

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

### Minutes of Meeting

#### *Inquiry session into COVID-19 and the sector's recovery*

#### **Inquiry Session 3: Mental Health and Wellbeing**

**Date:** Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2021

**Time:** 10:00 – 11:00

**Location:** Zoom

**Chair:** Carolyn Harris MP

**Minutes taken by:** Sarina Kiayani, Interel UK (Secretariat)

#### **Members present**

Carolyn Harris MP, APPG Co-Chair

Judith Cummins MP, APPG Co-Chair

#### **Witnesses**

Caroline Larissey – Director of Quality and Standards, NHBF

Dr Emma Meredith – Director General, CTPA

Karen Young – Editor and Communications Manager, Federation of Holistic Therapists

Helena Grzesk, Chief Operating Officer, British Beauty Council and Policy Adviser for the UK Spa Association

Abi Selby – Founder, Spabreaks

#### **Audience**

Katherine Morgan, APPG Secretariat

Victoria McNish, APPG Secretariat

Sarina Kiayani, APPG Secretariat

Abigail Bateman, Interel UK

Angus Bugg-Millar, UK Parliament

#### **Minutes of the Meeting**

**Carolyn Harris MP** opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees. She then asked **Karen Young** for her insight into mental health and wellbeing.

**Karen Young** spoke about the FHT's annual survey, which found that 76% of members regularly support clients with long-term health conditions. Of those, 83% support clients with stress and anxiety, and 42% support clients with a diagnosed mental health condition. COVID-19 restrictions saw a decline with numbers that they can support, but there was an influx after these were lifted.

She added that the FHT has conducted public (grassroots) survey on holistic therapy and how this has been helping clients. This focused on "effectiveness gaps" (where holistic therapy can substitute for NHS services and ease the burden on health services), and also treating long COVID. She said that survey results are now coming in – about 550 right now. She said that there has already been a strong indication that the public is using holistic therapy for the reasons that therapists have been reporting, and that holistic therapy has been effective in treating various health challenges.

**Carolyn Harris MP** said that **Peter Dowd MP** sends his apologies for not attending the meeting, and asked what the APPG could do to support the survey.

**Karen Young** said that more needed to be done to promote the survey, to get as many members of the public to respond as possible.

**Carolyn Harris MP** suggested that the APPG MPs can put the survey on their social media, and encouraged Karen to share the survey with the Secretariat to pass on to members. She then called on **Abi Selby** to speak.

**Abi Selby** said that sales at Spabreaks has seen a surge in sales since May – 1.4 million people visited the website in June, with 10,000 people visiting spas weekly. Spabreaks is launching a TV campaign in September, with mental health and wellbeing a potential focus of this.

She added that, despite high booking numbers, a third are cancelled within a 48 hour period as there not enough therapists to deliver treatments. 40 – 60 bookings are returned every day due to spas not being able to deliver. The spa industry is struggling to attract, retain and look after staff, which she attributed to policymakers not understanding the crisis and its immediacy. She said that staff issues prevented the industry from bouncing back better.

**Judith Cummins MP** asked if this was also due to a skills shortage of staff, which **Abi Selby** confirmed.

**Abi Selby** added that it is good for beauty if therapists set up mobile practices, but not for spas, where hotels need these trained staff members. She added that the mental health of therapists, due to their lack of pay, respect and perceived value, is at risk alongside their clients’.

**Helena Grzesk** agreed with the previous speakers and noted the shift in self-employment in the industry, adding that businesses have been classing some workers as “self-employed” to cut costs. She added that the British Beauty Council was looking into the shift to self-employment and will share figures around this in the coming weeks.

She also said that the skills shortage was pivotal, with fewer young people opting to have a career in the sector. She said that the sector needed to change the perceptions that the industry is superfluous, and that staff are not valued. The British Beauty Council published a paper in April on health and wellbeing, which highlighted gaps in existing research into this issue. The British Beauty Council and UK Spa Association praised the FHT’s survey to help to fill these gaps.

The British Beauty Council’s paper found that mental health causes 17.6 million days of sick leave in the UK every year, and 40 million days were lost to menopause problems. She emphasised that the industry had highly-trained, highly-skilled experts to nurture mental health and wellbeing, and that the NHS is stretched and unable to support those struggling with mental health and wellbeing issues effectively. Massage and touch therapy needs to be better recognised in the UK, and holistic therapists better supported so that they can see the industry as providing a career path for them. Mental health issues cost the UK around £5 billion a year, and the industry can help to educate people on how therapies can help, not just pills and medication.

**Carolyn Harris MP** and **Judith Cummins MP** spoke about the Menopause APPG’s campaign for free HRT in England, and how the beauty and wellbeing sector can support Menopause. **Judith Cummins** added that the hospitality industry was suffering with similar issues around staff shortages, which **Abi Selby** agreed with.

**Carolyn Harris MP** also said that we should support the manufacturing industry in Britain to manufacture more packaging to produce jobs, and reduce the reliance on China. She referenced plastic supply shortages during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Emma Meredith** said that there were also shortages of ethanol also, adding that producers of sanitisers were classed as “key workers”. She noted the impact of Brexit and UK REACH in attempting to get packaging and components into the UK, and that there are sustainability issues around small hand sanitiser bottles, which are not collected kerbside.

**Carolyn Harris MP** suggested a meeting with Rachel Reeves MP to discuss how the beauty, aesthetics and wellbeing industry can be included in the conversation around manufacturing issues.

**Karen Young** agreed with Helena Grzesk’s point about research gaps. She said that treatments are individualised, with tailored products and can be hard to substitute (e.g. massages).

**Caroline Larissey** said that the NHBF has been proactive during the pandemic, with an apprenticeship standard created for wellbeing and holistic therapists. This ensures that this aspect of the industry was included in the education system, enabling beauty students to specialise in it. She did, however, add that it was hard to recruit the students for these courses.