



**All-Party Parliamentary Group on Beauty,
Aesthetics and Wellbeing**

Minutes of Meeting

Panel session: *The impact of COVID-19 of the beauty, aesthetics and wellbeing industry*

Date: Thursday 7th May 2020

Time: 1pm

Location: Zoom

Chair: Carolyn Harris MP

Minutes taken by: Louise Abraham, Interel UK (Secretariat)

Members present

- Carolyn Harris MP, APPG Co-Chair
- Judith Cummins MP, APPG Co-Chair
- Nick Smith MP, APPG Secretary
- Dr Lisa Cameron MP, APPG Member
- John McNally MP, APPG Member

Speakers

- Caroline Larissey – Director of Quality and Standards at National Hair and Beauty Federation
- Ian Egerton – National Hair and Beauty Federation President and London-based hair and beauty salon owner
- Helena Grzesek - General Manager at the UK Spa Association
- Lesley Blair – Chair of the British Association of Beauty Therapy and Cosmetology
- Lisa Gerrard - Managing Director of Gerrard International and Chair of the Beauty Companies Association
- Kerry Stuart – Owner of an Ilminster-based hair, beauty and aesthetics practice

Audience

- Katherine Morgan, APPG Secretariat
- Victoria McNish, APPG Secretariat
- Louise Abraham, APPG Secretariat
- Jo Lloyd, Office of Carolyn Harris MP
- Victoria Brownlie, NHBF
- Jo Jones, Founder of Beauty Beat Communications and co-Founder of Beauty Banks

Minutes of the Meeting

Carolyn Harris MP opened the meeting, welcomed the attendees, and invited the speakers to introduce themselves.

Caroline Larissey said that NHBF has conducted a survey of their members which revealed the main concern of their members regards PPE. She said that their members were worried about where they can source PPE from and how businesses will be able to adhere to social distancing measures. She highlighted that many salons are small and micro-businesses so they are lacking the space needed for adequate social distancing.



Caroline Larrisey also highlighted how the members were worried about when lockdown restrictions will be lifted, whether they will get enough warning to prepare their businesses and what PPE businesses would need. The members also expressed concerns about unoccupied premises and keeping their clients engaged during this time.

Caroline Larissey also drew attention to mobile practitioners operating during the lockdown and the risk this poses to public health.

Caroline Larrisey explained that NHBF has been working with the Government to develop guidance, and is working with the Department for Education on apprenticeships issues. Ultimately, she calls for clear Government guidance and timelines so the industry can deliver safe treatments. She also highlighted that it is important to take into account the wellbeing of the public and the people employed within the industry.

Carolyn Harris MP then asked **Ian Egerton** to introduce himself.

Ian Egerton said that the industry is mostly made up of small and micro- businesses with limited cash flow so there will be financial difficulty across the sector. Those that are self-employed are seriously at risk as they struggle to access the Government's support packages.

Ian Egerton adds that the return to normal levels of business and clients may not be until 2022. He states that the big unknown is the financial crisis that will follow. He adds that the Government support measures have been helpful for some in the industry, however businesses like his in London Bridge have struggled to access this help because their rates are above the £51,000 threshold.

With regards to the support the industry needs from Government, **Ian Egerton** said that close contact treatments, such as massages, will suffer. Furthermore, the need to supply staff with PPE and the increased safety and hygiene procedures for treatments will mean more time is spent on each client, therefore reducing income and adding additional costs.

Ian Egerton asks that the Government considers a varied approach to protecting businesses in the industry by temporarily reducing the rate of VAT on services, continuing to pay the rate on the Job Retention Scheme until March 2021, revisiting the funding scheme to support those businesses that have fallen through the cracks, asks that the Government set up a taskforce around PPE supply chains to ensure businesses can source and purchase PPE at a fair rate and asks that the Government continue to protect businesses from landlords.

In terms of how the industry can support the NHS, **Ian Egerton** said that Government could potentially allow salons to do a soft re-opening to offer beauty and wellness treatments to NHS frontline workers. He added that doing this would be a useful exercise for those in the industry to practise how they will engage with the public upon the return of salons.

As the Government considers its exit strategy, **Ian Egerton** said that the Government should carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment for every treatment, and will be supplied by the NHBF if required. He also said that there should be potential to store track and trace data for every client.

Carolyn Harris MP thanks **Ian Egerton** and also welcomes **Dr Lisa Cameron MP**. She then introduced **Lesley Blair**.

Lesley Blair said that the lockdown has been crippling to sector, which is worth £6.6bn not including product sales, so this figure is made up of earnings alone. She adds that the industry has supported the high streets' decline therefore the impact is widespread. She agreed with **Caroline Larrisey** that the industry provides benefits to the mental and physical wellness of the public and the impact of this must not be underestimated.

