

From: Mairi Gougeon MSP <Mairi.gougeon@parliament.scot>
Sent: 10 September 2020 17:21
To: Cabinet Secretary for Finance <CabSecFinance@gov.scot>
Subject: (Case Ref: ME3053)

Good afternoon

I have been contacted by the owner of an indoor children's play centre with regards to the announcement today of the delay in reopening.

As it has now been 6 months since his business was informed to close and he asks what financial help can the Scottish Government provide for businesses such as his.

I would be grateful if you could provide a response that I can forward on to him.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Office of Mairi Gougeon MSP

John Lamont MP
John Lamont MP, 25 High Street, Hawick TD9 9BU
john.lamont.mp@parliament.uk
Telephone: 01450 375948

Jamie Hepburn MSP
Minister for Business, Fair Work & Skills
Scottish Government
BY EMAIL
11 September 2020
Our Ref: JL15674 DGF/11/6/20

Dear Jamie
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I have been contacted by my constituent, [REDACTED] who owns a soft play centre, [REDACTED], in [REDACTED].

[REDACTED] claims his indoor soft play would be safer than an outdoor playpark as he has the ability to make sure all the equipment is sanitised on a regular basis and his staff would ensure customers adhere to social distancing.

My constituent would like to know if there will be further help available from the Scottish Government to soft play centres, if they are to remain closed for the foreseeable future.

I would be grateful if you could address [REDACTED] concerns please.

With many thanks

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely

John Lamont MP

Berwickshire, Roxburgh & Selkirk

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From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 16 September 2020 17:08

To: Cabinet Secretary for Finance

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: SAVE OUR SOFT PLAY

Wednesday 16th September 2020

Dear Kate Forbes MSP

The Soft Play Industry lies at the heart of every local community and provides support to local schools and after school's clubs daily. Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them, Soft Plays allow children the play within a safe and fun environment not to mention the health benefits a parent receives from the rest and relaxation on offer for them.

As a leisure business, we were one of the first businesses that had to close in relation to the coronavirus outbreak back in March and have still not reopened. On Monday 14th September you advise that already 96% of business' have reopened but Indoor play has to remain closed—including soft play, roleplay centres and inflatable parks. There is currently a provisional reopening date of 5th of October but as of the 18th of September most of these business' have been closed for 6 months. Given that the date has already moved forwards we cannot be confident in this date either. The run-up to lockdown was also particularly hard as once discouraged from visiting crowded places the footfall to these centres dropped significantly.

While Business owners are doing everything that they can to ensure business continuity they are receiving little or no help from the government with many facilities falling out with the guidelines for support. With many premises being over a rateable value of 51k there are no grants available through the Leisure, Retail and hospitality Scheme. Whilst we are aware that there was a grant through the Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund and Hardship funds this scheme was significantly oversubscribed.

Business Interruption insurances haven't paid out to centres and there has been a requirement to take on more debt in anticipation of reopening. The significant reduction in numbers that are being proposed in centres going forward make it highly likely that most of these premises will be uneconomical to re-open. Scottish Soft Play

requires support for their period of closure, support in reopening and support to continue to trade and adhere to the reduced capacities. Some of the support that would be welcomed is as laid out below:-

- A newly established fund to support centres closure period
- Continuation of furlough scheme
- Rental (landlord) support
- A discretionary extension to the RV grants administered
- Staff cost help for reopening
- Play out to Help out Scheme.

Please help to support our sector before it is lost forever.

Regards

[REDACTED]

From: WISHART, Peter <pete.wishart.mp@parliament.uk>
Sent: 16 September 2020 12:22
To: Covid19 Response <covid19response@gov.scot>
Subject: Soft Play Business

Dear Scottish Government,

I have been contacted by my constituent who owns a large soft play business in [REDACTED]. She is concerned that various hospitality venues have been allowed to open including trampoline parks, play parks, cinemas and swimming pools, but that soft play areas have been an exception to this rule.

I would be grateful if you could outline why this decision has been taken the way it has so that my constituent can understand the caution. I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Pete Wishart MP

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Rona Mackay MSP
Strathkelvin and Bearsden

21st

September 2020
Kate Forbes MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Finance
Scottish Government
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Dear Kate,

I have been contacted by my constituent, who owns a soft play centre, and he has relayed the issues that his business is currently facing.

His business has been closed for 6 months, and due to the unfortunate rise in Covid cases, the indicative opening date continues to be pushed back.

