I do feel slightly guilty for almost never working late and worry that it will affect chances of promotion; however I've mostly come to terms with that.

📄 I am able to also work remotely if necessary. Not ideal as I should be manning the office, but good if I have to leave early for some reason.

🕒 Yes, I sometimes feel guilty for leaving promptly, but this is probably my fault. It has to be done, and my children are my priority, so I shouldn't worry.

📄 Agile working has become accepted as a way of working.

🕒 I worry about this (what colleagues think) all the time

And it can be all positive if we come to terms with it...

📄 I use my communicator & set clear out of office messages if I am not online to indicate how to reach me. My colleagues (who are all remote to me) all have access to view my calendar so they can see my working hours and if/when I need to be away from work for nursery collections etc. I am flexible in having calls later in the evening to facilitate the time differences we have across the team

📄 I don't worry about it - my colleagues who do have children already understand if/when I leave promptly. I don't worry about any perceived negative feelings as I find I don't really notice other people leaving early - it could therefore all be in your head!

My Family Care's best practice building blocks for success:

- Agree Team norms for practices such as managing email / Blackberries - speed of response, messages 'after hours' / on days off etc.
- Communicate availability with clarity and self-discipline: 'set out your stall'
- Focus on results rather than presenteeism
- Flexibility, rather than rigidity, tends to be more popular, especially in senior roles. What can you flex around your own immovable needs?
- Whole team discussions of needs - recognise and allow those who are not parents or carers to specify some needs too
- Against a culture of long hours, any shorter hours can feel hard to justify: clarify to colleagues if you have taken a pay cut to work less
- Work out in advance the best response to challenging comments, then just do it
- Where we are trying to trim workload to fit our hours, we need to let go of some meetings or processes: what are the absolute priorities for you? How will you communicate this?
- Where handling a specific situation or comment seems difficult, get really clear on why - is it a practical need ... or a feeling you have? That helps you decide whether to tackle something externally or change the way you view it internally
- If you are worried about others' views, is there a way to ask, openly and positively about this?
- Be a good team player and acknowledge others
- Identify successes and strengths to build your confidence in what you do



- Find ways of ensuring others see what you do when you're not there AND how prepared and planned you are. In your culture, is this about sending plenty of email or is it about approaching a meeting with clear agenda?
 - If you are a lone parent in a team of non-parents, find buddies elsewhere in the organisation to share tips. Help your team understand your situation but in a solution-focused way.
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Your clients

When managers turn down flexible working requests on the basis that clients wouldn't like it, it's sometimes hard to challenge how true that may be. It can turn out, that in reality client organisations are on the same journey toward new ways of working and value innovation. That said concerns include:

- Concerns about not responding rapidly to client requirements
- Individual clients without children who do not understand the realities
- High demand periods that may coincide with family demands
- Clients who assume they are the only one.

To give it more life, some comments, in pairs, from the same person (positive and then negative)

📄 I'm lucky in that the person I took over from in this role also worked part time so my clients are used to working around the days I'm in the office and are happy with that. I'm always very clear with any new clients up front of my working days and that I do not access emails / voicemail on my non-working days. I find this upfront communication is the key to successful working relationships.

🗨️ Some clients expect me to get through the many emails they send me on my days off by first thing on a Monday morning which can be frustrating as I have many others to deal with also. I just tend to continually remind them that it is my first working day back in the office and I will get to them asap.

📄 Always available by Blackberry, so the clients aren't that bothered about where I am. I work early morning before the children get up and evening after they are in bed often.

🗨️ Clients who don't have children don't get it!

📄 Clients are largely unaware of my circumstances. It's up to me to set and meet client expectations. Generally its fine, but some clients are sometimes unhappy when I am not available because of a child commitment (although Blackberries can disguise a lot)

🗨️ There are enough hours in the day, but far too much stuff needs to be done between 9am and 6pm, and cramming it all in is difficult

And a couple of positive, realistic views...

