



July 2020

Dear therapist,

MESSAGE AND COMPLEMENTARY THERAPY SERVICES: SCOTLAND'S ROUTE MAP OUT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESTRICTIONS

1. Further to the Scottish Government's letter of 1 June, setting out the conditions for restarting independent health and dental care services; we have been receiving an increasing number of queries relating to the reopening of private services such as massage therapy, which involve close contact for extended periods. This letter is to clarify the Scottish Government's position on when such services may open again.

2. We remain grateful for the cooperation of the people of Scotland in supporting our national response to the coronavirus pandemic, and very conscious of the considerable personal and professional sacrifices arising from the restrictions currently in place on individuals and businesses. However, while there can be no doubt that everyone wants to return to some form of normality as soon as possible, we must continue to prioritise public health at every stage of the carefully measured relaxation of restrictions. We have been clear and consistent in our advice that moving too fast at any point increases the danger of increased infection and the very real possibility of a return to lockdown, with the further detrimental impact that would have on individuals, families and the economy. It is therefore crucial that everyone continues to follow as closely as possible the spirit of the guidance set out in the [route map](#) out of lockdown in order to support the key public health messages at each stage.

3. We recognise that many people gain relief from their symptoms through massage therapies and complementary and alternative therapies, which are also an important part of the economy. However, the wide range of private therapies makes it impossible to say that all of them can re-open in a particular phase and the clinical evidence for each must be assessed individually. What we can say with certainty is that, during the early phases, the focus should remain firmly on the provision of essential and urgent care, and NHS Scotland is open for anyone requiring such treatment. By adopting the phased approach to restarting independent services and not encouraging significant numbers of people to travel for therapies that are not essential or urgent, we are controlling the risk of raising the R value.

4. In coming to a decision on those private therapies which involve close personal contact for extended periods, we must first assess properly the available clinical evidence. That process is currently underway and we will amend Scottish Government advice at the earliest opportunity, based on the outcome of that assessment. In the meantime, our official position is that therapy businesses not subject to statutory professional regulation should remain closed for the time being. All businesses may wish to consider checking with their insurers in preparation for reopening that they have in place public liability indemnity cover appropriate to the risks presented by their services. I should emphasise that health is devolved to the Scottish Parliament, and that UK Government guidance does not apply in Scotland. All businesses must therefore satisfy themselves that they are able to operate lawfully in compliance with The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 (as amended).

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2020/103/contents>

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Leitch', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

PROFESSOR JASON LEITCH