His business was not able to take advantage of some of the support measures put in place by the Scottish Government, as due to the size of soft play areas, they fell outwith the rateable value criteria for grants.

He is reluctant to take on a bounce back loan, as if the business can't trade for the foreseeable future, he is not confident that he will be able to pay this back.

My constituent would like to know if the Scottish Government would consider a grant for this sector, in a similar vein to the grants for the theatre industry, if the indicative opening date is pushed back again.

I appreciate that this would be subject to funding, but I would be grateful for your attention on this matter, and any information that you could provide.

Kind regards,

Rona Mackay MSP
Strathkelvin and Bearsden

Fiona Hyslop MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture.
Scottish Government
St. Andrews House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

My ref: GB/BD9400 18 September 2020

Dear Fiona,

Assistance for Soft Play areas

I write on behalf of a constituent who works in a children's soft play area in Glasgow. With the end of the furlough scheme, and soft play areas still unable to re-open, the staff are being made redundant. This includes my constituent. I know we must do everything we can to stop the spread of the virus. It is therefore right some business must stay closed.

I would ask if you share my view that the Westminster Government must review the Job Retention Scheme in order to allow it to continue in a targeted way to help businesses that cannot re-open at this stage. We must protect lives, but we must also protect livelihoods. I would also ask what further support the Scottish Government can offer for children's soft play businesses that continue to feel the direct impacts of lockdown.

Kind regards

Bob Doris MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn (SNP)

Powered by TCPDF (www.tcpdf.org)

Bob Doris MSP

e-mail: bob.doris.msp@parliament.scot

Constituency Office, Maryhill Burgh Halls, 10-24 Gairbraid Avenue, Glasgow G20 8YE

Phone: 0141 946 7700

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 21 September 2020 09:44

To: FitzPatrick J (Joe), MSP <Joe.FitzPatrick.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: HELP AND SUPPORT SCOTTISH INDOOR PLAY

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Wednesday 23 September, 12pm-2pm

Scottish Parliament

I manage [REDACTED] Play Centre and will be attending the rally above to support the campaign to allow soft play centres in Scotland to reopen or for the Scottish Government to provide support to prevent the closure of my own business and hundreds of similar ones across Scotland.

We have been closed since the 20th March but, in reality, have had no income from as far back as the start of March when customers stopped attending due to government advice to avoid social gatherings.

Over that time I have had to - Pay £100,000, insurance and other regular outgoings that could not be deferred-

Make 8 staff redundant 20 on furlough-

Take out £50K in loans-

Pay £2,000 in advertising and other costs when it appeared we would be reopening on 14 September.

I understand these are difficult and uncertain times but whilst the Scottish Government has said under-12s do not need to socially distance, my business, which is for younger children is not allowed to reopen even though I can demonstrate it can be done safely. I would ask that you come to speak to me outside the Scottish Parliament so I can explain in more detail the impact this is having on my business and how it is essential we are allowed to reopen or require some kind of government support.

There is also a motion in the Scottish Parliament tabled by Miles Briggs MSP on this issue that I would be grateful if you could sign so you can show your support for our campaign."

Thank you and I look forward to seeing you on Wednesday"

Benefits of Indoor Play

*"Children who don't get the opportunity to play and to be active may be putting their social, emotional, intellectual and physical development at risk."*¹
(Children's Commissioner for England, 2018)

Background

A recent survey by BALPPA revealed that 64% of indoor play centres will go out of business in England by October without any further support or a near-term reopening date². This statistic, first released on 13 June 2020 has already started to play out, with over 8% of the UK's 1,100 centres (and over 30,000 jobs collectively) already closed for good as a result of COVID-19 and other centres closing at a rate of over 20 per week currently and this figure is expected to increase significantly in the coming weeks.

The future of the indoor play sector in the UK is facing an existential crisis that could have a significant impact on children and parents' mental and physical health for years to come. But the benefits of indoor play are often unknown or overlooked as many people have an outdated view of a sector that not only provides exercise for children, but also plugs gaps in local authority services and serves as a key lifeline for many parents.

The Obesity Challenge

It is well known that indoor play centres can allow children to burn off steam in a fun and stimulating environment; but what is less well known is how effective indoor play is as a form of exercise. A child can burn up to 300 calories an hour whilst running around a play structure³.

