

EIC0565

Written evidence submitted by Annabel Mourelle (Director/owner at The Hungry Bedouin East Limited)

I am writing as a small business owner in London with a desperate plea to help save businesses like ours and the jobs of the people we employ.

To date we have not received any government help despite being drastically affected by Coronavirus.

We are a small restaurant that opened in Westfield Stratford City, London in November last year. We currently have 8 employees.

Because our business rates are included in our rent we have been advised we are not eligible for any business grants.

Despite applying to HMRC for our PAYE scheme in December last year, and paying employee's wages since November, we were only advised recently that our application had not been processed by HMRC before March and therefore we are not eligible for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

HMRC have acknowledged receipt of our application in December and have confirmed that this should have taken 1-2 weeks but we have not been provided with any explanation as to why it took so long to process. We have since been told that there is no process to appeal this decision.

We have spent hours and hours on the phone with HMRC trying to appeal this, have had our 'issue' escalated from tier 1 to tier 3 over a 3 week period to then be told that we need to lodge a complaint on the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) site, which we have done but not received a response to.

It feels grossly unfair that because of a technicality in our tenancy agreement, and because of an error on part of HMRC in processing our PAYE scheme, our business and our loyal staff are being made to suffer more and receive less help than other businesses identical to ours. There are 8 people with their respective families and commitments who are relying on this help in order to survive and pay their most basic bills.

At a minimum an effective appeal process should be created as a matter of urgency in order to help struggling businesses like ourselves to retain jobs and loyal staff.

June 2020