

UK Spa Association
2 Beverley Court,
26 Elstree Road
Teddington
TW11 8ST
Date: 21st April 2020

Dear Mr Hancock,

We need your urgent attention and assistance. As of 9am on 20th April there have been nearly 125,000 positive confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the UK. A total of 16500 deaths from this awful pandemic, (Gov,2020). In the UK, 1 in 6 people have reported experiencing mental health concerns in any given week before COVID-19 – it does not take much to imagine the impact of lockdown on these statistics (Mind,2020). It is proven that mental health affects an individual's physical health. It is research proven that spas, wellness centres and leisure offerings have a positive impact and proactive effect on mental and physical health and wellbeing.

The UK government must now publicly acknowledge the spa and wellness industry.

Identity, or lack thereof, has been the key issue for the spa industry throughout this crisis. For years the industry has never been fully appreciated for its contributions to UK GDP. The UK spa and wellness industry does not currently hold a standard industrial classification (SIC) code and therefore this means that the government cannot accurately monitor any statistics based on this industry. Public perception of this vastly growing sector is based on pampering as opposed to the base knowledge of the sector being about anatomy and physiology – care of muscles, the nervous and immune systems as well as a preventative approach to mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Now more than ever, the public are becoming vastly aware that this industry goes hand in hand with mental health and providing alternative health care offerings which assist on many levels. The support that this industry will provide to their communities and indeed the NHS post Covid-19 will be vital.

The UK Spa Association is the voice of the UK spa and wellness industry which champions the positive contribution made by the spa industry to UK, health, social and economic wellness and wellbeing; something that is surely a priority during these uncertain times? Spas and wellness centres (along with the gyms and leisure industry) are community hubs, providing a sense of kinship, as well as providing measurable assistance with stress reduction, improved sleep, nutrition and exercise - all areas I am sure you will agree are vital in today's circumstances. This is the industry that will provide continued support to the health care sector and will be needed more than ever going forward.

It is imperative that the spa and wellness industry gain clarity on how to re-open and the parameters of doing so in relation to best practice regarding PPE and further longer-term social distancing measures. Whilst we appreciate timescales are an estimation, we know that with increased anxiety and confused messaging to date and limited PPE available to health care providers we require government guidance on the following:

Safe Practise Measures

Spas, wellness centres, salons, massage centres and facilities with gyms, pools and thermal areas:

In order for the general public to access treatments which will aid their mental and physical wellbeing and prevent long term illness, we are looking for confirmation that that the above listed businesses within the wellness sector should operate within the same guidelines as that of a doctor's office, physiotherapist, chiropractors and similar industries which require one to one services.

We also ask for clarification as to whether employees working within the above-mentioned industries should be required to use basic PPE such as face masks and have continued appropriate sanitation provision?

This is imperative for not only the economy and general public trust in our health and safety guidelines, but is vital for the protection of our workforce who we believe will be the future, long term front line workers for preventative health care.

We appreciate your consideration at this unprecedented time and hope that you are able to provide clarity for us as an industry, so that we can best prepare and continue to assist the physical and mental wellbeing of the UK general public.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely

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