📄 I work from home once a week. On one occasion I was on the phone to a client and my daughter was chatting in the background. He commented on this and said how nice it was to speak to a human lawyer!

📄 I try not to discuss my personal life with clients; I don't believe this is something that they need to know - they expect a service not excuses about my personal life. I make arrangements with my colleagues to provide cover so they are not affected.

My Family Care's best practice building blocks for success:

- Predictability and reliability are important: sometimes down to details such as an email signature that says how frequently emails will be checked
- Agree preferred communication methods: some people are much happier with a phone call; others prefer the less obtrusive nature of email
- In any case, ensure your most valuable clients have a contact number (for an informed colleague if not for you), as well as email
- The best client service involves fitting their needs as far as possible, rather than your own style preferences. If necessary revisit and clarify what you can and can't promise, and have others prepared with enough knowledge to provide at least a holding response
- Remember that from time to time even the full-time, office-based worker needs to go to the loo, so a client may not necessarily expect 24/7 immediacy
- In many sectors, your clients too will be on a journey to more flexible ways of working and may be keen to discuss how to make it work together.



Your Partner

We need to manage, actively, the support we need from, and give to, others in our home lives. In this overwhelmingly female survey population, there was least satisfaction overall in this area. Things that bothered you include:

- Huge variation in how domestic load is shared
- Despite many being 'happy' participants' comments still reflect that they carry the greatest domestic workload
- Pragmatism over:
 - Priority of/flexibility in jobs depending on earning capability
 - Perceived ability of their partner to do what they do
- But still a lot of resentment about carrying the lioness' share of house and home.

To give it more life, some comments, in pairs, from the same person (positive and then negative)

📄 Pretty much shares responsibilities equally.

⌘ All the thinking falls to me, e.g. when is feeding/sleeping time - how does that fit with travel plans etc.

📄 Does all the cooking, shares day to day children chores

⌘ He is not as proactive as I am (e.g. we are out of X, must buy it on my way home)

📄 He is accepting of my need to have a challenging and fulfilling career.

⌘ My partner considers domestic responsibilities to be my sole charge. There are uneven workloads between us. He also considers my work as less important than his.

📖 He takes the kids to school several mornings a week. He considers that I have to be home in the evening to take over from the nanny.

⌚ So he then goes out when he feels like it and I have to ask to go out.

📖 My partner takes some share of childcare during school holidays, and helps where he can

⌚ My partner is not always helpful when it comes to doing his share, and seems to feel he is doing ME a favour by doing any childcare

📖 We share responsibility 50/50 for getting little one up in the mornings, and it's completely 50/50 at the weekend. I have to do all the nursery pickups/drop offs unless there's a specific reason, plus I usually do bedtime because I work regular hours and he doesn't.

⌚ Basically someone's career has to come first and at the moment it's his.

📖 We have split the work-day child-care - he does mornings so I can go to work early or exercise and I do evenings.

⌚ He doesn't notice all the household admin that needs doing - sewing ballet shoe elastics, paying for school trips, preparing for school events.

My Family Care's best practice building blocks for success:

- If you share family responsibilities with a partner at home, be aware of the assumptions you may both be making about whose job it is to arrange care, to manage the domestic chores and indeed whose salary the care fees are set against
- Voice your needs and also really listen when you are talking things through at home - brainstorm for both a quick fix and a lasting solution & avoid justifying / blaming
- Beware the passive-aggressive style: assuming partner will mind-read then being fumingly disappointed when they don't
- Don't just repeatedly try a failed method of getting more shared responsibility at home, but experiment with different approaches. For example, how would you describe how you currently divide the tasks between you and a partner: direct training & instruction, careful delegation, hands-off letting go, or an equal negotiation?
- Praise what works more than you criticise what doesn't.



Your Dependants

One webinar registrant commented 'the people being cared for - their needs are the most important'. This set of stakeholders offer us another great study in:

- Guilt, Guilt, Guilt! - usually around not spending enough time with children
- Sleep - everybody needs enough sleep; few of us feel we get it
- Demands from school
- Routines, morning routines, homework routines, bedtime routines
- No social life
- No 'time for you'

To give it more life, some comments, in pairs, from the same person (positive and then negative)

📖 Sleeping issues - had to get firm. Try not to let them get too tired. Arguments with clothes resolved with school uniform.

