

EXCLUSIVE: Sue Harmsworth pioneers new training standard in massage for those touched by cancer

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ESPA founder Sue Harmsworth MBE is collaborating with a number of spa industry leaders to create the Standard Authority for Touch in Cancer Care (SATCC) - a recognised standard of training for providing spa treatments to those living with cancer.

Through accredited UK spa industry partnership Spabreaks.com and Think Tree Hub, the new SATCC will provide those affected by cancer with transparent and easy access to appropriately qualified spa therapists, and support the industry with an accredited platform signposting training courses for staff.

One in two people in the UK is expected to experience cancer in their lifetime, and SATCC will ensure spas provide safe and inclusive treatments, from diagnosis to remission.

Sue Harmsworth MBE, SATCC founder, spoke to spaNEWS about the new standard: *“Hearing you have cancer can evoke a range of emotions from anger and disbelief to shock and sorrow, all of which compound the physical toll of the disease and its treatments. Every person diagnosed with cancer copes in their own way, our aim at SATCC is to ensure that spas and wellness therapies remain an option for those dealing with what will possibly be one of the greatest challenges they’ll face. Together, as the spa industry, we have a duty to embrace those living with cancer and help enhance their lives.”*

Over fifty years’ of holistic wellness and spa experience have brought Sue, who founded ESPA in 1992 and has designed over 600 spas worldwide, to establish SATCC. Sue said: *“It’s time for the wellness industry to wholeheartedly support those living with cancer and offer them treatments that positively impact their mental and physical wellbeing. The SATCC will create clarity for the spa industry, and give reassurance to consumers they can find a recognised spa and therapist to provide specialised wellness care.”*

She added: *“The independent, expert-led SATCC advisory board will ensure the spa industry and consumers alike can move forward with confidence, by empowering and upskilling therapists with the training and tools they need to treat with empathy, and better understand the contra-indications associated with an illness such as cancer.”*

Think Tree Hub, an online professional association for the complementary therapy industry is one of the founding partners of the SATCC, and has been brought on board to streamline and simplify access to SATCC qualified courses and online training. Kush Kumar, Think Tree Hub CEO said: *“As a member of the SATCC I believe in the key standards and messages of support, guidance, training and application of massage on those touched by cancer. The focus and intention of SATCC is to make massage for those touched by cancer accessible.”*

Speaking exclusively to spaNEWS, Abi Selby, founder of Spabreaks.com said: *“We’ve spent a decade lobbying for and implementing change to ensure those living with cancer are not excluded from spas and wellness treatments so we warmly welcome SATCC. We are committed to supporting SATCC and plan to work closely with them and our industry partners, to ensure that both spa therapists and spa users get the advice and support they need.”*

Abi continued; *“Though it’s undeniable that many within the industry have championed and worked hard to deliver appropriate training for therapists to provide massage to people living with cancer, for so long these courses have operated in isolation. What Sue has achieved by bringing together the wealth of industry expertise from individuals including Amanda Winwood, Jennifer Young and Christine Clinton to regulate massage standards is nothing short of incredible.”*

As part of the initiative, Spabreaks.com has launched 'Our Safe Hands Collection' - an SATCC-accredited search tool to enable those living with cancer to find the nearest certified spa with a simple postcode search. Abi added: *"Access to appropriate treatments offered by trained therapists is going to be much easier, and I'm delighted Spabreaks.com remains at the vanguard of the movement to open up spas to people with cancer."*

Speaking of her decision to partner with SpaBreaks.com Sue said: *"Spabreaks.com just felt like the most natural fit as the consumer facing element of SATCC. As one of the leading providers of spa breaks and holidays, Spabreaks.com not only offers the necessary scale, exposure and access we want for consumers, but Abi's integrity and passion as an individual to make treatments available and accessible to all is unbounded."*

Abi has big plans for the 'Our Safe Hands Collection' promising over the coming months consumers visiting the website can expect 'so much more than just a list of spas suitable for people living with cancer', with a host of useful content and information planned for the hub such as blogs, interviews with experts, and videos and tips to help those living with cancer.

Trialled initially in the UK and Ireland, Sue hopes the SATCC will eventually be rolled out across other countries across the globe.

"We decided to focus first on these markets as the rest of the world still very much looks to the UK as a benchmark for quality in education standards. We hope once the training has been established here to extend the programme out to different markets."

Sue is also already looking to the future and additional pillars of training and health concerns and conditions that can be covered by the new

industry standard such as Type 1 diabetes, mental health, disability, pregnancy, epilepsy, alzheimers and dementia - a direction very much mirrored and supported by Abi at Spabreaks.com

Abi commented “At Spabreaks.com our ultimate goal is to be able to give consumers the confidence they can enjoy spa safely regardless of their personal needs and whatever point in their life cycle. No single individual customer should ever feel excluded from spas. Our website receives up to 1.2 million visitors each month, so I feel it’s my duty to do more to make spa and wellness accessible to all.”

The new SATCC website will be launched in the coming weeks. In the meantime, visit the Our Safe Hands Collection hub at Spabreaks.com to find out more.

<https://www.spabreaks.com/safe-hands>