

ROI Report

Back-up Care: A benefit that pays for itself



Hello...

Thank you for thinking about the carers in your workplace.

We update this report annually and, whilst there are areas where we are seeing exciting progress, it's still pretty depressing to think that, at current rates, the gender pay gap will not be closed in my lifetime.

Please read the report and challenge yourself: why would you not invest in back-up care? I can confidently say no one does it better than Bubble.

I love thinking about innovations and support for working parents, so do reach out if you'd like to chat.

Sarah Hesz

CCO at Bubble





About this report

This report collates research on the current state of our workforce and our proprietary data on how working parents are managing their careers. We review how employers can be best placed to attract and retain talent. A full list of sources is provided.

Who are we?

Bubble is the UK's largest platform for on-demand childcare and trusted family support. Our mission is to support people to be all they need to be both at home and in the workplace.

Our unique and multifaceted benefits package offers employees a comprehensive network of support to improve wellbeing and career satisfaction. With Bubble for Work your team can access subsidised, flexible childcare, eldercare and petcare. We'll also invite parents to monthly wellbeing sessions hosted by expert voices around topics that matter to them.

With working parents making up 3 in 7 of our workforce, and 74% of Millennials planning to start a family, recruiting the best and brightest requires a family-friendly workplace.

Get in touch:

Oliver Daniels
Head of Corporate Services
oliver@joinbubble.com

Visit us:

joinbubble.com/flexible-childcare-benefits

Find out how businesses like Uber and Vitality use Bubble to support their employees across life stages.

Look around...



The exhausted new mum, fresh out of maternity leave, who starts every working day feeling frazzled because her childcare arrangements don't match up with her schedule.



The dad keeping his camera firmly switched off for the 3pm meeting because he doesn't want his team to know he's had to dial in from the school run.



The colleague who grimaces every time his phone rings because he's so worried about his elderly mother.



The talented mother of two, balking at the rising cost of her nursery fees and wondering how many promotions she's missed out on because she's been there for her kids, and how many magical memories she's missed out on because she's been there for her boss.



And let's not forget the hard-working junior who doesn't know how to broach that her poorly cavapoo is affecting her productivity...

The normal stresses and strains of everyday family life impact millions of us throughout the 90,000 hours of our lives that we spend working. Even with seemingly robust systems in place, there's a sense that we're holding on by a thread. Every time something goes wrong it feels like a brand new emergency, one we're unprepared for and sometimes even ashamed to mention.

Support through life's ups and downs shouldn't be going above and beyond for your team. It should be the bare minimum. The research screams that supportive management and a positive company culture are the number one factors keeping employees, especially women, happy in their jobs - more confident, productive and therefore less likely to leave. And yet still many companies are dodging the issue, dithering over solutions - or denying there's a problem completely until the financial results show otherwise.

It's actually quite simple. Invest in care benefits and keep your team happy, thriving and productive. You'll see returns immediately.

In this report, we're going to explain what support your teams really need - and why Bubble partners get a return of up to £3.08 for every £1 invested in childcare on productivity metrics alone.

Why now?

Your workforce need help and support; help and support that you can provide; help and support that could transform your business by increasing productivity, boosting retention and making your company a place where top talent wants to work.

The number one challenge for your people right now? The spiraling cost of living and its devastating impact. Costs that used to feel tough - like childcare fees, which have risen by £1000 a year on average - are now verging on impossible for swathes of normal families. Something has got to give - and more often than not, it's women's careers.¹

Make your business one that talented people with busy, demanding lives want to join - and then stick around at.

We are all parents, children and siblings just as much as we are employees, managers and CEOs. As business leaders, we can do better. We have the power to dramatically transform company culture and impact millions of lives.

Businesses who work with Bubble see an ROI immediately



Creating a culture shift which drives retention

Our management fee is equivalent to the savings made by retaining less than 1% of the 1 in 2 women at your business who are currently weighing up whether they can stay in their jobs.²

Practical support which drives productivity

Offering paid hours of childcare means, for every £1 invested, our partners see a return of up to £3.08 in productivity gains.