The average dwell time for parents in an indoor play centre is two hours, so a child visiting weekly for two hours each time would equate to up to 3.5kg of fat lost per annum. A House of Commons research paper released last year found that 22.3% of

¹ <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Play-final-report.pdf>

² <https://www.balppa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Indoor-Play-Industry-Faces-Extinction.pdf>

³ <https://healthfully.com/562083-caloric-expenditure-during-activities-for-kids.html>. Based on a child weighing 75 pounds and other sports similar to indoor play.

children in reception (4-5 years old) are obese or overweight and this figure increases to 34.3% at age 10-11⁴.

Indoor play centres, generally attracting children up to the age of 11, have a key part to play in tackling childhood obesity. The industry has a capability to provide 1.5m active hours per week.

Learning in Disguise

Less well-known are the learning and development benefits of indoor play centres. Indeed for children up to the age of 5, a comparison with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework (used in early years settings) shows that indoor play centres helps with all three of the prime development areas and at least two of the four specific development areas⁵.

“Free imaginative play” in indoor play settings can also help children to grow their *executive function*, which according to Howard Chudacoff, a leading children’s play writer is “thought to be a better predictor of school success than a child’s IQ”⁶. Indoor play centres should therefore be inextricably linked with the government’s children agenda, across health, social and education. The benefits are not only limited to obesity reduction but children’s play also increases educational achievement.

Filling the Gaps in Local Authority-Funded Services

Many indoor play settings are a vital community asset and often fill a gap left by the reduction in local authority children’s centres across England. As well as serving as a lifeline for many new mothers to socialise and take a break, indoor play centres can also serve as settings for baby and toddler groups.

Indeed, in a recent survey of BALPPA members⁷, 100% of respondents provide some form of toddler activity mornings during term time and 74% offer a vital venue for contact visits organised by social services. 83% work closely with local schools/nurseries and 76% offer regular sessions for SEND children⁸.

BALPPA also asked a number of centres across England to survey their customers about what they perceived the benefits of indoor play were. The results of these surveys, some of which are included in Appendix One, show that parents are overwhelmingly aware of the range of benefits indoor play offers and see these centres as a vital community lifeline. A large number of parents have acknowledged the contribution of indoor play centres to their recovery from a mental health crisis and developing support networks to cope with mental health problems.

Many centres also have a day nursery attached to their setting as well as providing key wrap-around care for children during the school holidays and before/after school, enhancing the local economy through enabling parents to work.

⁴ <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn03336/#:~:text=Childhood%20obesity%20in%20England,the%20National%20Child%20Measurement%20Programme.>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework-2>. The three prime areas are communication & language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development. The two specific areas are understanding the world and expressive arts & design, although certain centres also meet elements of the literacy and mathematics development areas through specific activities.

⁶ Chudacoff, H. P. (2007). *Children at play: An American history*. New York University Press.

⁷ Survey conducted on 8 August 2020 of all BALPPA FEC members.

⁸ Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Helping the Most Vulnerable in Society

Indoor play, and in particular soft play, owes its origin to Jack Pentes who first came up with the concept in 1982 to overcome the dangers posed by outdoor playgrounds. Indoor play has evolved a lot since this date to offer a more diverse range of play activities. It is accessible to low income families and deprived households (some of whom don't appropriate space in their homes for play and exercise) due to a low-price point for entry and food – compared to other indoor leisure activities.

For SEND children, who are often not able to use outdoor play areas not just because of the danger posed by other outdoor play equipment but also because of a lack of disabled access, indoor play can be a key part of their routine and development. For example, parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) often use the centres as a weekly visit to enable the parents to benefit from some respite whilst their children play in a safe enclosed environment. It helps develop fine and gross motor skills as well as social skills.

Customers have also talked about the importance of these centres for new mothers experiencing post-natal depression, parents' in abusive relationships and children or parents with compromised immunity for example because of cancer treatment. Indeed, some centres partner with local children's hospitals to enable children with compromised immunity to regularly visit after they have disinfected the centre by way of a fogging process. This is the only opportunity these children have to play.

Conclusion

Indoor play has fundamentally changed its operations since its conception in 1982, but the wider socio-economic benefits of indoor play are often overlooked. These centres should form a key part of the government's children agenda covering health, social and education strategies.

Indoor play not only has a key part to play in the fight against childhood obesity, but it can also contribute towards a better educated population with improved levels of mental health in both children and parents alike. Indeed, in some areas indoor play centres have become de-facto children's community centres due to a lack of other local authority provision.

The term "lifeline" is used to describe indoor play settings over and over again by parents from all types of socio-demographic backgrounds. Without them, parents of children of all abilities (but not least SEND children) would lose a vital community resource.

Appendix One: Selection of Results from Customer Surveys Across England – August 2020

The government just needs to look at the Early Years Framework they created! So many areas are being developed when children are 'playing' at soft play. The obvious physical development, helping babies sit, crawl, climb and walk in a safe environment. They learn so much about moving their bodies. Personal social and emotional development by meeting other children, understanding social cues, recognising different faces, personal space etc. Communication and language, mums being able to interact with their children, talking about what they are doing, learning about different colours. Need I go on!

Amy Knight, Gloucester

I suffer with postnatal depression and we used soft play on a once/twice weekly basis before lockdown (I had 2 children under 2) so it was so important for us. I could let them just run off energy and be in a safe environment whilst meeting a friend to have adult conversation with. It really is a lifeline for us.

Laura Francis, Gloucester

This is crazy. Soft play is essential! We always went with a friend, so there's social interaction for both parent and child. Multi-sensory play, physical play, imaginative play (making houses, shops, forts with the foam blocks), fostering independence (climbing the 'big kid cage' all by yourself when you're 4 🧡)...The fact you have to explain your existence. No one is questioning the importance of libraries for academic development and social cohesion. You are the physical and sensory equivalent, but with parking and coffee.

Isabel Healy, Northampton

A child who spends one and a half to two hours in a soft play area will get far more exercise in that time than most children would get at school in a fortnight. They use energy, they often make friends with other children so it makes them more sociable. These soft play areas are a necessity.

Tessa Mitchell, Northampton

The "Quiet/Autism" sessions are absolutely vital Socialisation opportunities for disabled children and their parents! Helps us feel like a 'normal' family.

Vikki, Devon

Its a life saver, i have friends who all have children of different ages, when i had my first baby in may last year it meant i could meet up with them and retain my sanity after a particularly difficult time! All children and parents can access soft play and enjoy the time they spend there. It is also a lovely place to spend time with my little lady knowing she is having the time of her life safely. I honestly don't know how I would have coped this past year without soft play!x **Robyn, Devon**

Freedom to run around, making friends, physical & social development. Exercise, fun, being able to explore different areas, burn off energy, make memories, building confidence and social skills as well as giving parents a bit of a break.

Lynn Firth, York

Physical and mental and social stimulation. Happiness and childhood memories. Learning to share and play well with others. Independence in a safe environment. Lots of stimulation that can not be achieved from just a home or school environment.

Maria Watson, York

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[REDACTED]

From:
 [FirstMinisterWebsite@gov.scot][SMTP:FIRSTMINISTERWEBSITE@GOV.SCOT]
Sent: 22 September 2020 20:42:22
To: First Ministers Website Mailbox
Subject: Activity centre
 Auto forwarded by a Rule

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: Activity centre

Message Body:

Hi I really would appreciate a response I am a single parent to 2 children and I currently work for an activity centre for children like. Soft play but we do activities with children I so depend on my job and with Christmas coming up I really could do with your help you make it clear exactly what we can and cannot do if we can open or we cannot I depend on my job so much for myself and my children and there just isn't enough said about our line of work so please could you make it clear on what we can do and cannot the business I work needs to know

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on the First Minister of Scotland's website (<https://firstminister.gov.scot>)

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 24 September 2020 12:56
To: Scottish Ministers
Cc: GRAY, Neil ; Neil A (Alex), MSP
Subject: FAO: Nicola Sturgeon and Kate Forbes

Dear First Minister and Ms Forbes,

I am contacting you as a Scottish business owner to try and understand why my industry has been totally abandoned by the Scottish Government throughout this crisis. I am a lifelong SNP supporter and have been impressed with how this crisis has been generally handled by your government but I am bitterly disappointed at the lack of support for my industry.

I own [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]. We are a children's indoor play venue aimed at under 5's and we have been closed for 7 months. With 96% of Scottish businesses now open, we unfortunately sit within the 4% that have been ordered to remain closed. I will follow this instruction and trust there is a valid reason behind it, even with schools, nursery's, playgrounds and playparks now open and under 12's not having to social distance with each other. However what I cannot understand or accept is the total lack of support for our businesses or recognition of how badly we have been impacted.

On a personal level, I have 12 staff that I feel a huge responsibility towards. I haven't made any redundancies since our March closure, and I have paid the 10% furlough contribution for September, but, due to this extended closure, it is financially impossible for me to pay the 20% contribution to all 12. I am now forced to look at making redundancies. I am also a father with three children who has worked hard to build a successful business and I now face losing it all and fear the impacts that will have to my family, house and ability to pay my own bills.

