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Parents hunt for 'Mary Boffins' to bring up their baby Einsteins

Brits fork out over £3 billion a year on 'super-nannies'

Move over Mary Poppins - the role of a professional nanny is changing fast, with ambitious parents now looking for exceptionally talented 'super-nannies' who can fill the role of third parent, language and music teacher, nurse and personal chef to their kids, new research by Gumtree.com reveals today.

The findings by Gumtree.com, the UK's busiest recruitment site for nannies, reveals that work-crazed parents are paying over the odds and offering expensive perks to entice nanny extraordinaires to work 12 hours a day to cater to their children's every available need, and give them an out-of-hours education while they're at it.

A staggering 45% of parents admit that they hire 'super nannies' to act as a surrogate parent and teacher, while they get more time to spend at work and progress their career.

The modern-day Mary Poppins, or 'Mary Boffins', is less magical English nanny, and more likely to be a university honours graduate who pulls out a foreign language dictionary, a guitar, flashcards, a first aid box and a Jamie Oliver school dinner menu from their bag of nanny tricks.

Just as comfortable with calculus as cooking, homework as housework and fluent in a second language, 'super-nannies' come at a hefty cost, with over 10% of parents paying out over £500 a week on their nanny. Coming in at £26,000 a year*, the cost of a 'super-nanny' is now considered quite a lucrative career option, with an annual salary well above the average national wage.

The research found that on average parents are spending £305 per week on their nanny. With 200,000 nannies working in the UK, that brings the UK spend on nannies to over £3 billion.

The Gumtree.com research revealed parent's must-have 'super-nanny' skills requirements:

1. A second language (65%). Spanish, French and German are the most popular

language skills sought by parents on Gumtree.com

2. Ability to perform CPR and carry out first aid (62%)
3. Artistic flair – ability to teach creative drawing and art (58%)
4. A professional childminding qualification (56%)
5. A strong disciplinarian (50%)
6. A nutritious cook (35%)
7. Ability to play and teach a musical instrument (10%)

One mother who posted a nanny job on Gumtree.com was keen for the nanny to help out with music lessons: *“It would be a huge bonus if the applicant can play the violin and/or piano as our boys are learning both and we don’t have a clue how to help with practice!”*

It’s a nannies’ market too, with parents competing with each other to poach nannies with the best skills and qualifications. Paid holidays and sick days are now par for the course for 74% of parents. With foreign nannies a popular option, many parents (29%) are offering to pay religious and cultural holidays on top. A quarter (25%) of parents will provide the ‘super-nanny’ with their own car, while others offer free computer access (24%) so they can keep in touch with their friends and their own room with TV (20%). To ensure that their nanny gets some rest in between the 12 hour days, 5% of parents will pay for membership to an exclusive spa!

Commenting on the research, Sophy Silver of Gumtree says, “It goes without saying that parents want the best for their children but the role of nanny is being increasingly blurred between that of professional childminder and parent. We have seen a 335% increase of posts on the site relating to families searching for nannies with advanced skills since this time last year with language and teaching qualifications the most searched for skills. It’s clear that ambitious parents are looking for a 24/7 Mary Boffins with top drawer skills to help fast-track their kids academic development.”

A spokesperson for the Family and Parenting Institute said: “Families in Britain are under tremendous pressure with increasing numbers of mothers working and fathers currently working the longest hours in Europe. Crucial contact time between parents and children is at a premium while parents struggle under financial and work pressures to achieve the work-life balance they want. Parents, of course, want to do the best for their children and when they cannot do it on their own then they will turn to the best possible help they can get.”

Notes to editors:

- Research carried out by Mumsnet, surveying 856 parents across the UK during March
- *10% of 200,000 nannies in the UK paid £26,000 per annum equates to approx

£520m per year