

Brinsley: 'Tales of Lockdown'

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Dear Parents and Carers,

I want to personally thank all those people who have contributed to this collection of 'lockdown accounts'. Not only have people been incredibly generous with their time, they have been remarkably honest. In doing so they have provided something that really does demonstrate the thoughts, feelings and experiences we share as a community.

In reading what people have shared it is easy to see the things that make Brinsley such a strong community. Things like an appreciation for the simple things, the walks in the countryside, the random acts of kindness, compassion for the people we live with or near; All of this generates a sense of pride for the community that exists.

Despite the positive it is inevitable that something like this Covid-19 lockdown would cause some anxiety, frustration and confusion. One of the things I would like to address is the sense of guilt and anxiety that some parents have said they feel because they do not think they are giving their children enough support in their learning. Please do not measure yourself against other people. Everyone's circumstances are different and this means not everyone can physically spend as much time supporting their children's learning as others. What we can all do is provide a loving, caring environment, an environment where the real 'Heroes' are obvious because we see them every day.

Kind regards

Jason Osprey

Over recent weeks I have become aware of the simple pleasures in life that I now appreciate more than I thought possible.

Sitting in my garden hearing children playing happily in their own gardens. Listening to birds singing, visiting with their babies and watching the seasons change. Sharing mealtimes together with the family, even though it has meant more cooking for me! I appreciate all those who have continued to work in order to make life safer and easier for us all.

I have had to find ways of adapting which has resulted in a much more stress free day, prioritising what is essential and putting to one side things that I can do nothing about.

Knowing that we are all in it together brings a sense of being part of a wide community. One that feels like we are all part of the same family.

These past few weeks have given me reason to pause for thought, to decide what is important and cherish those around me. I know I will be a better person because of this.

- **Anonymous**

I have run out of things to gloss! I have decorated most rooms and literally glossed every door, every skirting board, every architrave and even the bannister. No more glossing. Should I start flossing?

- **Miss Croft aka the Gloss Queen**



Where to start?

The week leading up to lockdown was busy at school as we watched the government briefings to see what the plans were. We were ready, just about, but like everyone else the full impact of what was to come and how long it would last for, didn't really hit home. Within a week the family were at home... all of the time!

The weather helped make it feel slightly like the summer holidays, until the realisation that we were going to have to juggle home schooling and supporting our families with their home schooling too. Not so easy with an 8 year old who only wants to do crafts and drawing all day! There have been ups and downs, positive moments and the not so positive ones, sunny walks and virtual catch ups with family, friends and our lovely class. Now the beginning of a new period of time where we can only hope things settle down and begin to look more positive as each day goes by.

- **Mrs. Williams**



Lockdown has not been at all what I expected it to be. Initially I found the whole thing scary and I've struggled at times trying to work from home, not going out and doing the things I enjoy, being with the same people day in day out, struggling to buy essentials and the sheer repetitiveness of it all. However, now we're slowly coming out of it I've started to see it as a 'blessing in disguise'.

It's given me time to reconnect with family who live further away, and friends who I've not seen in a while because we "didn't have time." A chance to catch up with and chat with neighbours during the Thursday night 'Thank you' clap - neighbours who I usually just exchange "Hellos" with because we're busy. A time to do some of the other things I enjoy like reading a book in a few days instead of months! I've valued the opportunity to slow down a little and think about what's actually important!

- **Anonymous**

Mrs. Bates' Lockdown Diary



20/3/20 – Schools are closing: It won't be for long, I bet we'll be back after Easter!

23/3/20 – Joe Wicks! Well that was harder than I thought it was going to be. We might try Cosmic Yoga tomorrow!

24/3/20 – Let's make the most of the garden. We planted some seeds and are looking forward to watching them grow.

26/3/20 – My lockdown birthday! What a lovely day. I had lots of phone calls, texts and driveway deliveries. It was really lovely to see one of the pupils from my class at the window! Especially when they came baring the glorious gift of 'grape juice.'



29/03/20 – Well let's see what this 'Zoom' thing is all about. A family get together on a Saturday night, playing quizzes and bingo, is the new going out!

2/4/20 – The Brinsley spirit was strong tonight! It was so nice to see and hear so many people out on the streets showing their appreciation for the NHS and Key Workers.

12/4/20 – Luckily the Easter Bunny was given permission to leave his burrow to deliver Easter eggs. Once again, the Brinsley spirit was strong as every child was given an Easter egg by the local councillor.

23/4/20— Glow stick disco night! We enjoyed turning the lights out and dancing in the dark with glow sticks. It was so much fun recording my part for the staff video to the children.



