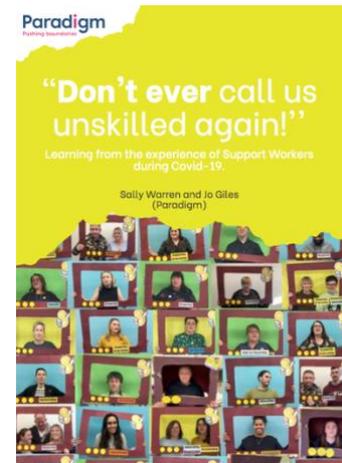


## Press release from Paradigm

5th August 2020

**Contact:** Sally Warren, MD Paradigm  
**Email:** Sallyw@paradigm-uk.org  
**Tel:** 07792 405976  
**Web:** www.paradigm-uk.org



### Report launched:

## “Don’t ever call us ‘unskilled’ again!”

Learning from the experience of Support Workers during Covid-19

**Authors:** Sally Warren and Jo Giles ([Paradigm](#))

*“People who offer their time, energy and attention to help ... others are an asset to society and should be valued as such.*

*Let's see a shift away from viewing Social Care as a tiresome drain of resources to viewing it as a valued and essential part of society.”*

*(Survey respondent)*

“Don’t ever call us ‘unskilled’ again” brings you the voices of 118 Support Workers (supporting people with a learning disability and/or autism) from across the UK. \*

The majority of the respondents are members of the [Gr8 Support Movement](#).

The report captures their experiences, thoughts, ideas and learning during the pandemic and shares them with the nation.

It highlights:

- how support workers responded during the pandemic with thoughtfulness, creativity and dedication.
- some key messages and 'must haves' for moving forward beyond the pandemic.
- the plea of Support Workers to be valued and recognised as essential and highly skilled members of the Social Care workforce, not just now but as society moves forward.

\* In February 2020, Government Cabinet Member Priti Patel, described 'Care Workers' as 'unskilled'!

Care homes supporting older people have hit the news and the rest of the Social Care sector (including Support Workers) have been overlooked and excluded from guidance and easy access to testing. As journalist Saba Salman explains: “The government’s guidance on coronavirus for supported living settings has been “under development” since mid-May, in contrast to care homes guidance, published three months ago and already updated at least once.” ([Whilst everyone else emerges from Lockdown](#) -The Independent, 14th July 2020)

We wanted to give a platform to this hidden and hugely skilled workforce - Support Workers (supporting people with a learning disability and/or autism) who do not generally get the opportunity to tell their story.

*“As per usual, Support Workers have a vital voice, they have proven to be highly skilled, caring, kind and resourceful - Powers that be MUST continue to listen and encourage more creative ways of support and value the role.”*  
(Survey respondent)

We end the report with eight ‘Key Messages’ and six ‘Must Have’s’ which have emerged from the of voices Support Workers who have been (and are still) working directly on the frontline.

*“A hidden workforce speaks out. Support Workers we salute you.”*  
Sue Livett (CEO Aldingbourne Trust)

**See full report, a narrated recording of a short version (with pictures) and narrated recording of the whole report here:**

<https://paradigm-uk.org/2020/08/05/dont-ever-call-us-unskilled-again/>

## Supporting statements:

**Baroness Hollins** says...

*“This outstanding survey can be summed up in these few words from the report: ‘Social Care has been underinvested in, undervalued and invisible to many’. The complexity of the Support Workers role is just not well enough understood.*

*During the pandemic it has become very clear that smaller settings are safer - more people have become ill and died from Covid-19 when they live in larger settings.*

*Sadly, Support Workers who are essential key workers, have not been offered PPE or testing in the same way as staff in congregate settings for the over 65 age group.*

*I agree 100% with the report’s conclusion that a national Support Worker scale is needed which pays people a salary to reflect their training and expertise.”*

**Dr Sara Ryan** (Oxford University) says...

*"This report brilliantly brings the experiences of support workers, a too often overlooked and undervalued group, to the fore. It demonstrates the flexibility, skill, creativity and knowledge Support Workers use to accommodate challenges during COVID-19 and offers powerful and important messages we should all pay attention to."*

**Sam Harrison** (Support Worker) says...

*"It is really refreshing to read something that actually reflects how I feel. The fact it is being published gives me a small amount of hope that someone may take notice of us. It also helps me feel more empowered to carry on the fight for all my colleagues, as I have been increasingly disillusioned with the sector ... This reminds me that as a whole Support Workers need all the support they can get, and we should all carry on the fight."*

**Sarah Maguire** (CEO Choice Support) says...

*"This survey and report highlight the values and humanity that is at the core of the support worker role. Without fuss or fanfare support workers carried on with their jobs to ensure people's lives were protected. I am humbled by their resilience and commitment and outraged that anyone could describe their work as unskilled."*

**Sue Livett** (CEO Aldingbourne Trust) says...

*"A visceral report which doesn't pull any punches. A hidden workforce speaks out. Support Workers we salute you."*

**Beverley Dawkins, OBE** (CEO Generate) says...

*"We hope that policy makers take notice of this hard work, and the 'must have' recommendations of this report. It's time that society recognises the importance of the lives of people with learning disabilities and/or autism, and the expertise, skills and value of the people who support them."*

**Katie Gibson-Peacock** (Community and Support Worker) says...

*"In so many supportive networks and connections the really good stuff often happens below the radar of all others - of course with the exception of those that it really matters to most - the people in that relationship! They know good stuff/ support when they **feel** it!"*

*As many support workers know, GR8 Support is not unusual - what is more unusual is that it hits the headlines.*

*My hope is that this report will highlight the prevalence of GR8 support and inspire those providing GR8 Support to go from "GR8 to even GR8-er" whilst at the same time encouraging others to step up, value themselves and each other, to give of their best and offer truly person centred support.*

*Try getting through a global pandemic without us!"*