


Coronavirus: Nannies in demand to help with home schooling

By **FARIHA KARIM** and **NICOLA WOOLCOCK**

THE TIMES

11:45AM JANUARY 19, 2021 •  34 COMMENTS

A luxury agency that recruits nannies, housekeepers and butlers for celebrities has had a rush of interest from families looking for help with home schooling.

The number of families getting home help from Polo & Tweed has doubled in the past six months and inquiries have risen by 200 per cent over the same period.

The agency, which supplies domestic staff for affluent families, including those of chief executives, entrepreneurs and diplomats, says that there has been a particular demand for nannies who are educated to degree level and can assist with home schooling.

While the number of Polo & Tweed's clients has doubled to between 20 and 30 each month, the company has also had a flood of applications from professionals such as lawyers looking to become home helps themselves.

"A butler can earn £100,000 (\$AU176,000) a year and live-in housekeepers can earn £65,000 (\$AU115,000 a year," Lucy Challenger, the founder of Polo & Tweed, said.

"A couple of months ago, we placed a nanny on £85,000 (\$AU150,000) a year. The family, an American family, had a main property in Chelsea and an apartment five minutes around the corner that the nanny lives in, free of charge."

The agency trains domestic staff in silver service, housekeeping, house management and etiquette. Although staff do not need to be formally educated beyond 16, some clients are now seeking a nanny who can also be a home teacher, some even asking for applicants with master's degrees.

Many working parents have found themselves home schooling their children during the day and then working late into the night. Some have cut back their working hours or even suspended their careers. Others have described how their children are not prepared for their parent to assume the “teacher” role, and feel they end up doing both their day jobs and teaching roles badly. Last summer the campaign group Sept for Schools said that parents had been reduced to tears, including in front of their children during home lessons.

“Because of all the home schooling, especially for professional families that have several children, it’s impossible for two adults to teach their children and work,” Ms Challenger said.

“We get them help to get a nanny to live in with the family, or a lot of people are also saying they need temporary support or part-time staff to give them a break. Teaching nannies are really popular at the moment.”

HM Revenue & Customs has confirmed that the furlough scheme can help employees who cannot work because they are caring for children while schools are closed. The scheme is, however, dependent on employers agreeing to it.

A TUC survey of 50,000 people found that seven in ten requests for furlough had been turned down for working mothers, while nine in ten said their mental health had been negatively affected by stress and anxiety.

Ms Challenger said that during the first lockdown some clients asked for training in household tasks for themselves because their home staff were unable to work. “They were faced with doing things they had never done before,” she said. “Like working the washing machine, or if you’re cleaning a pure silk Alexander McQueen dress, you don’t want to put it in the washing machine. We had one client who called us to help change her loo roll.”

The Times