

'We're sharing childcare: I've colour-coded each parent according to risk profile' ^[1]

Listen in on the conversations of the office workers as they endure the long summer break

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AVAILABILITY

Access online (paid subscription) ^[2]

EXCERPTS

Leila, the childcare juggler

Will,

I'm attaching various spreadsheets related to summer childcare. I know I'm only in the next room but the arrangements are so complicated it's easier if I write it all down. Anyway, if the kids see us talking they'll think it's family time and I really need to get this report done before dinner.

BTW, forwarded you an email from Awful Amy who seems to think now home schooling's out the way it's back to normal. Maybe if you've got a live-in nanny but not if all your bloody summer camps are shut.

Also cc'd you in an email to your parents asking if they'd have the kids. I know they say they're shielding but I spotted a picture of your dad on Facebook having a celebratory post-10k pint with his mates. If you ask me they've spent too much time during lockdown enjoying themselves. Someone needs to remind them of their responsibilities. By someone, I mean you.

My mum is doing Fridays. I'll write up a Covid list: when to sanitise the kids, play instructions (football OK, Twister out). Strictly no hugging. My sister has bubbled with her (can't believe she got to her first) and so mum can only cuddle her kids.

The rest of the week is the kid pod. We're sharing childcare in rotation. I've colour-coded each parent according to risk profile. Jacqui talks a good hygiene game but I saw her shake someone's hand. Mark and Josie aren't in any more. They got into the posh pod with the hedge fund couple with the huge wine cellar.

Which brings me on to our schedule (also attached). It's how we'll share the working day while also looking after 10 children. I'll set my alarm for 4 and get a couple of hours before the kids wake up. They can watch TV until the others arrive. I can take over from 2 o'clock which will give you a clear nine hours.

Signing off before the kids find me. L

Rich, the family-business man

Hola, team! Thanks for coming to this emergency all-hands huddle.

Theo, por favor, you know we agreed at your appraisal in January that once you turned five, you would dress and behave like a grown-up. Even on holiday, yes.

Now at our last weekly check-in, we said we would review our stay in the villa in the light of the new quarantine restrictions on Spain.

You initially all signed off on a long break this year, until the end of August, so that we could decompress post-lockdown. Sophia and Milo now vote for cutting the holiday short, on the basis that they would miss the start of the new term if they were quarantined, but as founder – sorry, darling, co-founder – of this group, I have a supervote and I'm overruling you both. As you know, I can "work from holiday" just as easily as working from home, and, as we discovered last year in France, holidays are the ideal opportunity to hone your business skills.

Sophia, a longer break will give you a chance to work on delivering that stretch goal we set of developing a home schooling curriculum that holds up past brektime on day one.

As for your other KPIs, the board – that is, Mummy and I – were unanimous that bonuses should be scrapped this year, so no fizzy drinks for the duration. I'm also asking you each to sacrifice 20 per cent of your pocket money. Call it a gesture of solidarity. No whining, Theo – and think yourself lucky: five is not too young to be furloughed.

Milo, I have a Zoom call scheduled later, so while the others are enjoying a siesta, you need to tune up the WiFi. Don't pout at me: it's in

your own interests since you spend most of your time staring at that device and you did interview so well for the position of chief technology officer.

Theo – thumb out, please – you’re in charge of Operation Ischgl: pursuing the refunds from Easter’s cancelled ski trip. What do you mean “I’m too young”? All it involves is dialling and redialling this number and in any case you’re used to being ignored.

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