


Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

By e-mail on behalf of the  signatories below

Dear Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP

Re: Social Care Taskforce Recommendations

Throughout the pandemic it has been clear that marginalised groups have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. The 1.5 million people with learning disabilities in the UK continue to be one of those impacted groups, whilst also being excluded and forgotten in debate, planning and policy.

People with learning disabilities and their families have been affected by wide ranging issues during the pandemic, such as: inaccessible and delayed information about the complex new rules, the loss of support and community services, blanket decision making that has seen people unable to visit their families for months and unlawful Do Not Attempt Resuscitation orders being issued.

We continue to be concerned about the lack of accessible and timely testing available to people with learning disabilities, their families and support workers. We note that the interim planning around covid-19 vaccinations does not prioritise people with learning disabilities.

Novembers LeDER and Public Health England reports estimate that people with learning disabilities are dying of COVID-19 between 6 and 3.6 times the rate of the general population. This new data makes it clear that the needs of people with learning disabilities must be recognised and addressed by central and local government and social care, with urgency. It is only right that we work quickly to end these inequalities.

Over the summer the Social Care Taskforce worked on recommendations for the government to improve people's experiences of social care through the pandemic. Many stakeholders and indeed signatories to this letter took part in the taskforce's learning disabilities and autism advisory group. While we welcome the Taskforce's boarder recommendations, we are concerned they do not represent people with learning disabilities or the priorities of the advisory group.

We would like to draw your attention to the Advisory Groups highest priority recommendations and ask for your commitment to support their implementation.

The Advisory Group recommends that government should:

1. Commit to accessible guidance and communications for people with learning disabilities and autistic people, and their families, being issued with or very soon after all future COVID-19 guidance. This can be achieved by
 - a. coproducing a library of easy-read and accessible⁸ COVID-19 information for people and services, as their local areas move in and out of lockdown,
 - b. a national funded programme of digital inclusion to give people living at home or in services the right skills, equipment and broadband, and
 - c. resourcing councils and CCGs to fund local self-advocacy and community groups to help people understand the rules and changes.

2. Restore, maintain and adapt the support for individuals and families already assessed as having eligible needs. This means ensuring councils and CCGs
 - a. pause care, health or personal budget reviews during the period of service disruption, unless requested by the individual,
 - b. make independent advocacy available wherever a change to support or an institutional care package is suggested, with support to identify and organise a community alternative for the same cost.

3. Urgently identify and provide the level of resources needed for councils or CCGs to financially stabilise provider organisations at risk of collapse; coproduce with providers a workforce plan for social care; expand funding for and availability of PPE, testing programmes and the Better Health in Care Homes programme from care homes to the whole provider sector (and individual employers using direct payments), and grow the most effective and personalised forms of community support.

4. Reduce isolation and loneliness for people with learning disabilities, autistic people and their families, through
 - a. expanding the reach of NHS and other volunteering programmes, and COVID-19 hubs, to people with learning disabilities and autistic people, and
 - b. investing in a national awareness campaign encouraging and enabling communities and mutual aid groups to be more inclusive and supportive.

5. Reach individuals and families who don't receive social care support or organise their own, but who are isolated or in crisis. This means ensuring councils, CCGs and local VCSE partner organisations identify people not known to services to offer accessible information, timely needs assessments, and accessible mental health support.

[You can read the full report here.](#)

We are writing to you to ask you confirm support for these recommendations and give a commitment that government and the social care sector will be assisted in implementing them. In addition to raising the needs of people with learning disabilities in all debates and policy development now and in the future. As discussions about the long-term restructuring and funding of social care get underway, this is vitally important.

Knowing the disproportionate impact Covid-19 is having on the lives and deaths of people with learning disabilities, the implementation of these recommendations and action to include and support people with learning disabilities cannot wait.

Yours sincerely,