



Russell George MS  
Chair  
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee

4 November 2020

Dear Russell,

Thank you for your letter dated 13<sup>th</sup> October regarding the hair and beauty sector and the impact of restrictions highlighted by the National Hair & Beauty Federation.

We are acutely aware of the incredibly difficult and uncertain circumstances currently being experienced by businesses, not least the hairdressing and beauty industries, and we are absolutely committed to providing the support and assurance the business community needs.

With coronavirus spreading rapidly in every part of Wales there is no choice but to act now, before it continues to accelerate, and before our NHS is overwhelmed. Hence the introduction of the short, sharp, shock to slow down the virus and buy us more time – the national fire break – from 6pm on Friday 23 October until Monday 9 November. It applies to everyone living in Wales and will replace the local restrictions which are in force in some parts of the country.

The advice from our medical and scientific advisers is that this short, sharp fire-break will give us an opportunity to reset and ensure the NHS has the capacity to respond to the pandemic and other winter pressures.

We recognise the enormous efforts businesses have made to become safe places. This requirement to close during the “firebreak” period is not a reflection on those efforts. But at this stage, minimising any contribution to the spread of the virus is important, which is why we are requiring certain businesses to close temporarily. People’s health and wellbeing is at the forefront of our approach.

In response to this and in line with our principles of providing further support, we have created an enhanced Phase 3 of our Wales-only Economic Resilience Fund (ERF) of almost £300m, which includes an extra £150m to support to businesses affected by the firebreak.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
Caerdydd • Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

[Gohebiaeth.Ken.Skates@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Ken.Skates@llyw.cymru)  
[Correspondence.Ken.Skates@gov.wales](mailto:Correspondence.Ken.Skates@gov.wales)

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The close contact personal services sector is a diverse sector. Our guidance covers hairdressers and barbers; beauty therapists; make-up artists; nail service technicians; aestheticians, holistic, wellbeing and other practitioners; acupuncture and electrocautery practitioners and massage therapists including sports and clinical massage therapists. However, whilst diverse in activity, risks associated with Covid-19 transmission in these settings are comparable.

We can assure the Committee that there is no unconscious gender bias within Welsh Government. In fact hairdressing salons and barber shops were amongst the first non-essential businesses to be reopened in Wales after the national lockdown.

The Welsh Government has prioritised the protection of people, and has based its approach to the reopening of businesses on the latest scientific and medical advice of the risk from particular settings, the extent to which other risk mitigations are available and in place, and the level of disease-causing transmission.

We have taken advice from Public Health Wales and environmental health professionals who confirm that close contact service businesses present a significant risk of onward transmission if they do not comply with their duty to take reasonable measures under regulation 12 to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus. This is because they are regularly within close physical proximity of their clients and can spend prolonged periods of time within the high risk area around the face.

We have said that apart from treatments on the face, most close contact services, including hairdressing and barbering can be provided safely whilst wearing a type II mask and a clear visor during COVID-19. This was based on scientific advice that visors on their own have limited effect in preventing the spread of the virus and that close contact services practitioners should wear both a Type II mask (as source control - to protect the client from the practitioner) and a clear visor (to protect the practitioner from the client). These items are non-clinical grade PPE and are widely available

We have been clear that treatments around the face are high risk treatments because they are usually applied to the front of the face where aerosols and droplets from the nose and mouth, that may not be visible, can be present and pose a hazard from the client to the practitioner and vice versa, and therefore is extremely difficult to be carried out safely without the appropriate grade PPE which is a Fluid Resistant Surgical Face Mask (FRSM) plus eye protection (goggles or full face visor).

The fluid resistant mask, when used correctly, reduces the dispersal of viral particles into the atmosphere. It gives some protection to those close to the wearer and collectively, to all people in the room or space, including all the wearers, as it reduces the overall level of COVID viral particles circulating in the air. The visor gives some protection to the wearer by preventing splashes/droplets etc to the mucous membranes of their eyes.

We have been very mindful of the fact that treatments around the face constitute a significant proportion of the treatments offered by the beauty industry; that is why Welsh Government has not prohibited the provision of these treatments. However, we have strongly advised not to carry out these treatments, based on Public Health Wales advice, unless the practitioner is wearing the appropriate grade PPE - a Fluid Resistant Surgical Face Mask (FRSM) plus eye protection (goggles or full face visor); has had the appropriate training in the use of PPE and has received training on standard infection control precautions.

Over the last few months Environmental Health Officers have worked tirelessly with local businesses to support compliance and have acted proportionately, only taking enforcement action in the form of Improvement or Closure Notices as a last resort.

Feedback from enforcement officers is that enforcement action has only been required in a small number of cases. Of the 54 premises closure notices served since 8<sup>th</sup> August only 6 (11%) were served on close personal services. The majority of non-compliance has been identified in the hairdressing and barber sector. 193 premises improvement notices have been served since 8<sup>th</sup> August of which 45, 23% were served on close personal services.

Our officials have held discussions with the close contact advisory bodies, including the National Hair and Beauty Federation regarding the approach we have taken in Wales.

The Welsh Government guidance is kept under review and is updated to reflect any new or changed restrictions. We are in the process of reviewing the guidance to support the reopening of these businesses on 9 November and will be consulting the close contact services advisory bodies on the content.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Skates', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Ken Skates AS/MS**  
Gweinidog yr Economi, Trafnidiaeth  
a Gogledd Cymru  
Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales