

## WEARING MASKS DURING WORKING HOURS

We have suggested that adults that belong to different households and share space in a home, in the context of childcare provided by a Nanny whilst the parent/s are working in home office, **wear masks throughout** the portion of the day they spend together. In light of the new variant of SARS-CoV-2 that emerged in the UK and is believed to be present throughout other countries (<https://www.bbc.com/news/health-55507012>) we feel that it is important we encourage you to implement this precautionary measure again.

Please consider that, even when a parent is working in a separate room, with the door closed, a child might choose to pay them a visit, and the Nanny might follow: the Nanny will then be exposed to the parent's droplets, which will have accumulated in the closed room. The same will happen when a parent enters a room occupied by a Nanny and their charges. Wearing masks will considerably reduce the amount of droplets in the air you share. The children will of course not be wearing face masks, and this might make it seem pointless for the adults to do so. There is seems to be grounds to believe that children do not pass on the virus in the same way as adults might, and hence sharing the care of a child should not deter adults from protecting themselves and each other (<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/12/we-now-know-how-much-children-spread-coronavirus/>)

## THE IMPORTANCE OF VENTILATION

Whenever adults that belong to different households are spending time together in a home, they should have a solid plan for ensuring the space is appropriately and regularly ventilated. There are a few methods for ventilating (<https://welcometogermany.com/2018/12/how-to-air-out-a-room-like-a-german.html>) in different types of buildings (<https://theconversation.com/how-to-use-ventilation-and-air-filtration-to-prevent-the-spread-of-coronavirus-indoors-143732> and <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/ventilation.html>).

**We recommend ventilating thoroughly for 5 to 10 minutes every hour**, and whenever an adult joins others that had been in a closed room up to that moment (<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-how-to-ventilate-your-home-to-make-it-safer-for-christmas-12166505>). This will mean that temperature go down in the home often, ensure all adults and children have a “ventilation jumper” to put on when it is time to ventilate. Set alarms and work ventilation into your routines so you don't forget: perhaps you'll ventilate for 10 minutes before your Nanny arrives, and for shorter spells before a parent joins Nanny and charges for a meal, or when they come back from an outing. Remember that shared bathrooms also need to be ventilated if adults are entering them in close succession. This will be tedious and unpleasant, but becoming ill is worse: the days have started lengthening again, the spring will come, it will get better.

## **EXTRA STRESS AND WORK BROUGHT BY KITA CLOSURES**

We strongly encourage you to openly discuss the changes to your routines, stress and workloads brought on by the suspension of Kindergartens and schools. As time goes on, the accumulated tiredness from the last nine months might make all feel truly blue. Parents will see their time for work and rest shrink further, and Nannies will find themselves looking after more children and for longer than was intended as you started working together. This is nobody's fault, and is hard for all. Review your daily routines, renegotiate the sharing of household chores and cooking. Nannies with an increased workload will have less time to dedicate to their nursery duties, parents will have less of a chance to put the house back together after a Nanny has left, or before they return. Be in solidarity with each other, and make a plan to weather the next few weeks: do not hesitate to contact Extra Arms if you need support in defining task lists and division of labor. Your teamwork will carry you all through this phase.

## **VISITING PARKS SAFELY AND COMING UP WITH ALTERNATIVES**

As all parent, carers and children get through their days, in some areas and at certain times of day the parks can become quite busy. It is both important that children continue to get chances to play with other children, and that risks of contagion are minimized. We encourage all adults to keep social distance, to supervise from a little further of when possible and to wear masks outdoors when the area you are in is becoming crowded. Ensure you disinfect/wash children's hands and toys after playing with others/sharing. Consider alternative outing possibilities and activities, the Nannies have been discussing options such as visiting bigger parks instead of Spielplätze, walking quieter streets for a bit of dog-spotting, construction site supervising, "I spy" games, chalking pavements, tree climbing, bug watching, leaf gathering, etc.

## **NANNIES WORKING ACROSS TWO FAMILIES**

If a Nanny works with more than one family, all families might reasonably become concerned of the risk of cross contamination between households. Nannies might not be able or willing to "let go" of some families for the benefit of the others, both because all families will be dependent on the Nanny's care and loyalty, and because of the loss of income it would entail. We encourage Nannies to ask families if they would like to hold an e-meeting in order to get to know each other, compare and define common approaches and precautions. So far, Extra Arms is able to say that all families working with our Nannies and Sitters have been very cautious and consistent in ensuring all is done to prevent contagion.