Mental load support which boosts confidence & performance

Deloitte's UK report on mental health in the workplace makes the case of a 5x return.³

Your team want childcare - the benefit that pays for itself

Gone are the days when a well-stocked fruit bowl and weekly team beers were considered major perks. And while discounted gym memberships and meditation apps are certainly nice-to-haves, providing them doesn't mean you've ticked the "employee wellbeing" box. In fact, a lot of your team simply don't have time to use those benefits at all, since overwhelming research shows that lack of accessible childcare is the biggest work challenge for many employees today.

It's well-established that a huge chunk of the national workforce are thinking about quitting their jobs, but what if there was a way to change their minds?



60%

of working parents say they would stay in their current jobs if they had subsidised childcare.



55%

say they would take a pay cut to work for a business providing quality childcare.



81%

of working parents say childcare benefits are a key factor when it comes to considering a role.⁴

Currently; only 11% of employers offer any kind of childcare benefit - but this number is growing, and with it are the expectations of existing employees and potential hires. With 75% of Millennials and Generation Z-ers intending to have children if they haven't already, this isn't a demand that's going to go away.⁵



Why childcare is stressful for everyone

You might walk down the street and see appealing childcare options around you: the colourful nursery by the station advertising its vacancies, the childminder on her way to the playground with a rabble of happy kids. But this is by far from a reality.



17%

of traditional childcare providers in the UK permanently closed down due to insurmountable running costs.



£1000

average increase in childcare costs in 2023.



8 days

a year lost to childcare fails¹

The distressing truth about childcare

There's a severe shortage of quality childcare, with 17% of providers closing their doors in the past three years and 1 in 10 still considering shutting down due to running costs and the huge churn of poorly-paid staff. 1 in 5 families have already been affected by these closures - with many more to follow.¹⁷

Over the past year, early years childcare fees have increased by an average of £1000 a year. Right now most working families are not entitled to any childcare support until their child is over the age of three. The government have pledged to change this - but how it will be rolled out with the severe shortages of providers remains to be seen.

Unexpected events, from sickness to school strikes, are stretching parental leave well beyond its limits. Thought things got easier once kids are school age? Sadly not - childcare in the school holidays (adding up to 12 weeks a year for state schools) is expensive, scarce, varying in quality and often operates over very limited hours not compatible with working life.

It's the same story with wraparound care (the before and after-school childcare that's necessary for most parents to perform productively) - demand outstrips supply with huge waiting lists, leaving many parents simultaneously juggling caring responsibilities with work, often secretly.

And then there's the mental load. The average parent - and in heterosexual couples it's usually the mum - takes on over 15 hours a week of "mental load" tasks. For those with younger children, researching, calculating and generally figuring out childcare arrangements, particularly as unexpected curveballs pop into the calendar, accounts for a substantial chunk of this. So, unsurprisingly:

72%

of working parents describe themselves as stressed out by disruptions and uncertainty around childcare.

39%

say that this negatively affects both their career and their parenting.

38%

of millennials say they are "stressed" and those millennials now make up the vast majority of new parents.¹⁸

74% of parents have missed work due to caregiving.
Give your employees back-up care and gain 100s of extra days of productivity for your business.¹⁹

Invest in childcare and reduce your gender pay gap

For working mums saddled with the lion's share of childcare responsibilities, work-life balance proves untenable even with shared parental leave and flexible working. While men continue to advance in their careers after having children, women are more likely to suffer setbacks - or leave the workforce altogether.

75% of women report having the greatest responsibilities for home inclusive of childcare duties.⁸

It recently emerged that for the first time in decades, the number of women not returning to work after having a baby is on the rise - and it's rarely a decision based on choice, but economics.¹⁰

Before motherhood, there is very little difference in average pay between women and men. As a result of employer policies that place the burden of childcare on mothers, working women continue to experience a gender pay gap.

Women who have a baby miss out on almost £70,000 in wages over the following decade.⁹

The statistics

46% of mums in the UK (equating to 1.7 million women) say they have struggled to find suitable childcare, leading to:



15%

quitting their jobs.



30%

reducing their hours.



46%

not taking on more hours.



34%

turning down a job.¹⁰

What are you doing about the sticky floor?

