



FHT



Mr Christopher Byrne
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The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP
House of Commons
Westminster
London
SW1A 0AA

9 November, 2020

Dear Mr Sharma

First and foremost, I hope this letter finds you and your colleagues well.

I am the president of the Federation of Holistic Therapists (FHT), the leading professional association for complementary, holistic beauty and sports therapists in the UK. We represent c.14,000 members a year, a vast number of whom are also listed on our Accredited Register of complementary therapists, which is independently approved by the Professional Standards Authority as part of a government-backed programme to help care commissioners and the public choose a non-statutory regulated health practitioner with confidence.

I am writing to ask you for your support in addressing a matter that is impacting the professional reputation of not just FHT and our members, but the therapy industry as a whole.

In legislation and Government guidance published in relation to coronavirus, the phrase 'massage parlours' has been used, time and again, when referring to businesses that offer massage services. I don't know if you are aware, but this phrase has long been associated with brothels and other establishments that offer sexual services and is therefore completely inappropriate when being used to refer to massage businesses and services offered by professional therapists.

FHT members are qualified to nationally recognised standards, insured to practice, abide by a strict Code of Conduct and Professional Practice, and accountable. More than 70% of the clients our members support on a regular basis are living with long-term health conditions such as low back pain, joint and mobility problems, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, cancer, dementia – the list goes on. As such, many of our members not only treat clients in the comfort of their own home (when government restrictions allow), they also work in hospitals, hospices, residential and

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nursing homes, and schools, where their services are highly valued by those they treat, their families, and the staff working alongside them. In addition, around 25% of our members also support clients with soft tissue injuries as a result of sport and recreational activities.

In recognition of both their professionalism and the contribution that our members make to the health and wellbeing of the nation, I ask for your support in ensuring that, going forward, the phrase 'massage parlour' is no longer used in legislation and Government communications, and that it is replaced with 'massage clinic', 'massage centre' or 'massage therapy services' instead. Thankfully, the term 'massage and sports therapy' is used in the COVID-secure guidance developed for close contact services, which is followed by our members. Please help us to ensure that the same phrasing is now used in legislation and all Government communications.

Thank you for your support and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Christopher Byrne,
President of the FHT