Distancing Not Disconnecting

THE PYJAMA FOUNDATION’S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
It was late March when all of our worlds turned upside down. We quickly had to adapt our regular weekly mentoring visits to ensure the safety of our volunteers and the families we support. While we were concerned about the road ahead, we were also confident about the commitment of our volunteers and the lengths they would go to continue helping the children they support thrive.

There was no surprise that our Pyjama Angels went above and beyond to adapt to these changing circumstances. This commitment and adaptability has allowed us to ensure that during such an uncertain time we were immediately able to continue meeting our mission and support our Pyjama Children, in new and innovative ways.

During these times, we were committed to supporting our volunteers and helping them remain connected with their Pyjama Children. We did this by providing weekly updates via emails to volunteers and their foster carers. These updates included policy updates, self care tips, uplifting words of support and of course a wide range of resources that are easily adapted to the virtual realm they were now working in.

Here is a range of examples of some of the resources we have provided during the COVID-19 lockdown to our volunteers and foster families to support them with the transition to online. These resources include downloadable post cards to assist with letter writing, a daily planner, Facetime Battleship, growth mindset reminders, a scavenger hunt and a colouring in story book written by one of our Pyjama Angels to help our kids understand what’s happening around them during this time.

Resources sent to volunteers & foster families
LISTENING TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

As well as weekly support emails to all of our actively visiting volunteers, and fortnightly virtual catch ups we have also undertaken two surveys which asked our volunteers to comment anonymously on how they are connecting with their Pyjama Child during these difficult times.

We knew our Pyjama Angels were incredible, but of the 329 people from across the country who responded in our initial survey sent out in April (a response rate of more than 25 per cent), we received some amazing results about how wonderfully they were adapting to the current situation and going above and beyond to support their child.

In the second survey we undertook, we equally retrieved an impressive result with another 240 responses from volunteers across the country.

KEY FINDINGS

TWO THIRDS

Despite the immediate change to our Program, approximately two-thirds of our Pyjama Angels continued to connect with their Pyjama Children during the lockdown period.

70%

Out of the Pyjama Angels who had been in contact with their child, approximately 70% felt they had been able to maintain their relationship and connectedness.

45%

More than 46% of the Pyjama Angels surveyed said they connected with their Pyjama Children via virtual means during the lockdown period (FaceTime, phone calls or online gaming platforms).

59%

Most significantly, of the Pyjama Angels surveyed more than 59% said they focussed on general conversation with their child during this time to ensure they maintained a strong connection.
“Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the current situation regarding engagement with children through the Pyjama Foundation. In general I’m finding the phone calls with my child, (6yr old) to be working well. His carer has been great and he is very receptive. We had a strong connection before the restrictions were implemented and I’m sure that helped.

Today we started to write our own book. My child decided on the topic and we wrote down the story together over the phone. It was a lovely story about his dog, Abby. I’m going to get a little booklet together and illustrate the story, in black and white with simple pictures. I’ll post it to him. My child will then colour the pictures to complete the book and will add finishing touches like “The end” and “Written by ...”.

He was very excited about it and said that he will check the mail with his carer. He can’t wait to show his brother and read it to his friends, and to Abby, of course!”

“Since our face-to-face visits stopped in April, I’ve been posting letters & activities to G regularly. It’s nice to see in her replies, that she’s also giving me activities to do...she must know I really need to work on my math skills.”

“With our physical visits on hold for the moment, it’s important my little friend G and I remain in contact in other ways. Today I was lucky enough to find a big pile of Easter artwork at my front gate from her - it’s a lovely feeling to know that even though we haven’t seen each other for a few weeks now, she’s still thinking of me and wanting to sit down & make me things.”
"We totally understand why this decision had to be made and will miss seeing N’s Pyjama Angel. We will forever be grateful to you and Jacinta, N’s gorgeous Angel, for everything you have done for him and us.

N* has come so far since he has had Jacinta in his life and we will never forget the support you have given us. He will keep in touch with her though mail and phone calls..

"I have communicated with both Mike and Adrian (Pyjama Angels) about this. The level of commitment from both to their Pyjama Children is heartwarming and this current crisis will not impede these relationships.

I will be endeavouring to support ongoing contact via any digital means available. I hope to convey to Mike and Adrian the immense value their interest in these boys’ lives is and ask that you note same."

"Just a message to say thanks for the amazing care package the foundation sent to us via Christine (Pyjama Angel). It has been a lifesaver during this time providing distractions and learning opportunities for all the kids. I cannot thank you enough.

Our Pyjama Angels have been amazing reaching out to the children via phone, text and even zoom to keep supporting us.

During the peak of the lockdown we supported our Foster Carers by sending out activity books to keep the children engaged and learning. This little person sent us a special reply letter to say thank you.

Dear PJ Foundation,

Thank you so much for the wonderful book. I can’t wait to do them all, they really enjoy my PJ Angel. He is really funny. Right now I’m playing to build a tree house (I got the idea from the book you sent me). Thanks again.

From [Child’s Name]

FROM OUR FOSTER CARERS