🕒 Now homework is tricky. Too tired later in the evening

📖 I am lucky to earn enough to afford to pay a nanny. The nanny takes the children to and from school and makes sure that they do homework etc. I don't know how I would make it work without a dedicated childcarer.

🕒 There are simply not enough hours in the day. I have a very demanding job and work at a senior level. It is hard combining this with having enough time to spend with the children and look after the house. I am torn in all directions and have almost no time left over for me.

🕒 Getting homework done and the exhaustive list of demands from school.

🕒 I'd love to be able to do the school run a 3rd time each week and participate more in homework assistance.

🕒 Guilt, I just need to get over it!

🕒 The rush to get home

📖 Helping with school work is a time challenge. We always add 10 mins in the morning to do something on the white board and practice times tables on the way to school. Ensuring they are able to get themselves dressed at an early age helps. We have moved from complete dependence to me laying out clothes and now they choose their own stuff and get dressed just leaving me to brush hair in the morning. An invaluable timesaver. (BTW they are 7 and 4)

🕒 The need to constantly have attention on them when I am trying to finish off work. They don't understand that just because I am not in the office it doesn't mean that I am all theirs. I have to do some work from home as well. Explaining and enforcing that with them is hard.

📖 You have to stick to what you say - if you say you can't go on the computer until you've done all of your homework, you have to stay firm and not let them go on the computer until all of their homework is done! You should never give in to tears or tantrums - you're only making a rod for your own back and will lose the respect of your child (and possibly your partner too). If your child has a busy after school schedule, you need to squeeze homework in whenever you can. For example, I will frequently test my son on his spellings whilst I'm making up his packed lunch and will test him on his times tables whilst driving to and from activities/school. A regular bedtime is advisable - both for the health of your child, but also for your

own sanity as well! May need to become a bit more flexible as your child gets older (e.g. I still aim to start getting my 7 year old son ready for bed at 7.00pm, since that gives time for him to wind down and me time to read to him (& him to me!) I'm normally happy if he's tucked up with the light dimmed by 7.45pm. However, he does a couple of activities a week that mean he's not home until closer to 8.00pm, so on these nights I make sure he understands that it's past his bedtime and will only read him a poem rather than a chapter from his book). I also let him go to bed a bit later on a Saturday night, which makes it hard for him to argue that his friends go to bed later!

⌘ Lack of time and frequently lack of co-operation! My son is a dreamer and it takes a while to get him to focus on even basic everyday tasks like getting dressed/undressed! I have to work hard not to get cross (however late we are), because as soon as I raise my voice, World War 3 breaks out and we end up even later than we were before. My son is also a very fussy eater, which is why he now has to have a packed lunch rather than school dinners. He will not eat the same food as me and my husband and although he has to eat earlier than us during the week, I always have to plan and prepare a meal for him and then a different meal for me and my husband. Fingers crossed this will improve in time!

📖 Weekly family meetings to discuss what each child has on and needs for the week.

⌘ Hard to organise quiet time for homework or to allow me to prepare dinner.

📖 Being mega organised. Having fun time as a reward for doing things that need to be done, e.g. we can read your new book together as soon as you have put your pj's on and brushed your teeth.

⌘ It frustrates me that my daughter can never have friends around for tea after school as I am in work (she is in after school club every day). Travel is really, really difficult, as there is very little overnight childcare available.

📖 Have found a network of other mothers that help out with play dates when I am working, as well as 3 babysitters that are flexible. My son is pretty good in playing on his own when I work after school in the evenings, but my husband doesn't want anyone in the home.

⌘ I would like an au-pair, so as to be more flexible in the evenings, but my husband doesn't want anyone in the home

Some positive realism (and joy)...

