

Statement from Starlight CEO, Cathy Gilman

We are all very concerned about the coronavirus and its impact on our loved ones and our daily lives. Anxiety, isolation and loneliness are emotions that we are all susceptible to, especially at this very difficult time, but at Starlight we know these are emotions that seriously ill children and their families can feel all the time.

That's why despite the challenges that we all currently face; we hope to be able to continue to deliver essential services wherever it is safe to do so. Very sadly it does mean that we must suspend our wish-granting programme at this time. We simply cannot put vulnerable young people or our hard-working team at risk of infection. It also means that we must postpone our storytelling in hospitals and hospices until it is safe for hospital wards to have visitors again.

This does mean though, that our play and distraction services are more important than ever before. As hospitals and hospices become busier and nurses face even more pressure within the NHS it's vitally important that we continue to deliver our Distraction Box service. These special toolkits help all kinds of health professionals- from paramedics to anaesthetists- in the delivery of what can be distressing procedures for children, they can even help clinics operate more efficiently and cost just £128.

At a time when visits may be restricted and activities cancelled in hospital wards, our treasure trove of toys, games and puzzles called Boost Boxes will play an even more important role in comforting, distracting or simply cheering up really poorly children. Each box can help 60 children and costs just £124.

Technology plays an important part in giving children what they need too. We're soon to distribute you gaming bundles to more than 1000 hospitals and we're testing a telepresence robot that is specifically designed to alleviate isolation and separation anxiety.

You might think in the current circumstances that opportunities to play in hospital and hospices are a nice to have rather than a vital service but we know that they are essential to maintain the wellbeing and normal healthy development of a seriously ill child as well as helping them to cope with their treatment. Preserving childhood through serious illness really matters.

So quite simply we really do need your help. We are just about to enter what would normally be our busiest time of year, the next 5 months would usually be jam-packed with events that would typically raise at least £1 million. Many of these have quite rightly already been cancelled and inevitably more will follow. Starlight depends upon your support, without you there is no Starlight. We do understand that you must put your own family first at this unprecedented time, but if you can spare a thought for Starlight and support these essential services too you really will be helping thousands of families across the UK.

Thank you