## WORKING SAFELY

We wish to encourage you to call a meeting and discuss what precautions you need each other to take in order to feel as safe as possible in your work together. Some examples of precautions Nannies and families have taken include:

- Nannies can keep a few changes of **“indoor clothing”** at the family's home, and change into them upon arriving, if commuting on public transport – ensure you leave your outerwear at the door, and thoroughly wash hands before and after changing.
- Families and Nannies can plan together and pool resources to avoid or **minimize use of public transport**. The families can allow use of the family car, offer to pick up and take the Nanny home when possible, and share costs of car-sharing services. Nannies can bike whenever distance and weather allow, or drive to work when possible. If transport cannot be avoided, wearing gloves and/or sanitizing hands after alight is always helpful.
- Families can ensure they provide alcohol-based **hand sanitizers, surface sprays and soap** at every sink (prefer dispensers or separate soap bars, to all sharing the same bar).
- Families can provide the Nanny with a **separate set of cutlery**, glasses, cups and dishes, and/or ensure all kitchenware is washed in a dishwasher.
- Wearing masks around young children can be difficult as well as uncomfortable. However, we encourage adults to wear masks indoors whenever anyone is displaying symptoms that could be consistent with COVID 19 but are mild enough not to cause immediate, excessive worries.
- Ensure you **ventilate** regularly and thoroughly, especially when the Nanny and parents are sharing indoor spaces: at the office, we crack all windows to create a draft for at least five to ten minutes every hour or so.
- Ensure that adults working in the same home **use separate spaces** whenever possible, and that Nannies and their charges have chances to spend time outdoors.

## SHARING INFORMATION

- It is fundamental that both Nannies and families are **completely transparent** with each other with regards to their risk factors, both in the case of children and in that of adults. Any instance of significant contact (sharing of indoor spaces for over 30 minutes or outdoor meetings involving conversations and proximity for over 30 minutes) with a person who has tested positive, and/or with a person who came down with symptoms that are consistent with COVID19 must be shared immediately. These include, but are not limited to: dry coughs, sore throats, fevers, bouts of diarrhoea, loss of taste/smell, difficulty breathing, fatigue.

- Every time you see an instance of **risk is communicated**, assess together. Direct contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID19 requires, in our view, that care be suspended and everyone is tested. Whenever adults or children have been present in an environment where another person has tested positive (perhaps at an office, an event or at school) we encourage you to contact your doctor, wear masks indoors and, whenever possible, take a test (<https://www.berlin.de/corona/en/testing-facilities/>).
- We are all under a lot of stress, as we each try our best to protect ourselves and our loved ones, whilst also preserving our social lives and our work. Families and Nannies are finding that more information needs to be shared about how time outside your work together is spent. This can feel like a crossing of boundaries, especially for those who prefer keeping your work together and your private lives separate. Remember that if more questions are asked than usual, it is due to all of our desire to feel safe. We encourage you to discuss general habits and precautions that you feel are important, in an attempt to build trust that means details don't need to be shared as often. If you are worried about a risk factor (a crowded office, or a WG) sit down and communicate your worries, so strategies can be found together.

## HOME OFFICE

- Many parents are working from home, meaning that Nannies and families are often **sharing care of the children**, even if that had not originally been the plan. Sharing your family home, a space that has also become your Nanny's place of work, can be complex. We encourage you to:
  - **Assess the space available:** can it be divided, and different areas assigned to different people, and/or different activities during the day? Making a plan together in this sense will help the Nanny to know they are not intruding in a space that a parent needs, and parents to know that they will not be disturbed because the Nanny and child have all they need for a given span of time.
  - Be mindful of **boundaries:** children might be used to accessing all spaces of their home at all times, but consider that spaces such as a master bedroom or study might be uncomfortable for a Nanny to spend significant time in – they are private spaces and/or spaces where things that should not be damaged are kept, and reserving these areas as working spaces for the adults during the Nanny's hours might be useful.
  - Share your needs: Families should let their Nannies know what they need in order to work: **be clear** when you need not to be interrupted, when you need the home to be quiet because you are on a call or doing type of work that requires special concentration. Nannies should let their employers know what activities and games they would like to engage the child in that might involve noise, music or a specific space. Plan together so that workable compromises can be reached.

- **Acknowledge and manage difficulties:** caring for a child in their parents' presence is different to caring in sole charge. The child will usually prefer a parent's company to the Nanny's and parents might be inclined to intervene more often (in response to a child being upset, in order to instruct regarding activities/meals etc). This will change your working dynamics, and might end up making things harder. Sit down and have a conversation about this, negotiate practices again in this new context. All families and Nannies are experiencing these difficulties, you are not alone – please reach out to the agency if you need support in finding new ways of working together, we are here to help.

