

Future Skills for Young People Report



Introduction

Among their numerous responsibilities, working parents and carers are preparing their children for a future we cannot predict. The only certainty is that the world they grow up into will be different. There will be new technological advances, and issues to contend with, such as climate and biodiversity challenges, demographic changes and likely ongoing geopolitical shifts. They will also be growing into a world of jobs that don't yet exist. So what skills will the children of today need for their tomorrow? What do parents want them to have to help them navigate, stay resilient and be nimble in the face of fast-paced change? What will enable them to embrace the world confidently as it evolves? What will equip them as tomorrow's leaders and capable members of society?

Our annual [Modern Families Index 2024 Report](#), surveying 3,000 randomly-selected UK working parents and carers, highlights the needs and challenges faced by working families, with insights for the employers who wish to attract, retain and engage them.

This year we also took the opportunity to ask parents what skills they believe their children and young people will need in the future.

We asked:

“Thinking about the future of work, including the impact of AI and the wider employment landscape, which skills do you think your children will need the most? Please choose up to 5.”

The responses were enlightening as the table below shows.

	Total	Gender of Parent		Age of Parent		
		Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+
Resilience, ability to cope/thrive through change	38%	32%	46%	31%	41%	49%
Interpersonal and social skills	38%	34%	43%	29%	42%	44%
Written and spoken communication skills	34%	31%	39%	29%	36%	46%
Imagination, creativity and problem-solving	33%	32%	35%	32%	34%	41%
Computer science / programming	32%	30%	35%	27%	36%	32%
Maths and data analysis	29%	30%	28%	25%	31%	36%
Management of AI	27%	29%	24%	22%	28%	32%
Family / community building skills	24%	21%	26%	26%	23%	18%
Management of people	21%	23%	18%	19%	22%	21%
Ability to conserve the environment and biodiversity	20%	21%	19%	23%	18%	18%
Self-defence / survival skills	20%	18%	22%	22%	19%	18%
Ability to use leisure time well	16%	17%	15%	20%	14%	13%
Other (please specify)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Don't know	7%	7%	8%	5%	8%	14%

Key Findings:

1.

Parents believe their children will need resilience, and interpersonal skills above technical skills like programming, maths and data analysis.

2.

Younger working parents put their strongest emphasis on their children's imagination, creativity and problem-solving, followed by resilience.

These responses signify a societal shift from prioritising hard skills, in favour of learning resilience and flexible 'soft' skills, enabling individuals to connect with others in the face of an ever-changing landscape.

We asked our Parent Panel to comment on these interesting findings. The Parent Panel is made up of families with children in Bright Horizons' Early Education Settings, while the original 3,000 parent sample was a random UK population.

"Children's emotional development is more important than ever in order to be successful in the future working environment. With information being so readily available, the days of traditional learning (book studying, exams etc.) are likely to be phased out with more emphasis on group working, projects and practical assignments. Interpersonal skills and resilience will be key in an ever changing, evolving workplace."

"Having interpersonal skills and resilience helps her to understand when she should say no to something. She will live in a world where no one will ever be able to switch off. She needs to be able to create boundaries and show her worth at work so as to not be overlooked by AI."

"Interpersonal and social skills are floundering with younger generations, perhaps in part due to the pandemic, the rise of technology and virtual interactions, and the relaxing of many formalities that once governed society. It's important to me for my child to feel confident in social settings and to have good communication skills."

"Resilience and coping through change is another really interesting topic, which I think again comes easier to younger generations who have grown up in this technology/internet boom."

"Sadly the world isn't always a kind place, so resilience is key, especially with impacts of social media e.g. on self worth and body image. Interpersonal skills are imperative to everything, school, work, friendships and being able to thrive in life."

With society's ever-evolving demands, both at home and at work, parents are clearly aware they need to prepare their children to take change in their stride. To support future work choices, specialist skills must still be nurtured and will remain important on an individual and industry-specific basis. However, being ready to face – and, ideally, influence – life's challenges will be essential for everyone.

"Things are constantly changing every day, more than they used to when I was a child. So it's important to keep up but also cope with all the changes."

"The employability of our children will be increased by strong technical know how, empathy, social skills and the ability to adapt and change whilst having a strong emotional intelligence."

"Most technical skills can be taught, but as we develop, it can be very hard to 'unlearn' less helpful behaviours. That said, I think it is important to reward and encourage our diversity as humans, not least because we will all think and feel in different ways, and it is that difference that will be more important than ever to cut through the increased use of future technology."

"Whilst I see resilience as being very important, I wouldn't say this is more so now than ever. I think understanding computer science and programming will be a great skill to learn in addition to problem solving. I work with AI at the moment and we will still need people to interact with it so, in terms of work, I think that's important. However, I believe that ultimately interpersonal and social skills will be the priority to have a fulfilling life."