📖 With the children set clear boundaries for when they come home from school, homework, behaviour and then a nice time before bed. Despite travelling, Friday night is snuggle night on the sofa watching TV together.

📖 Jointly coping when the children don't do as they should and not letting them play you off against each other

📖 My dependants are two gorgeous boys (4y and 4mths), everything is good about them.

📖 Honestly, there is no 'bad' with them. Whatever they do I basically try to remind myself that they are children. Most of the stress I have to deal with is from work not because of them. It is however challenging to juggle with family, work, money, etc. But personally I think it is just part of the game.

My Family Care's best practice building blocks for success:

- **Care solutions:** Really spend the time and money to find ideal care solutions. If you have access to My Family Care's services, 'Speak to an Expert' allows you to seek advice about finding suitable care
- Make **contingency plans** - Identify for example, a parent at your school you can trade pickups with, if the unexpected crops up, or a neighbour of your elderly relative who might pop in, in an emergency
- **Be honest with yourself and your dependants about choices and possibilities:** every family has different constraints and opportunities and we don't have to try and conceal that from our children or other dependants. It does not mean we don't love them!
- **Form a team** with those you care for: really talk and think together about things each person can take responsibility for. For example, some children respond really well to being responsible for their own PE kit etc. by reading their weekly needs from a family timetable or white board in the kitchen
- **Make dates** with your loved ones (e.g. a Saturday morning coffee with a teenage daughter): knowing you have these planned can take away some potential guilt about not being there all the time, too.



Your Care Provider

A key member of the support team, though sometimes not proactively managed, these are some of the concerns with care providers:

- The sheer cost of it
- Care opening hours
- Hard to cover for sick days and holidays
- Moving through the constantly changing care needs of a growing child
- The need for complex multi provider solutions, nurseries, afterschool clubs etc.
- Guilt over the number of hours children are cared for by someone other than a family member.

To give it more life, some comments, in pairs, from the same person (positive and then negative)

📖 Nanny - Fantastic flexibility with hours/days and often able to work overtime when needed even at short notice. Did have a period where it became impossible to talk about problems as my nanny took it very personally, resulted in her resigning and leaving with no notice. However after 6 weeks and a lot of talking between us, she returned with a better understanding of what was required and why I needed to discuss both good AND bad things with her. She has been back with us for 2 years now and as far as I'm aware has no intention of leaving anytime soon. Much easier than combining school and nursery drop offs/pick ups, plus means I can work 4 long days which nursery wouldn't be able to support.

🗨 Sometimes can be difficult when I feel she has overstepped the mark (kissing children, telling them she loves them etc.) as she doesn't view it the same way I do. Also difficult when she is ill as have no backup childcare.

📅 School, after school club, ex nanny one evening a week, and parents who moved 60 miles to live near me!

⌚ Cost, children wanting to be home and not in childcare, acting up as soon as I walk in the door, my parents who have moved near me now getting frail and eccentric and unreliable with the children.

📅 Our nanny is very good with the very little ones but is often not on top of everything i.e. nutritious meal prepared, homework done, rooms tidy, playing nicely as I would be. Much better than me at arts and crafts, outside activities, nursery stuff.

⌚ Sometimes, nanny feels like an extra person to sort out as well. What to cook, clothes ready, money for activity, petrol in car. It would be better if she used initiative a bit more and was a bit more in control and self-reliant.

⌚ Challenge to come will be when all 3 are at school and I need cover for drop-off and pick-up only.

⌚ Childcare is extremely expensive in the UK.

📅 We have a nanny 3 days a week and they go to nursery 2 days. I find this a really good balance.

⌚ The cost! I spend somewhere in the region of £1300 per month in childcare.

📅 Childcare changes at each age as the children grow up, so think at least 1 year ahead. I have a great flexible arrangement with a local child-minder who is my ultimate back up for if things go wrong.

⌚ Feeling guilty about the small number of times I need to flex work around child care arrangements

📅 Combination of nursery, before/after school club, and babysitters. Works well - but quite a juggling act.