30/4/20 – What day is it? I'm pretty sure it's Monday 56th Apranuary?

2/5/20—Where is this 'Blue Bus' I keep hearing about? We went for a walk and discovered the 'blue bus', which turns out to actually be a big blue coach owned by Mrs Berry, our chair of governors! I have found so many nice walks around our local area since lockdown began. I feel very lucky to live in such a beautiful village.

8/5/20—VE Day! Wow! Once again, Mr & Mrs Enever brought the community together and delivered cream teas and sweets for every house in Brinsley. A very special day that will be remembered by many.

17/5/20—Purple hair day. With no sign of hairdressers opening, I had to take drastic action! Mr Bates was let loose with the very purple hair dye!

24/5/20—Boris says schools will reopen on 1st June. I'm not sure about this, is it safe yet?

25/5/20—Mia's 9th birthday. We had lots of fun today and it was made extra special by a visit from 'The Brinsley Dinosaur'. Mr Chamberlain (parent and governor) has been making magical mornings for the children of Brinsley by surprising them with the dinosaur on their driveway! Amazing! [See picture overleaf]

30/5/20 – It's Mr Bates' turn to visit the home barbers! Today I did my first ever haircut. Not too bad if I do say so myself!

3/6/20—Today I have been preparing to return to school to teach FS2. I have missed everyone so much and cannot wait to start back on Monday 8th June.

When I decided to teach at Brinsley Primary School I was apprehensive about teaching in the village I lived in! I can honestly say that the last two months have made me feel nothing but proud and honoured to be able to do this! Thank you Brinsley folks. You are awesome!

During lockdown I got a rare opportunity to spend lots of time with my family as the boys moved back in! We've had lots of family meals around the table, lots of laughter, we have played games, been in the paddling pool and on lots and lots of long walks. We are truly fortunate to have the surroundings we have to enjoy the countryside.

We watched the news avidly in the beginning, however after a few days I found it all to distressing so tried to keep busy in the garden, sewing and constantly cooking for everyone.

I really missed all my friends and family and the school children.

We will slowly get back to a new normal and look back at lockdown with a mixture of emotions. The happiest moments will stay with us forever xx STAY ALERT xx STAY LOVED xx

Mrs. Scrimshaw



During lockdown, I have missed seeing my friends and family. I found it very hard not to be able to see them and sometimes I felt very lonely. If I was having a bad day, I would either go outside, go to my bedroom or FaceTime a friend or family member. I have learnt that I am good at trampolining tricks, because I was experimenting with tricks in my free time. On a good day, I would play with my brothers and sister. I am grateful for the fact that none of my family have caught the virus and everyone that I know is safe. Also, I am grateful for the warm weather that we have had during lockdown. If there was anything that I would change after lockdown, it would be that I would walk a lot more. The most important things to me are: my family and my friends.

- **Caitlin aged 10**

I have missed my friends - it has been lonely. During lockdown, I have uploaded videos to YouTube. It hasn't been too bad because I was able to speak to people online. I am grateful for my life, my friends and my home. On good days, I did landscaping and gardening. I learned a new skill - wood carving! I also learned that my family is massively important to me. - **Alfie aged 11**

Family is not an important thing. *It's everything.*



During lockdown, I have missed my friends and family - I found this really hard, which tells me I have good relationships with them. Because I had lots of time on my hands, I learned to ride my bike. At first I thought it was tough, but I can ride my bike 3m now! Sometimes, I found my little sister annoying, so I had to move away. Now I know I am grateful for my friends, family and foster parents.

- **Ben aged 11**

One of the funniest things I remember was when we were trying to teach my mother in law how to use FaceTime and we spent 20 minutes looking at her ear because she just couldn't understand that she had to look at the camera. Being in their seventies and on the 'shielded' list, teaching them how to use technology was so important. Like a lot of families, we developed the weekly 'family quiz night' where we took it in turns to host via FaceTime. In fact, it was at the family quiz this week where I learnt in a quick fire round of questions that I was going to become an aunty! Of course, I was absolutely delighted, but what did I want to do? Like anyone in my situation, I wanted to go and hug my brother and his wife, but I couldn't.

Home schooling was challenging at times. I have to say my eldest, with the exception of one day, was a dream to teach, but my 4 year old.... Let's just say I tapped into my happy place on more than one occasion! Thankfully my eldest was so on the ball. He was up at 7am ready for his lessons which we were able to complete before I knew my class would be logging on to Seesaw and I would need to start giving feedback to them. My weekly Zoom quizzes with the class have been a highlight of the week. It did take me a few weeks to build up the courage to do them knowing that at any moment my youngest could burst on to the screen and say something horrendously embarrassing or throw a tantrum.

