

Those businesses most affected have largely been ignored. The companies that were forced to close first and which will be the last to open such as nightclubs have had the least support. The events industry which covers everything from weddings to shows and festivals have also been hugely affected as they were not able to operate last year and most likely will not be able to operate wholly in 2021. These industries have essentially been closed since March. Whilst other areas of hospitality were able to trade well for several months of the summer and autumn, nightclubs and some events sectors were forced to remain closed.

All other industries have been able to claim on the payroll co-funding scheme despite only a 30% downturn and now only a 20% downturn in business is required in the latest version of the scheme. Many industries which have bounced back extremely well such as construction and the trades will still be able to make claims however nightclubs and events all of which have a 70% - 100% downturn get the same level of support albeit fractionally more generous.

The Visitor Attractions and Events Scheme has not worked. The criteria makes it impossible for anyone to apply. One aspect of the criteria requires that a business must show a 50% downturn in business which is reasonable. However when determining the downturn a business must take the previous 12 months trading figures into account. For example if you wish to claim for October you must compare figures from November 2019 to October 2020 against 2019's figures. This means a business must include pre-pandemic figures in its turnover calculations. This will include December 2019's figures which is by far the busiest month of the year for nightclubs and those working in events. This appears to be designed to make most businesses fail the 50% detriment test.

Ministers first met with representatives of the events industry in July 2020 to discuss an urgent package of help. Despite delays it was eventually agreed that it would be released in September. However this was delayed every month until finally it was released in January. Despite delays on the government's side there is a refusal to back date it any earlier than October. To date we believe that less than 0.5% of the £2m fund allocated has been paid out.

We simply ask that we are treated fairly and that action is taken swiftly to help the most affected businesses.