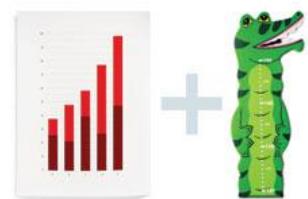
⌚ If one of the children is sick - things can get very tricky to manage, especially with short notice.

📅 Real difficulty getting a place at school breakfast and afterschool clubs, now resolved and the service is great. Problems with a childminder, whose own children were jealous of my daughter... I would never ever use a childminder again!! Problem with a nursery who gave my child food that she was allergic to, and also failed to give her medication for several months making her ill. I removed her from this nursery and used another one which was fabulous!

⌚ I really wish there was some provision for overnight childcare so that work travel is less stressful.

My Family Care's best practice building blocks for success:

- Ground rules / boundaries: be clear and specific, don't just make assumptions or provide vague hints
- Reports - what matters to you: you may need to ask directly
- Appreciating their expertise and input: aim for a balance and a professional, amicable partnership
- Give & take: flexibility applies here too, as does punctuality
- Back up & covering contingencies: communicate.



Yourself

Pragmatism seems to rule!

- Many of you wish you were more organised or more assertive either at work or at home
 - I wish I could say NO to my husband and make him do the children more often and I keep my work life as sweet as his
 - I wish I were more assertive. Work is important but I work for the kids' benefit and I get annoyed when people ring me in the middle of a football game or whilst I'm watching the kids do something. I wish I could tell them to get lost
- Many still 'coming to terms' with being the one responsible for family
- Many advise taking a confident, positive approach and trusting that things will work out in the longer term
 - I try to maintain a "glass is half-full" approach to life. Negative thinking doesn't get you anywhere, although a rant every now and again does you good! You need a good group of friends that you can talk to and fall back on if required.

To give it more life, some comments, in pairs, from the same person (positive and then negative)

📖 I am very tolerant of mess and chaos. I am honest about my challenges of being a mother to a disabled child. I have been reasonably disciplined in keeping to my part time hours.

🗨️ I can sometimes swallow less than good standards from a nanny or childcare setting because of the difficulties in finding new arrangements. This then becomes resentment in the long run. I also wish I had a more open communication with my partner about the challenges I face and about sharing the work load between us more equally.

📖 "Don't sweat the small stuff". Let the men grand stand and take the glory sometimes, so long as I get my precious flexibility and family time.

📖 Nothing on the negative side, I have been very successful career wise and also have flexibility which I appreciate.

📖 I have accepted that the pace at which I progress through the organisation will slow as I cannot work the long hours anymore and my number 1 priority is my son rather than my job. I also don't stress about the house being spotless as it is not possible to do it all with the long commute we have and the amount I have to fit in, in the couple of waking hours at home.

🗨️ I let my husband away with doing too little at night time and at the weekends to help with our son.

📖 We both have stressful jobs and are committed to our roles. Try to be positive and work everything around our young family. Key is strong organisational skills.

🗨️ Such planning means late nights every night and so exhausted by Friday. Feel guilty when things don't go to plan. Probably less patient with children

📖 I know I am very good at my job and am a good role model for my children in working part time in a senior role. I have accepted I am not going to get promoted while the children are school age and need me to be there for them.

⌘ I wish I didn't feel the need to dive into a glass of wine the moment I have put the children to bed after a hard day at work. I wish I had more patience and wasn't always saying "come on!" to them.

📄 We both have stressful jobs and are committed to our roles. I try to be positive and work hard in the hours allotted and try to be as visible as possible. I have moved sideways into a more internal role which I can do part-time but without compromising my seniority.

⌘ I should be more assertive and proactive.

📄 Just keep going without complaining too much. Relaxing about things that don't really matter but don't drop standards on things that are important. I now try to relax more with the children, and not wait until they are in bed! I always remind myself why I am working and want a career; I want to be an example for both my daughter and son.

⌘ No help from our parents or family with childcare. Wished I had more time for myself to go to the gym and get better fitness.

📄 I think I have a reasonably good balance and my daughter is well looked after and happy.

⌘ Feel like it's all on my shoulders - if I don't sort it out then no-one will. It always seems to be me having to compromise based on what everyone else wants.

My Family Care's best practice building blocks for success:

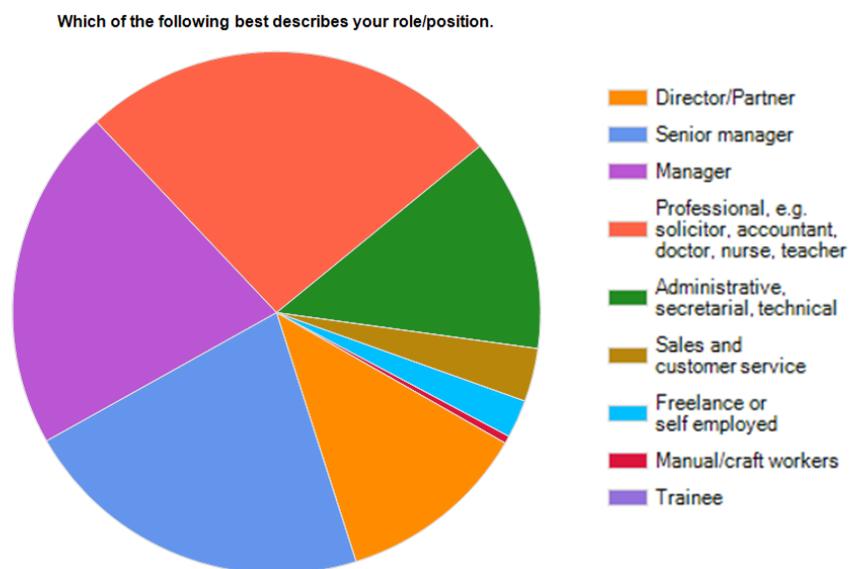
- **Strengths:** Focus on strengths, promote yourself & avoid over-apologising, both at work and at home. Know and be prepared to say out loud what you are good at: you may need to practise this with a friend
- **Positive psychology:** We often focus on the limitations our caring roles impose rather than identifying what we contribute. Really notice the positives in what you are achieving in order to remain in a resourceful state (the failures are all too easy to spot). And check out your self-talk: how much of the perceived culture is actually inside your head?
- **Managing personal energy** - take micro-exercise and micro-relaxation. You may need to be smart about exercising on the job, whether it's walking one tube stop further or exercising with your kids. You can't necessarily be everywhere you would like to be, so be selective
- **Thinking time:** Regain some time to reflect and strategise: This time is often lost when working part-time, or around family. Use the 'moments in between': when you walk from one meeting to another, to think big picture, relax your shoulders, breathe, (rather than fretting over that odd, slightly critical comment someone made in the last meeting)
- **Time management** - use tools and technology so they are liberating, not enslaving
- **Impressive Dads** - be aware that being involved with your family, alongside being ambitious at work, can be seen as character-enhancing in men. It may still feel awkward to ask for time out for the school play or sports day but used wisely, a bit of role-modelling around prioritising family can be viewed as a leadership quality.
- **Take charge** - Hint: use your parenting skills well at work and your professional, organisational skills at home. Be aware that parenting and caring will have enhanced some of your vital leadership skills such as prioritising, negotiating, multi-tasking, delegating, empathy. Make more of your transferable skills at work and use them to manage and team-build at home



