

Written evidence submitted by Richard Whaley (Founder at Harriet Gibson Executive Search)

I am 61 years old and I have always worked.

Employed for most of my 42 years, I had my own business between 2003 and 2008. Whether it has been via PAYE, corporation tax or VAT I have always paid my taxes in full and on time. For 20 years I have been a specialist recruiter, working in non-food retail, hospitality and leisure

In February 2019 the recruitment business I had been a key part of closed. I decided to set my own, independent business working in the sectors I know well. As a sole trader, the first three months were tough, establishing my business. Then we had successes and going into 2020 I was busier than I had ever been. I wasn't making a fortune by any means, but I was doing okay. Then overnight, all my clients were required to close their businesses - no one was hiring so no work for me. Any business I had done in January/February, my outstanding invoices are still unpaid.

There is no indication that business will improve over the next few months. Stores are opening now but it will be months before they can trade normally. My livelihood has been cut from under me. If I get paid what I am owed I will consider myself lucky. But what then?

I have had no support from the various schemes available - no grant, no SEISS, no local authority discretionary grant. I have been a taxpayer all my life yet feel totally abandoned, as if my business is not worth saving. Yet the irony is my taxes will no doubt be worth collecting - which somehow seems doubly cruel.

How can it be right that an individual who has contributed to the system for over four decades is passed over in favour of those who have just started out? And how can it be right when the government throw money at businesses that stay open, and in many cases thrive during this pandemic whilst other hard-working decent people are left to rot. It defies logic.

We are all taxpayers. Yet it seems some taxpayers are more important than others.

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