

Business leaders criticise Government for 'arguably recklessly' and 'inexplicably' ignoring vital report

2 years ago



Business leaders have branded the Government's lack of interest in adopting the findings of a recent Covid-19 learnings report which called for cleaning and hygiene to be made a national priority 'arguably reckless' and 'inexplicable'.

The trade bodies representing one of the UK's ten biggest industries have united to launch a campaign for the recommendations of the report from the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for the Cleaning and Hygiene Industry to be adopted in full.

The British Cleaning Council (BCC), which represents the £59bn cleaning, hygiene and waste industry, is being backed by 22 trade associations covering the entire sector to support the report entitled 'Embedding Effective Hygiene for a Resilient UK'. The report is also supported by The Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH).

If the Government adopted the 11 recommendations in the report, it would put cleaning and hygiene at the top of the national agenda, making the UK much more resilient to current common infections such as flu and also better prepared for future public health emergencies like the Covid-19 pandemic.

The BCC, which is the secretariat for the APPG, and its 22 member associations are calling on industry colleagues to write to their MP in support of the report. The BCC is also lobbying MPs and Government directly. (Scan the QR code to support the campaign).

Chairman of the BCC, Jim Melvin, said: "It is inexplicable and arguably reckless that the Government does

not appear to have any interest in the cleaning and hygiene industry as this vital report, if adopted, could help to save lives in the future. It is time for the Government to sit up and take notice.

“These are sensible recommendations based on the advice of industry and public health experts that together will ensure the lessons of the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of cleaning and hygiene are learnt for the benefit of UK citizens.

“By making cleaning and hygiene a national priority going forward, we will help protect the public from future Covid variants and any other future pandemic, as well as commonly recurring infections like flu.

“The public will be healthier, happier and safer if cleaning and hygiene is culturally recognised as a key, frontline service with a vital role in terms of public health.

“But if the Government continues to see cleaning and hygiene as a cultural after-thought, as it did before the Covid-19 pandemic, they are effectively leaving the health of the public at risk. This report must be fully reviewed and adopted.”

The recommendations of APPG report are summarised below:

- The establishment of a joint Government-industry preparedness team to plan for public health emergencies.
- Minimum levels of cleaning materials and equipment to be agreed and made available in readiness.
- Thought to be given to how to increase production during a public health emergency.
- Key frontline worker status must be bestowed upon cleaning operatives and staff working in supply and manufacturing if a pandemic happens.
- Urgent consideration to be given to making cleaning staff eligible for the Skilled Worker Visa scheme.
- Minimum standards for hygiene infrastructure and cleaning in diverse venues to be agreed.
- A standard qualification for cleaning to be developed within the Apprenticeship Levy.
- Training budgets for cleaning operatives should be adequate.
- Government communications around hygiene in times of pandemic should be clear, consistent, sustained, timely, relevant and specific.
- The Government should use behavioural science-based communication campaigns to promote hygienic behaviour to the public.
- The Government should support the cleaning and hygiene industry in realigning perceptions of the industry.

The BCC and member associations launched the campaign at the Cleaning Show earlier this month, asking industry members to download a pre-written letter from the BCC website to email to their MP in support of the report.

As part of the campaign, Jim Melvin recently met his local MP, The Rt Hon Grant Shapps, to brief him about the issue and currently awaits his response.

APPG Chair Nigel Mills MP and BCC representatives also met with Ben Everitt MP, Chair of the APPG on Business Resilience, as part of a drive to contact other APPGs about the report. The BCC has also been in touch with the Conservative party policy unit and information has also been shared with the UK Covid-19 Inquiry.

The drive takes place under the umbrella of the BCC's 'We Clean, We Care' campaign, which reflects the pride cleaning and hygiene staff have in the vital, frontline role they perform, keeping others safe, well, healthy and increasing public confidence in the UK's infrastructure and workplaces.

The recommendations of the Embedding Effective Hygiene for a Resilient UK report were published last December after the APPG held an inquiry which heard from a wide range of industry experts, clients and stakeholders from across the cleaning and hygiene industry, including representatives of the RSPH.

To take part in the letter-writing campaign, please visit

<https://britishcleaningcouncil.org/2023/02/06/download-letter-here/>