Rather than simply preparing for school or for a specific career path, parents recognise their children need to be prepared for life, with the confidence and motivation to flourish, whatever the circumstances.

"We focus our development on routines and predictability because as humans we strive for this. However, we must teach our children to cope with the unexpected events life throws at us. I find it interesting that out of all of the options the top two are based around some level of socialisation, something I agree as being very important."



Parents Seeking Advice

It's interesting to note these results tie in with the top concerns brought to Bright Horizons' team of Work+Family 'Speak to an Expert' Consultants and Coaches. The Coaching & Consultancy team supports Bright Horizons' clients' employees through a range of issues that impact work and family life.

In 2023, almost 50% of Bright Horizons Work+Family 'Speak to an Expert' cases sought advice on parenting, including resilience, wellbeing and managing children's emotions.*

Discover how we helped working parents support their children and teens with our recent Resource Pack:

Understanding and Supporting Children's Mental Health

[Find out more →](#)

The Bright Horizons Nurture Approach

The aspirations of parents for their children, expressed in the Modern Families Index, also align with the uniquely holistic educational approach practised in Bright Horizons nurseries. The outcome of extensive research and development. The Nurture Approach places as much emphasis on children's emotional wellbeing as it does their practical and academic skills. By nurturing the whole child, this approach introduces the concept of positive mental health from an early age, laying the foundations for lifelong success and ensuring children grow up as resilient, compassionate individuals ready to thrive in an ever-changing world..

The Bright Horizons Nurture Approach is comprised of three core elements:

- holistic learning
- emotional wellbeing
- inspirational teaching and exceptional care.

These are brought to life through the learning and activities in our nurseries, alongside the way the practitioners support each child's individual needs to ensure their wellbeing in the crucial early years of brain development. This unique environment provides children with the secure foundations they need to develop social and emotional skills that will support them throughout life.

Our separate early childhood research further demonstrates that children who are securely attached and feel safe and secure in their environments are curious and eager to try new things and join in. They are empowered to make academic progress, showing pride in their achievements and are able to recover more quickly from mistakes and disappointments. They are helped to develop quality relationships with others, are more confident and able to express their thoughts and feelings. Children are also more likely to experience high levels of self-esteem and develop resilience to manage threat and challenge as they grow older.

*These cases are in addition to those which included practical challenges, such as childcare and education, as these topics are categorised separately.

About Bright Horizons

What we do

For more than 35 years, Bright Horizons has been supporting the evolving needs of working families and their employers. We create, develop, and deliver solutions that remove barriers to performance, talent and diversity in our clients' businesses and help them succeed in their goals.

We address the wide range of challenges facing parents and carers in the workplace today, enhancing our clients' ability to attract and retain key talent, giving their teams the peace of mind and confidence to do their best work.

How we do it

Bright Horizons' services include workplace and partnership nurseries, coaching and development provision, digital resources, and manager guidance, plus back-up care for adults, children of all ages - and even pets.

We provide our clients with access to live usage and engagement analytics on their programmes, and also keep them updated with ongoing research findings and benchmarking data.

Who we are

- We have operations in the UK, US, India, Australia, and the Netherlands. 1,300 clients globally, more than 400 in the UK.
- We have been recognised as a UK Best Workplace by the Great Place to Work Institute every year since 2006, and are actively committed to Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging, and to Mindful Business practices.
- We strive to minimise negative environmental impact guided by our Future Earth green agenda and, through our registered charity the Bright Horizons Foundation for Children, to make a positive difference in the lives of children and families in crisis.

Our family of services includes:



Reliable, flexible **Back-Up Care** options for children of all ages, adults and elders **and even pets**. When usual arrangements break down or schedules change, Back-Up care is a trusted Plan B that protects productivity and supports wellbeing.



One to one **Virtual Tutoring** in Maths and English for children (ages 4-16 years) and also school entrance exam preparation. Tailored tutoring helps confidence and achievement, while easing parents' concerns about their child's education and mental health.



Work+Family Space, an easily searchable hub for all matters work and family, and a vital resource for busy workers. Filled with a world of information, tips, webinars and expert advice, there's something for everyone - whatever their life stage or personal situation.



Our innovative **Parental Leave Toolkit** is a digitised coaching solution delivering timely checklists and advice to the individual and their manager at every point in the journey, making a significant difference to return rates. Beyond the parent transition, we've developed tailored coaching programmes for our clients on many major life events.



Workplace Nurseries and Nursery Partnerships provide parents with reassuringly high-quality and convenient care at, or near, their workplace. The ultimate "sticky benefit" and a real game-changer for retention.

Get in touch to discover how we can help your business and your employees:

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