Lesley Blair adds that while the loans and furlough schemes has been beneficial, there are discrepancies which mean some businesses are not able to benefit. For example, the Job Retention



scheme does not take into account owners and limited companies meaning these businesses may not be able to survive. She praised the Bounce Bank Loans Scheme, citing that many of their members have received their money within 24hrs of the initial application.

Lesley Blair described the difficulties facing the industry as immense, explaining that there is no way for industry to comply with social distancing rule. She called for fit-for-purpose guidance, to ensure maximum safety while leaving no room for misinterpretation. She states that the industry needs a level playing field and there is a need for rules rather than advice.

If the lockdown were to continue, **Lesley Blair** wanted clarification if there will be extended financial assistance, extended furlough schemes and provision for partial furloughs. She adds the BABTAC have asked their members to donate their PPE to the NHS. However, she highlights that when the industry reopens, it will be important that the industry can source the adequate PPE that they need, while ensuring the supply to the NHS is unaffected.

Carolyn Harris MP then introduced **Helena Grzesk**.

Helena Grzesk states their survey shows that 92.4% of their participants stated that COVID-19 has had a severe and significant impact on their business, with a third anticipating that they will need to make redundancies once reopened without the appropriate financial support. Almost 80% of participants also believed that the use of face masks and PPE will need to be introduced, with many participants concerned about the costs of PPE.

Helena Grzesk said that the UK Spa Association recognised that spa and wellness services are key to local communities and there is a real need to support communities beyond the pandemic.

Helena Grzesk stated that the UK Spa Association would like the Government to include spas, salons, wellness centres and gyms in an exit strategy, with clear guidance on the use of pools and thermal facilities. There also needs to be clarity regarding social distancing measures the use of PPE. She explained that it is important to protect their skilled workforce, therefore there is a need to build consumer confidence by sticking to specific and clear rules. By agreeing consistent rules across the industry, consumer confidence will build. She also called for the Job Retention Scheme to be extended until October 2020 to ensure businesses have continued support. She supports the need for a partial furlough and the need for a salary support scheme for spas, salons and other tactile industries.

Carolyn Harris MP welcomed **John McNally MP** to the meeting and introduces **Lisa Gerrard**.

Lisa Gerrard echoed what everyone has said. From a beauty suppliers perspective, Gerrard International have 5,000 customer accounts ranging from high street salons, hotels, spas and mobile hairdressers. She explained that through their correspondence with their customer accounts, she has heard the majority of people wanting clarity on what they can or can't do. She explains her customers are looking to their brand suppliers to provide this information and confirm the details of being able to conduct specific treatments.

Lisa Gerrard states that Gerrard International wants to provide advice that is backed by scientific evidence to guide the guidance and protocol around treatments. She also explains that their customers are anxious about returning because of the lack of clarity around safety procedures. For example, they have seen an increase in demand for manicure screens but there are still specifics that need to be ironed out because of PPE.

Carolyn Harris MP then introduced **Kerry Stuart**.

Kerry Stuart said that her salon consists of a small team of four people and that she was very fearful for her and her team before they closed. She stated that she wants to go back to work however she wants to return to a safe environment and does not want her staff and her clients being fearful.

Kerry Stuart stated that there needs to be clear timelines, and expressed concerns that she will be unable to stick to social distancing guidelines due to the size of her salon. She explains she is already



reviewing her salon's layout, the salon's operating hours and the working patterns of her staff, which will increase her overheads.

Kerry Stuart also asked for clear guidance on PPE, on operation hours and infection control, and what treatments will be permitted. She explained that she donated PPE to the NHS but is now looking at extensive PPE bills in future. She expressed concerns of whether she should pass on the additional costs to her clients and where she would source PPE going forward.

Kerry Stuart said that she was lost when Government announced the closure of businesses as she was unsure where her salon sat in the classifications. She said that the Government's guidance did not explicitly say 'beauty and aesthetics' clinics. She called for this to be made clearer.

Kerry Stuart said that while checking on her salon premises, she was approached by some members of the public asking for haircuts. She explains that hairdressers are being offered a lot of money to provide their services and that this needs to be regulated by the police in some way.

Kerry Stuart expressed concerns about the future of her business. While she praised the availability of Government grants being made available to her, she is worried about the future as the funds will not last forever. She called for the Government support to be ongoing and reviewed. She praised the Government's Bounce Bank Loans Scheme but said this will extend a business' liability and the 12 months interest free period will go very quickly. She also called for a total review of VAT and business rates relief going forward. She also called for more support for working parents, such as the provision of affordable childcare.

