



25TH MARCH 2020

Letter to inform readers of the current situation within the UK Laundry Industry

I am writing this open letter to re-emphasise the critical status, the pressing needs of our industry and how we can help support the country in this emergency.

Hospitality Laundries

Following the Government announcement yesterday, we are expecting that a significant numbers of hospitality laundries will have to cease production due to the closure of the hospitality sector they service. Whilst they will work to implement all the government support measures that have been introduced to support their staff during the shutdown it will result in almost 15,000 workers being furloughed or made redundant. This will potentially create issues where hospitality laundries have within their customer base care homes, private hospitals and other essential service providers.

We are aware that some hotels are opening as essential worker accommodation or may become temporary hospitals. In order for our industry to support these operations, we need to understand the scale of this so we can co-ordinate an industry solution. Finally, those hotels converting to temporary hospitals would require a totally different approach as the risks to the laundry operators increase. Furthermore, such establishments would need to be serviced as a healthcare facility using a specialist healthcare provider.

The industry still requires urgent clarification on the details around the scheme. The key concerns being:

- If somebody is furloughed, we need to make sure that the liabilities going forward around return to work and re-start are minimal and can be phased
- Non contracted staff - urgent clarification is needed here - we have thousands of staff on variable hours
- Can consideration be given to allow staff to be partially furloughed. This would allow laundries to continue to operate on reduced staffing levels and also in the event of a closure allow key staff to maintain operational status of the facility for re-opening. E.g. A laundry engineer furloughed for 4 days but maintains the equipment in good working order for one day a week
- Can Directors who are salaried and full-time employees be furloughed. We have many small companies where the Directors are hands on operational members of the team
- Suspend the accrual of holiday pay while they are furloughed as once staff return, companies will not be in a position to pay lots of additional holiday pay
- We require a clear understanding of the potential anticipated increase in demand. The Textile Service Association is happy to be included within these emergency plans so we can prepare the industry and ensure continuity of service. How many key workers hotels are likely to be set up?

Textile Services Association The Bower, Four Roundwood Avenue, Stockley Park, Uxbridge UB11 1AF

T 020 3151 5600 E tsa@tsa-uk.org W tsa-uk.org

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Healthcare and Essential Service Laundries (Food and Pharmaceutical)

The situation here is very different to hospitality laundries. Generally, they are busy and doing an amazing job in maintaining services to the NHS, Private healthcare and essential service manufacturing sectors. However, we are seeing severe operation issues on the horizon.

- Some operators in this sector are struggling to retain a full workforce and we need to create an incentive for experienced laundry staff in the hospitality sector who have been furloughed to transfer to the healthcare sector
- Access to PPE, generally this does seem to be getting through, but we need to ensure that this continues
- Support to commercially adjust pricing where increased costs can be fully justified and audited. We are seeing a dramatic increase in demand for scrub tops and trousers as hospitals move nurses out of healthcare uniforms which are normally on a selfcare basis and into an outsourced validated hygienic uniform service. (Something we have been lobbying to achieved for 10 years!) We are currently preparing to mobilise increased UK production but the cost of this versus offshore is clearly going to be more. Another example would be if a laundry needs to increase thermal or chemical disinfection for an increased range of products. Suspension of the Climate Change Levy charge would assist in covering this.
- We require a clear understanding of the potential anticipated increase in demand. The Textile Services Association is happy to be included within these emergency plans so we can prepare the industry and ensure continuity of service, how many emergency beds are the government looking to add. Laundry service, linen and garments are an essential element of a temporary hospital
- Laundries and support services (soap supplier, machinery and field engineers, etc) need to be specifically added to the essential services list. At the moment we understand we are included but it is not clear and could be open to misinterpretation.

Best regards

David Stevens

CEO, Textile Services Association