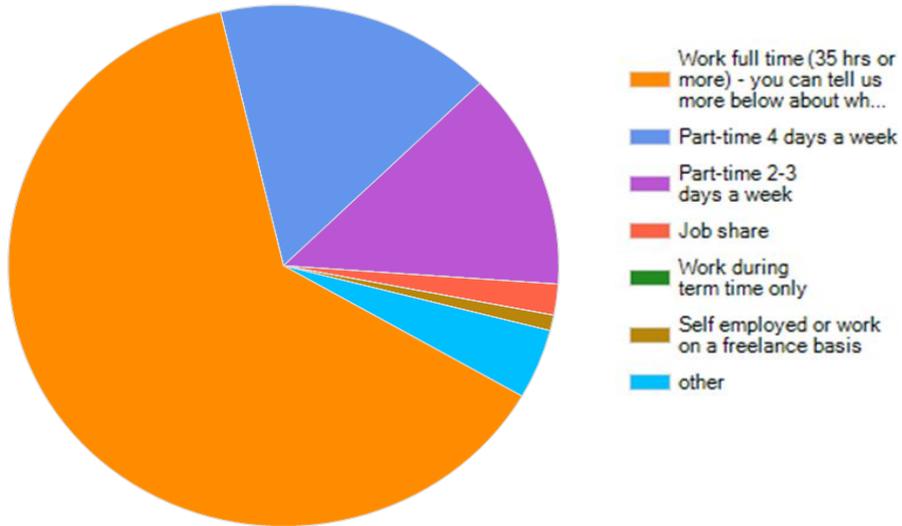
- **Engage sponsors, champions or mentors** to help you publicise successes and be seen
- **Networking for profile and promotion:** Flexible and remote workers can be less visible, less 'top of mind' for some senior influencers. Ensure you put some time and energy each month, or quarter, into considering and growing your network. Although you may not have time to spare, can you identify just one network to commit to? Or join flexible social communities through online forums, webinars, wikis etc.? Can you make it a natural habit in your diary-planning to identify influential or supportive people you could / should be talking with each month and prioritise this along with other meetings?
- **Make a plan:** You can sit down with a cup of tea (or glass of wine) and map out how well it's working for each of your stakeholders, the good, the not-so-good and the way forward. It helps to get clear and then act strategically
- **We** - with our **Work+Family Team** are the only ones who can take the lead on managing our own vision of family life and what we want in terms of career achievement: **Communicate and then commit to an action** in line with your vision this week.

About the survey respondents:

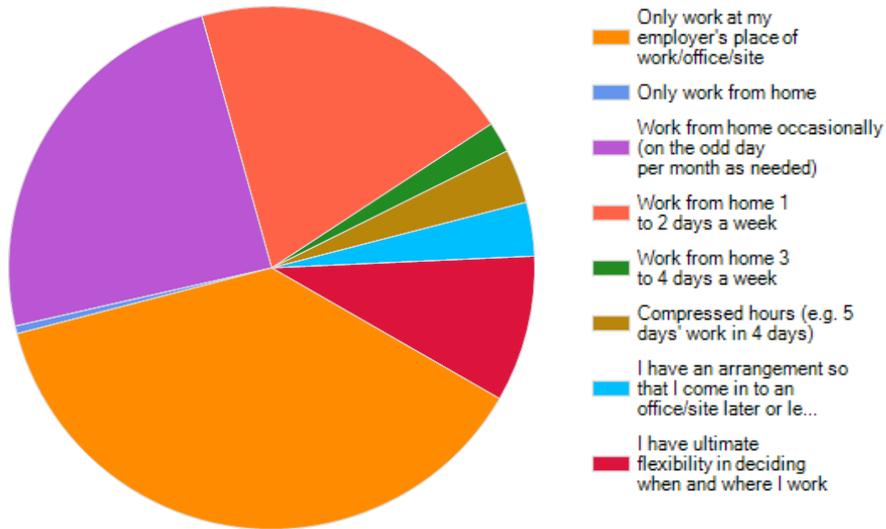
- Unsurprisingly 90% of all respondents were female and 90% of all respondents had children under 16
- Age ranges reflected their status as parents with young children; 54% fell in the 31-40 yrs range and 37% were aged between 41-50
- The following charts describe the makeup of the survey respondents in terms of their role/position, how they work and their working patterns.



Please tell us about how you work.



Which of the following BEST describes your working pattern?



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If you need any further advice please contact My Family Care on 0845 676 7680. All information and advice contained in this factsheet are meant as guidance only.