Lockdown has taught me the importance of my family and our health and well-being, especially being married to someone on the clinically vulnerable list. After all this is over, I want to make sure that we continue quiz night as a family (in person) and my boys appreciate the freedom they have and understand that heroes aren't the celebrities they see on the TV and the footballers in their favourite club, but those men and women who have worked on the frontline to ensure that should we fall ill, we would be looked after and those who ensured we had food on our table.

- **Mrs. Sisson**

My lockdown journey so far has been mixed, up and down, but definitely more positive than negative.

I work full time, usually behind Rock City in the city centre, but since the 23 March, I have been working in our spare room/office. Initially, just before lockdown started, the thought of working from home filled me with dread. The few times I had worked from home before had not been particularly productive, I wasn't set up properly at home and I just thought it was going to be an absolute nightmare in terms of actually getting anything done workwise.

Instead, it has been completely the opposite and more productive than usual. This is probably a combination of still getting up pretty early and just getting on with work before waking the kids up and not having the hour commute to and from work and somehow, thanks to my fiancé Richard (who is thankfully a stay at home dad), actually having fewer distractions at home than work, even with two kids in the house. Also having a proper office-type set up (big monitor) really helps! Because it is working so well across the firm, when things are back to "normal" we will probably be able to work from home two or three days a week, which will be fab and will quell some of the working mum guilt (more below).

I'm certainly not missing getting up at 5.30am, getting ready, sorting the lunches etc, and rushing to get the tram about 7.30am. Things in general are much more relaxed and I'm really enjoying being around more, seeing the kids more - starting early etc means I can just stop and do stuff with the family as and when during the day. However, work has been very busy the last few weeks/months so this hasn't happened as much as it could/should. Though, with the weather being so nice, it's been lovely to just stop work at 4.30 and go into the garden and be with the family (and then maybe log back on at 10pm 😊 - it is becoming more difficult to separate work and other life).

What I am finding incredibly stressful is my absolute inability to get any home schooling done, combined with seeing other mums doing it "properly". I'm torn between the mentality that things can't go too awry if not much gets done, to being a total failure and terrible person for not being able to enforce or inspire much in the way of work, especially from my 10 year old (with the 14 year old attitude) – everyone seems to be doing this much better than me. It is particularly difficult because Richard isn't my eldest's dad and although we have been together since she was 2, she still wants me to do all the stuff, which is sometimes exhausting, and physically impossible – I can't sit at my desk and do all my job work, and sit with my daughter at the same time doing schooling.

Being at home does ease some of the working mum guilt I expect many of us have – I think if things were normal and the kids were both at school doing useful things, it would be great. I can see the kids before and after school, pick them up which I can't usually do. But working at home with them not at school feeds the guilt again as I can hear them, and feel bad that I can't help Richard out more or spend more time with them helping with schooling - but I have to work! I feel better now that Edward is back in FS1 and at least having some social interaction and doing useful things for a few hours!

I don't know if we are all just ok and happy being in the house/garden, or because we've not been out in so long that something is broken – now we can go out a bit with the kids, I feel like I should be all enthusiastic, taking them out all over and making the most of it. The last time I went out was Good Friday, to Morrisons and I feel little desire to go anywhere! Not because of the virus, I just feel like I can't be bothered!

- **Sara Holland**

Coronavirus vs Dad

This little bug showed its head late February, I was one of those who was “Hey it can’t be any worse than the Flu.” Oh how wrong was I!!!! February turns to March. Everyone is starting to look at each other funnily if they have a sneeze or a cough. Boris then tells us we need to lockdown. Schools close, shops close and it is the start of what looked to be a pretty bleak summer.

We were worried for our families, worried for our jobs, worried how to educate the kids. How do we manage? Well pretty well I think. It has been rough at times but it has been just wonderful being able to breathe for once. The morning school rush, the rush to get the kids in to school, the childcare runs, the stolen hugs before bed because we were too busy!! Coronavirus forced us not to be busy, it forced us to reconnect with our own families in our own micro community, learning to be around each other, respecting the space we have (granted, daily our house was a bombsite).

The way we greet each other has changed, no more handshakes, high fives, hugs or kisses. The reassurance we get from a hug from people we love and care about is what I miss most. It forces us to communicate differently. We see someone in distress we want to hold them, but now we hold with our eyes and ears, listening and appeasing trauma in a way we have not experienced. It feels uncomfortable but it’s the new way.

