

How to Support Parents and Carers During Lockdown 3

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1. Support with Working From Home

Current working from home set ups aren't the norm. Many parents and carers find themselves having to juggle home-schooling with work and increased caring responsibilities due to COVID. Insufficient space, limited technology and inconsistent support bubbles significantly impact parents and carers' ability to easily meet work and family commitments.

Support Strategies

- Conversations between managers and employees around the **scheduling of work** (e.g. realistic deadlines and the good times of the day for meetings.) can support a parent or carers productivity around their caring responsibilities at home.
- **Provision of work laptops and/or tablets devices** enable personal computers to be used for home schooling.

2. A Flexible Approach to Working

Autonomy and flexibility around core working hours will enable parents and carers to set their own working hours. Many find working early mornings and late nights the most efficient use of time at the risk of working significantly more hours than contracted, in order to fit the work in. This latter point highlights the equal consideration that needs to be put into a manageable and realistic workload during lockdown, alongside flexible working.

Support Strategies

- Managers can explore **adjusting core hours, offering flexible hours, compressed hours or moving to task-based work** rather than hours completed.
- Designing a **lockdown specific workplan**, that is kept under regular review, can support a manageable and realistic workload.
- Exploring **Job Shares** can also establish flexibility longer term to support caring related needs.

3. Support for Parents and Carers on Furlough

It can be extremely isolating for parents and carers not to be connected to their workplace. This can prompt fears of job security and anxieties around returning to a workplace that will have undoubtedly changed during COVID.

Parents or carers can **request to be put on furlough**, or part-time furlough due to caring responsibilities. It is good practice to ensure all employees are aware of this. For those who did not start a PAYE payroll role on or before 30 October 2020, furlough cannot be accessed.

Support Strategies

- Having a **conversation before someone goes on furlough** to agree parameters for contact during the furlough period will alleviate speculation around job security and anxieties caused by unknown developments. Remaining 'in the loop' will support a more confident return to work.
- Factoring in **regular reviews** will lay the foundations for an open dialogue throughout the period. The way that furlough can be incorporated into an organisation is evolving with the Government guidelines (i.e. extensions of end dates), so an open dialogue with parents and carers means furlough can remain a responsive tool of support as circumstances change (i.e. moving between full time and part-time furlough in returning to work).
- Providing regular organisational updates and opportunities for parents and carers to check in with the organisation will foster an environment of trust and a sense of continuity. This can include **virtual briefings**, establishing **online social events**, or the **circulation of supportive information**.
- Organisations would benefit from exploring their own policies of **Parental Leave** and **Time off for Dependents** to provide the needed support, for those employees who cannot access the furlough scheme, or when additional support is required.

4. Get to Know Your New Workforce

The circumstances of an organisation's parent and carer workforce will have changed during COVID and as we emerge from lockdown. Caring responsibilities may have changed, many will still face reduced or inconsistent care provisions or support networks, and others may be shielding or living with a vulnerable relative.

Support Strategies

- Providing the opportunity for parents and carers to effectively **communicate their new circumstances and needs** will enable an organisation to draft a comprehensive **Return to Work Strategy**. This could include a **full staff survey** and specific **1:1 meetings with managers**.

5. Reach Out to Your Freelancers

Freelancers make up a large percentage of the entire performing arts industry and PiPA's research has shown that parents and carers are more likely to work freelance. The COVID pandemic has disproportionately affected freelancers due to little support in place for the self-employed. It is important to stay connected to this constituency, to demonstrate their value to your organisation and consider their future engagement with you.

Support Strategies

- Include freelancers in **organisational updates**.

- Signpost freelancers to **professional and financial support**. On the PiPA website there is a [COVID resource page](#), with free resources and links to further support, that could be shared with freelancers.
- **Create professional development opportunities and artist attachments** as lockdown restrictions ease. This would provide valuable security for freelancers whilst also creating contingency plans for the organisation (e.g. cover for staff isolating or on leave).

Further Support

PiPA can provide an industry led framework to support performing arts organisations to review the policies, working practices and resources outlined in this document. The *PiPA Charter Programme* provides organisations with a toolkit, access to events and UK wide network, to create lasting change for their parent and carer workforce. For more information [visit our website](#) or contact matt@pipacampaign.com to discuss further.