Carolyn Harris MP asked **Jo Jones** whether she wanted to contribute any thoughts.

Jo Jones said that the products sector is booming right now and questioned whether it would be possible to draw support from the products side of the industry to support the service side of the industry.

Carolyn Harris MP said that this is something that the APPG could explore.

Carolyn Harris MP added that she never envisaged the APPG would be talking about COVID-19 when the APPG was set, and that she wanted to talk about success and contribution of industry. She now wants to support the industry as the coin has flipped.

Judith Cummins MP reiterated that to her the message was loud and clear – that there is a need for clarity and rules. She asked what is the industry's view on black market of rogue practitioners still selling services. She referenced *The Times* article reporting on this issue. Furthermore, she asked what the medium and longer term impact are of COVID-19 on the industry.

Caroline Larissey answered that as far as she is concerned, practitioners continuing to offer their services under lockdown are breaking the law and people should report them to the police. She referenced that during one of her industry meetings, she was told of a mobile therapists going to a care home to do a treatment for one of her clients. She said that while a majority of practitioners are sticking to the rules, those flaunting the rules should be reprimanded.

Lesley Blair added that there are also implications on insurance. Operating against the rules could make a business' insurance policy void. She also mentioned that the reporting procedure for salons not complying with Government rules is unclear. She gave an example of a person wanting to report a salon breaching the rules however the police said that it was an issue for the local council to deal with. She called for a whistleblowing or reporting process to be in place if the industry will be one of the last sectors to emerge from lockdown.

Nick Smith MP asked what are the industry's specific asks on PPE and need for clear rules on health and safety. He acknowledged the hardship COVID will cause salons based in city centres but wanted to know what the impact will be on salons situated in towns and neighbours.



Kerry Stuart replied that salons should be given a list of exactly what PPE items they must use, and whether this would be treatment led.

Carolyn Harris MP said that to her, it seems that there needs to be a consultation process in place to that salons know how to adapt their use of PPE according to the risk of transmission when conducting treatments. Kerry Stuart agreed.

Nick Smith MP suggested that it would be best if the industry suggested a way forward on PPE guidelines.

Caroline Larissey replied that the NHBF has pulled together guidelines on each treatment and given these guidelines to Government. She asked for further clarification on the type of masks that salons would need.

Dr Lisa Cameron MP asked what the implications for nail bars are over the longer term, particularly on those in nail bars with less secure employment and past reports of modern slavery.

Lisa Gerrard replied that she would like to see that all salons and nail bars stick to the same guidelines including those on the high street, by following procedures such as the use of manicure screens. She wanted further clarification on what treatments will be able to customers.

Carolyn Harris MP stated that she is worried about modern slavery and considers this to be a bigger issue now than ever. She called for guidance from Home Office on this issue as it should be treated as a policing issue not a trading standards issue.

Carolyn Harris MP asked for any final comments.

Helena Grzesk added that the UK Spa Association's members are worried about phased reopening of the Government's exit strategy. She explained that because many spas are within hotels and leisure centres, there needs to be clear guidelines on what facilities can be used while social distancing is in place. She calls for the clear guidelines on how spas within hospitality sector can continue to operate.

John McNally MP said that a hair salon owner contacted him concerned about a barber shop opening up behind boarded up windows. He said that all comments he heard had been great and consistency on the message from the trade is most important.

Judith Cummins MP asked if anyone had any tips on how to lift people's spirits. However, she reiterated that the most important thing is how the APPG can help the industry survive and avoid redundancies. She added the Group is here to help.

Carolyn Harris MP added that the main takeaways are that there must be clear guidance, financial support for big and small businesses, particularly those who have provided valuable services and have been successful, such as **Ian Egerton's** business. She stated that the Group should to write to the Treasury for clarification on the support available for big and small businesses. In addition, further support needs to be considered for the smaller businesses and how the industry can be supported by product manufacturers.

Carolyn Harris MP concluded that the Group will write a series of letters to different Ministers about the specific issues raised. She invited further details on specific case studies that the industry is aware of and called for evidence of good practice to be brought to the attention of the Group. She also added that the Group would consider writing an article for the Sunday supplement magazines. She emphasised that she wanted to show the importance of the industry and highlight how the industry is being forgotten and taken for granted in its ability to bounce back from the impact of COVID-19.

Jo Jones added that app-based businesses such as Treatwell and Urban would be good allies to the industry and that the Group should get in touch with them.



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Helena Grzesk said she is in contact with Jack, the owner of Urban, and said he is keen to support the APPG.

Carolyn Harris MP said the Group will explore having online platforms in a follow-up session and thanked all the panellists for their time and for appearing before the APPG.