

# Key messages in responding to the pandemic

An excerpt (Page 22 - 24) from “Don’t ever call us unskilled again!” Learning from the experience of Support Workers during Covid-19.

Sally Warren and Jo Giles (Paradigm. [www.paradigm-uk.org](http://www.paradigm-uk.org))



“...when the crisis hit, it was the low paid people we relied on. Not the rich or famous. We need to learn about what is important ... PPE stocks need to be maintained, investment into care and NHS systems continued. A pay scale which represents the role, not one that represents the interest society wishes to pay to a hidden industry.”

## Message 1: Supported living settings need clear, timely guidance!

Clear guidance for those with a learning disability and/or autism living on their own or in a shared home with support (known as Supported Living) is urgently required in order for people to be supported out of lockdown and in preparation for a possible second wave.

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)

Easy Read information must also be published alongside any public announcements giving guidelines. These must be made available in a central place. People with learning disabilities/autism watch the news too!

## Message 2: Coronavirus tests must be available in supported living settings

Coronavirus tests must be easily available for all those living and working in supported living settings.

**Paradigm**  
Pushing boundaries



### **Message 3: Support each person out of lockdown in the way that is right for them**

Carefully consider how each person comes out of lockdown (with each person and those important to them). This must be done in a way that keeps each person as safe as possible but also in a way that maximises their independence, autonomy, understanding and freedom. There is no 'one size fits all' way of achieving this. Commissioners must work alongside providers to ensure the necessary resources are available.

### **Message 4: Recognise and support the essential role of Support Workers at this time!**

Agree how you will ensure Support Workers are able to recover and rebuild their energy – particularly considering a potential second wave may occur. This should include various forms of enhanced conditions such as additional leave, and/or hazard or bonus pay. It is also important to consider supporting people with their emotional well-being, offering reflective supervision and time with peers for informal connections and support.

### **Message 5: Recognise and support the role of families and unpaid carers**

Ensure that plans are in place to support families (many of whom have been caring full-time for their loved ones due to reductions in support during lockdown). This support for families must be ongoing but needs additional consideration and action as we ease out of lockdown. Many families will need respite, support plans and resources in place as we prepare for a potential second wave.

### **Message 6: Society needs to act responsibly as lockdown eases**

One of the most common messages from Support Workers was for the rest of society to adhere to guidance and respect the social distancing rules.



“...Please don't take for granted that things are improving and relax the standards that have helped get to this point. There are still so many people who are vulnerable and now is not the time to get lazy or they could suffer further.”

## Message 7: Keep building on the community spirit

We must nurture the spontaneous and genuine natural connections with families, friends and the wider community that have been created during this time. They are key to ensuring that people are valued citizens in their community.

## Message 8: Get ready for a possible second wave

Government, regulators, commissioners, and organisations/employers must:

- stock up on PPE.
- ensure that contingency and crisis plans are co-produced with self-advocates, families and Support Workers and communicated clearly.
- make sure clear policies and procedures for staff are in place, communicated and understood, fund/develop necessary training (including leadership training), reflective supervision and facilitate opportunities for peer support for Support Workers.
- establish relationships with local businesses such as supermarkets to ensure that priority food slots can be given to all those who receive support (not just those living in residential care homes).