## WORK HOURS LOST TO ISOLATION THAT IS NOT MEDICALLY MANDATED

You will find yourselves deciding to take breaks from the routine that are not medically mandated (i.e. no doctor's note, no partial reimbursement from the Krankenkasse), and will be in doubt as to what to do with those lost hours:

- **Know that it is nobody's fault,** the situation is hard for all: the risks of contagion are everywhere, nobody can isolate completely whilst living in a city and continuing to work, and despite all precautions you all will eventually come in contact with people who test positive, or will develop symptoms that cause concern.
- **Split the annoyances half way:** the family might have been exposed to risk, and ask the Nanny to stay home. Technically this is not the employee's fault, remuneration will stay the same and recouping hours should not be expected as a matter of course. The Nanny might have been exposed to risk, and will decide to stay home – this is not the employer's fault, it is not mandated sick leave and the expectation will be that all hours are “caught up”, which, depending on the Nanny's other commitments might be difficult to do. We encourage to split hours lost down the middle, forgiving half and recouping half whenever possible. There is no way to know who will need to request a break to minimize risks, it is in everyone's interest that risks are communicated: creating a situation of mutual solidarity will ensure that nobody puts others at risk because they feel that asking for a break will cause conflict.
- We encourage you to **take a break whenever in doubt:** dealing with lost hours might be annoying, but becoming ill or spreading Covid19 is worse. Err on the side of caution.

## STRUCTURE THE DAYS

Nobody planned to spend this much time indoor together. The days can be all kinds of weird and long. Structure your days: decide what times Nanny and Family will spend in the same room, and what times will be spent separately. Depending on the child's age, plan

activities for the morning and afternoon, to “wrap” around naps, meals and other established routines. Use **regular body breaks** (put on some dancing music, a CosmicKids yoga video, open windows and be silly). If a variety of shared activities happen each day, the times spent playing freely/independently will feel less like a vacuum, they will be more enjoyable for the children, thus providing adults with respite. Acknowledge that providing childcare in these circumstances is tough, requires a lot of ingenuity, and takes a toll on carers and parents alike.

## **MAKE USE OF SICK LEAVE**

If your Nanny is feeling unwell, even with slight symptoms, discuss calling a doctor and obtain sick leave: this will allow families to claim partial reimbursement for time of, and everyone to avoid taking unnecessary risks!

## **USE YOUR “HOUR BANKS”**

Those working on part time contracts (let's say <25h per week) can easily make use of their hour banks as a way to give paid leave ( let's say for <1 month) against hours that will be worked of in future. This might be useful when dealing w i t h mandated/self imposed isolation periods , and might be especially appropriate when families might expect that once we've all adjusted to this new way of life, work will pick up again, and it will be likely need to be done from home with the little ones present. We encourage those families working with freelancers to put a similar system in place, if at all possible, in solidarity with them: freelancers are the most economically vulnerable among us at the moment.

## **CLUSTER SHIFTS/CONSIDER OVERNIGHTS**

This is NOT one for all, and only works if all genuinely feel comfortable with the arrangement: be honest with each other, this is not a good time to exacerbate stress.

Example: the Nanny is prepared to sleep over two nights in a row and the Family can squeeze work (and a little rest) into three day clusters. Each cluster should be followed by a cluster of time of of the same length, so you decompress, rest and are ready for the next. This will mean that the Nanny does longer days, allowing parents to work/rest as needed. It will also mean that the Nanny spends considerably less time commuting, thus minimizing risk to self and others. Each pairing will need to decide how this concept can be declined to suit their hours/schedule/commitments and other circumstances. Make use of Extra Arms' support if discussing such complex and out-of-the-ordinary arrangements alone is hard.

## OUTDOOR TIME/EXERCISE

Soon it may no longer be safe or possible to go out for walks with babies and children, so all will be spending more time together indoor. Make use of balconies and internal courtyards whenever possible as a means of safely getting some fresh air. Or take a car to some place empty and out of town (again, lockdown permitting).

Make a plan re getting some indoor exercise. The internet is full of all kinds of videos on how to move. Help the children work “body breaks” into their days, at least once every two/three hours. Use bikes to be outdoors whilst minimizing contact with others, whenever it's possible and it's safe.

## ACKNOWLEDGE THIS IS ALL VERY ROUGH!

Both Families and Nannies are under enormous pressure. All are fearing (or are already contending with) financial losses, precariousness and the great difficulty of making predictions about how long this will last. We all worried about our loved ones who live abroad. Allow each other to be stressed.

Be in solidarity with each other, do your best, meet in the middle and cut each other and the children some slack.