Everyone's heard of the glass ceiling - but the reality for millions of working mums is more like a sticky floor. Cutting down hours or holding themselves back from career advancement opportunities due to concerns about fitting increased responsibility around family commitments is keeping many women stuck firmly where they are.

Putting their career "on hold" can be a choice as they adjust to enjoy motherhood - but often, due to the gender pay gap and the unsustainable costs of childcare, it feels like the only one.

As a result of mothers often working reduced hours or holding themselves back from promotion, that gender pay gap increases further and becomes harder to recover from, with many women dropping out of the workforce completely as their family grows.

Managers have the power to give that sticky floor a much-needed mop - but many consider it easier to let their frazzled female employees stay put, often at a point in their lives when they have a huge amount to offer.

For women in their forties - most of them mums to young and school-age children - career progression, company culture and learning and development opportunities are

a huge factor in how happy they are in their jobs, and therefore how likely they are to stay.

With at least 20 years of professional experience behind them, plus the soft skills gained from juggling motherhood, their potential is enormous. Sadly, many experience a confidence crash from the demands of parenting and the impact it's had on their careers to date and how they're perceived by those around them.

The eighth annual Women in the Workplace report from McKinsey and Leanin.org shows that women are still dramatically underrepresented in leadership and are leaving companies at higher rates than men.¹¹

Supporting these women when they need it the most is an essential ingredient of a positive company culture, and a huge boost for your business. This is also the most effective way to reduce your gender pay gap.



Not investing in childcare is expensive

If women had access to the childcare they need to work the hours they want, it could generate up to £28.2 billion in economic output each year and increase their earnings by between £7.6 billion and £10.9 billion per annum.¹³

Talent retention

The facts are clear: not providing support will cause a talent drain. Last year Deloitte reported that half of women in the workplace are looking to leave their employer in the next two years and A McKinsey report published last year found that senior-level working mums were 1.5 times more likely than men to seriously consider leaving their jobs, with the overwhelming majority citing burnout as the main cause.²

Replacing a salaried employee has an estimated cost of six to nine months' salary on average, plus Oxford researchers estimate that it takes eight to twelve weeks to replace knowledge workers, followed by a further one to two months before their replacement reaches full productivity.¹⁴

Without support, this cycle will continue.

Preventing staff attrition and burnout with dynamic support quite simply makes good business sense. As we transition into new ways of work, having a well-constructed parental retention strategy is more than “the nice thing to do”.

The loss of a single working parent with a £40,000 salary could cost an organisation upwards of £20,000 in lost productivity, recruitment expenses and new hire training.

According to We Are The City, based on the average number of women leaving the workforce after having children, this adds up to a total of £200,000 a year lost for a business of 5000 employees.¹⁵

And the loss isn't just financial: businesses with large percentages of female staff are associated with higher levels of job satisfaction and engagement for everyone, regardless of gender. In turn, this makes it easier to attract new hires: ultimately, diversity fosters innovation.

If all those popular, experienced women leave, others will follow.



The Bubble management fee is equivalent to the savings you'll make if just 1% of the women who are considering leaving due to burnout decide to stay.²

Offering family support with Bubble can transform your business

You already know that creating a supportive culture from the top down has a huge impact - but how can you implement this in a way that truly eases the strain and boosts productivity?

According to Harvard Business School's research into Managing The Future Of Work, a "turnover tsunami" can be avoided by making an intentional choice to care for employees and their families.¹⁶ Showing you care leads to higher employee satisfaction, and the benefits of that care, such as feeling less stressed about childcare, rapidly leads to increased wellbeing, which in turn increases productivity.

Working parents currently make up 3 in 7 of our workforce and they have enormously different expectations in the workplace than previous generations of new parents. Pro-family culture and accompanying family-focused benefits are critical to business success.



Over 80% of employees reported that caring responsibilities negatively impacted their productivity - and the data showed that senior executives were the most affected.

Bubble for Work provides a full package of care

We've spoken to hundreds of HR Directors, thousands of working parents and built a suite of care to make sure introducing Bubble has a real impact.



Back-up care

We are the UK's leading provider of last minute care. Our network of sitters across the UK are ready and waiting to help parents get on with their jobs on days when childcare doesn't go to plan.

