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Women Supporting Women – New #TravelSupportBubble from Travel Industry Leaders

Advantage Travel Partnership and the Association of Women Travel Executives join forces for World Mental Health Day, 10 October 2020

9 October 2020 - As a second wave washes over the nation, the travel industry remains at sea with no life raft in sight. Bearing the brunt of the undulating tides are the women of the travel industry, who are facing severe financial hardship creating extreme mental health issues across the board.

With international travel reduced to a trickle and consumer sentiment about travel at an all-time low, the tourism industry horizon looks bleak. Around 60% of professionals in the travel industry are women with the majority in lower paid positions*. This has made women in the travel industry significantly more vulnerable to redundancy or minimal income potential as many, such as homeworking travel agents, rely on commission-based earnings. Recent studies have highlighted a pandemic-related increase in women experiencing at least one underlying health problem, from 11% to 27% (men reported a rise from 7% to 18%)** thanks to a toxic combination of financial uncertainty, increased demands of childcare and domestic work and a lack of social interaction brought about by government restrictions creating the perfect storm for a mental health disaster in the travel industry.

Many travel agents and travel business owners have sought help from the government by backing campaigns to #SaveTravel and #SaveFutureTravel with no tangible results helping the sector and giving any reassurance to their plight. Following a number of desperate emails from women in the sector to [Advantage Travel Partnership](#), the UK's largest independent travel agent group and [AWTE](#), the women's travel business network, the leaders of both companies have joined forces to create a '**Travel Support Bubble**' to offer emotional support to fellow travel industry professionals.

Launching on Mental Health Day, 10th October 2020, volunteers and those in need from across the travel sector can connect each other in a sign of solidarity during these tumultuous times.

Julia Lo Bue-Said, CEO of Advantage Travel Partnership said: *"My team and I are speaking to desperate agents everyday who are literally losing the will to continue the battle to save their businesses. Seven months is a long time to be at the coal face of a crisis with no sector specific financial support from the government, and for many of our members there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel. On a day when Advantage member Go Travel, a business that had been trading for 21 years, ceased trading due to the impact of government border restrictions and lack of financial support. Whilst Boris, Rishi and Grant continue to ignore us, we want to show our agents – many of whom are women – they are not ignored by the industry. We hope the Travel Support Bubble will help bridge the gap for those of*



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our colleagues at the end of their tether and provide likeminded souls to offer support and empathy when they need it most.”

Claire Osborne, Chair of AWTE added: *“AWTE has been supporting women in business in the travel industry for over 60 years and never has the need been greater to show solidarity than now. This is more than tears of frustration from our members and network, this is actual despair. Things are looking very grave for many working in the travel industry and we have seen this have a huge effect on the levels of anxiety and depression across the board. Anything we can do to support our fellow professionals is a step in the right direction, as we have people on the edge of a precipice, and we want to help in whatever way we can.”*

As part of the outreach to women in need across the industry, AWTE and Advantage will host a Weekly Open Forum starting on Friday 16th October at 1pm, where participants can share their issues in a supportive open forum hosted by Claire and Julia. The leaders are also asking fellow industry professionals to offer their services to women in need and urging everyone to get in touch if they feel they would benefit from a friendly ear from an industry peer.

To become a volunteer supporter or to ask for help from the bubble email admin@awte.com

- ENDS -

Case studies of women travel agents facing financial ruin and associated anxiety are available and willing to share their stories.

For more information please contact Amy Skelding FINN Partners amy.skelding@finnpartners.com

* UNWTO Global Report on Women in Tourism <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284420384>

** Gender Gap on Mental Wellbeing during Covid-19 outbreak

<https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/research/publications/working-papers/iser/2020-08>