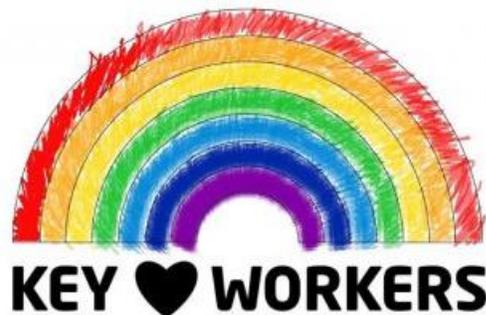
Being a keyworker working across the county conducting Covid positive home visits and seeing the impact was truly terrifying at times. The days of stripping off on the doorstep (like your mum used to make you do because you were filthy from playing football or hanging out building dens) I thought were gone. Wondering did I clean my car keys? Did I remember to bag my used PPE properly? Truly scary, but I also saw amazing acts of kindness and bravery throughout this.

The days when you’re out on the road and can’t find a brew – a good job, as there were no public facilities available; Not being able to get lunch out because everywhere was closed and waiting an hour at Tesco was not an option for a really rubbish meal deal. Working at home - the management teams realising you can be just as efficient with a small child on your lap in a management meeting!

We see people achieve the most incredible things in the most trying of times, I can’t speak for other areas but Brinsley itself has become united like I have never seen before, the Crazy Dinosaur that wanders the streets bringing joy to so many people [see previous photo], the meals for vulnerable and shielding, foodbank collections, the list goes on and on.

The good that people do also highlights the areas we need to work on as a community moving forward. These inequalities in the village will still be here when things return to the new “normal.” We need to remember those who propped up the community when it was low and hopefully we will remember this period not with just sadness but of pride, this bug won’t be going away anytime soon, so we will have to be on our toes. Remember the fallout is going to be with us for a while, we need to remember our children and families need us just as much now as in the middle of the lockdown if not more as the “NEW WORLD “awaits.

- **Anonymous**



I have found lockdown difficult to adjust to, but after a period of time I have found I am enjoying the extra time with the children and the extra money I am saving! I don't feel in any rush to get back to normal and hope I can take the positive aspects of lockdown with me into the new 'normal' that the future holds.

I feel it has improved relationships with my immediate family and the children get on so well, having spent the last 3 months in each other's pockets. They will never get this time again!

I have to say I'm so appreciative of teachers and what they have done prior to lockdown as well as during lockdown. They really have gone above and beyond and I want to say a huge "Thank you."

- **Anonymous**

"Woohoo!" said my son. "Oh noooo!" I said.

So it began - I made a plan. Lots of lovely things to do, some school work, activity, walks, etc. Keep our days busy and organised. Wow this is going to be amazing! Out came the fence panels at the bottom of our gardens so we could actually see our neighbours, not just hear them. We met every morning at 11 and every evening around 4ish for a cuppa. Sometimes we would also meet at gin o'clock.

We continued to meet twice a day to keep our sanity. It turns out that I cannot teach my own child!

Apparently, I'm "stupid and don't know anything" or "the teachers have been teaching me wrong then," so says the child! By the end of week 1 my 'plan' was scrapped!

We both had sleepless nights, worrying over different things, we had fun in the sun, had frustrating arguments over the simplest of things, we had tears and laughter. We found ourselves withdrawing from each other so that we didn't argue and get cross over silly things. We were exhausted! We stopped doing schoolwork.

Then one day we got up and just went for a drive. We didn't get out of the car, we didn't see anyone, we just drove and talked. We talked about everything from cloud shapes to feelings and every other random thing in between. Lots of it probably nonsense, but all of it was important to us.

We learned that to take time to simply talk and listen was the way forward. From then on the fog lifted and things just fell into place. We stopped worrying about things and offered our time to help and care for others. We talked to elderly people on the phone; we did doorstep visits to friends. We helped other children feel a little bit more 'normal' again. By helping others we rebuilt our relationship.

So all in all we have our many ups and downs. We may not have done as much schoolwork as others, but we have both learned some valuable lessons. We have had a really awesome, productive, yet challenging Lock Down.

We are all in it together.

Keep smiling xx

- **Anonymous**

If you are suffering any kind of anxiety related to the issues discussed in this letter, please try the links below:

Mind – Covid-19 and your wellbeing:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/#collapse842d2>

Samaritans - Having a difficult time with your mental health during coronavirus:

<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/support-and-information/if-youre-having-difficult-time/if-youre-worried-about-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak/>