- All sitters are verified and parents see their reviews
- Parents choose the right sitter for their family (parent requests get an average of 8 sitters applying)
- Employers decide how many hours of care they will support, we recommend 50 hours/year



Eldercare

Employees can use the app to get advice and support on eldercare. They can also book in-home care for their loved ones.

- Vetted carers around the UK
- For the 1 in 7 employees who have care responsibilities
- Book an call with a care coach to help navigate the complicated world of eldercare



And more...

We run monthly bitesize events with fantastic speakers to inspire working parents. We also frequently co-host events with our partners to support the launch and adoption of Bubble for Work. Set-up is simple and we provide a full roll out plan.



Holiday clubs

Parents can also use their hours to book holiday clubs, particularly vital for parents of school-age kids. The BBC reported in summer 2023 that holiday clubs were costing £943 per child for working parents.

- 160 locations across the UK
- Full days of childcare in the school holidays
- Fun and inclusive activities for kids



Petcare

Pets are increasingly seen as part of the family and with more workplaces requesting more office time petcare is becoming a real factor for Millennials and Gen Z employees when reviewing company benefits.

- Our petcarers give employees more flexibility to work in different places
- Whether it's dog walking or letting out the cat - our carers can help
- It's easy to set up, manage and book all through the app

Final Words

You have the power to make a huge impact.

While government policies, childcare shortages and the crippling cost of living might feel out of your control, you do hold the power to support your people from within - easing the mental load and financial strain that impacts working parents every day as they juggle being the most productive employee and loving parent they can.

Introducing Bubble is a simple and very effective way of showing that you get it: being a working parent can be logistically and mentally challenging.

The new world of work requires new benefits. Benefits that deliver across multiple KPIs and provide tangible support, and benefits that empower your employees to feel supported and in control.

As this report has outlined, Bubble will deliver returns by:



Boosting productivity within the workforce



Driving talent retention and attraction (key for gender pay gap gains)



Instilling confidence and mental wellbeing

Can you afford not to act?



References

- 1 <https://news.sky.com/story/nursery-fees-to-rise-by-1-000-this-year-as-childcare-providers-struggle-with-costs-forcing-parents-to-quit-work-12806742>
- 2 <https://www.deloitte.com/an/en/about/press-room/men-face-alarmingly-high-levels-of-burnout-despite-shifting-work-arrangements-rise-in-hybrid-working.html>
- 3 <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/uk/Documents/consultancy/deloitte-uk-mental-health-report-2022.pdf>
- 4 https://www.kindercare.com/-/media/kindercare/documents/kindercare%20confidence%20report_b2b.pdf?la=en
- 5 <https://pregnantthenscrewed.com/one-in-four-parents-say-that-they-have-had-to-cut-down-on-heat-food-clothing-to-pay-for-childcare/>
- 6 <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/lack-of-child-care-costs-economy-122-billion-dollars-parents-businesses-taxpayers-study/>
- 7 <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth>
- 8 <https://www.cityam.com/childcare-and-chores-leave-professional-women-burned-out-during-pandemic/>
- 9 <https://www.smf.co.uk/childcare-crisis-means-new-mothers-miss-out-on-70000-of-earnings/>
- 10 <https://www.progressive-policy.net/publications/women-in-the-labour-market-2>
- 11 <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace>
- 12 <https://hbr.org/2021/04/childcare-is-a-business-issue>
- 13 <http://www.progressive-policy.net/publications/invest-in-childcare-to-boost-annual-earnings-of-working-mothers-by-up-to-10-6-billion-thinktank-urges-chancellor>
- 14 <https://www.oxfordeconomics.com/resource/the-cost-of-brain-drain/>
- 15 <https://wearethecity.com/why-bringing-working-mothers-back-into-the-fold-is-the-ultimate-roi/>
- 16 <https://hbr.org/2021/04/childcare-is-a-business-issue>
- 17 <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2023/may/25/one-in-10-childcare-providers-in-england-likely-to-close-official-report-finds>
- 18 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tracybrower/2022/06/05/working-parents-are-in-crisis-new-data-and-the-5-best-responses/>
- 19 <https://www.benefitnews.com/news/74-of-parents-miss-work-and-its-costing-employers-billions>