I have listed my main questions below and look forward to both your answers:

1. Grants have been made available to other businesses with the 4%, still closed, why have indoor play venues, which support 1000's of jobs across Scotland and remain closed for 7 months, been excluded?
2. What was the reason for excluding indoor play venues from applying for the culture grant that was made available for the majority of the 4% such as nightclubs, comedy clubs and music venues? What defines who is included if nightclubs are prioritised from a cultural perspective over businesses that support the health and wellbeing of children and young families.
3. The First Minister suggested she may have closed pubs and restaurants completely had she access to the necessary borrowing powers to compensate. Pubs, cafes and restaurants have been open for 2 months, and enjoyed the benefit of a 5% VAT cut, along with the eat out to help out scheme. While we have been closed for 7 months, even with our counterparts across the UK having reopened, yet the Scottish Government refuse to acknowledge us or provide any form of compensation. Why would a pub be compensated for being told to close when a kids play venue isn't?
4. In England, businesses that are forced to close due to local lockdowns, will receive a grant every 3 weeks to support them. If the UK government recognises the impact total closure has on small businesses why have the Scottish government not shown the same recognition and offered us financial support while we remain one of the few businesses still closed and with no additional financial support.

I hope you can understand my frustration and despair when we are one of the only businesses that remain closed without any additional support in recognition. At a basic level it feels completely unfair when we see the additional support to other sectors and I am becoming increasingly angry at being left to rot.

I am also well aware of the previous support schemes such as furlough and business loans, and these initially helped but that money is long gone. I am paying rent and various bills that can't be deferred and our monthly bills total several thousand

pounds per month. However my main issue is that these option were available to all businesses and following this additional support and resources are being made available to the 4% closed businesses apart from us.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

From: Neil A (Alex), MSP
Sent: 23 September 2020 13:49
To: First Minister
Cc: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills ;
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] ; [REDACTED]
Subject: Re-opening of Soft Play Areas
Importance: High

Dear Nicola

I am writing on behalf of the soft play centres in my constituency

As you know these centres are amongst the types of businesses which to date have not been allowed to re-open owing to the pandemic.

I believe there will be a further review of their status in the next few weeks

I am therefore writing to ask that serious consideration be given to allowing such facilities to re-open provided they meet the social distancing and other rules governing safety from the pandemic

In support of this request I would make the following points:

- These businesses have probably more health and safety measures now in place, ready for re-opening, than many businesses already given the go-ahead to re-open
- As we approach winter many families with young children are dependent on using these centres and their facilities
- They have a vital role to play in essential health strategies such as preventing obesity in children
- If they are not allowed to re-open soon, most of them will be forced into administration, with the consequent loss of jobs and the detrimental impact on children and their parents
- The ending of the furlough scheme will make it financially impossible to keep these businesses sustainable

The proprietors of these businesses are fully appreciative of the challenges presented by covid but believe that the damage done by not allowing them to re-open would now be much greater than the risks associated with keeping them closed.

I hope you will give these points serious consideration in deciding their future.

Yours sincerely

Alex Neil MSP

From: Gail Ross MSP
 Sent: 23 September 2020 14:54
 To: Minister for Children and Young People
 Subject: Indoor and Soft Play Centres (Case Ref: GR4858)

Dear Maree,

You will be aware that there is a rally outside the Scottish Parliament today regarding indoor and soft play centres in Scotland and their need for more support and clarity around reopening.

A constituent of mine is attending the rally and has requested that I seek clarification from the Scottish Government on when they might be permitted to open their soft play businesses as well as whether there will be more financial support available to those businesses which are not yet permitted to open?

Kind regards,

Gail

This email has been scanned by the Symantec Email Security.cloud service.
 For more information please visit <http://www.symanteccloud.com>

Hi I would like to know why on earth pubs are open and softplays are not? This makes no sense , after a couple of drinks people don't care in pubs , or think and start cuddling and mixing with each other , in softplays they do care and is badly needed .

I suffer a chronic anxiety disorder and mild depression and going to softplays and meeting people and being able to talk helps my recovery and gives me routine , this helps my 2 year old daughter as I cannot keep her in 7 days a week she needs. Routine and friends .

Now I am a wreck, routine is gone , no help, no face to face talking with my go, counselling group, nothing and I have got so bad I have lost my job, so thanks for that. The softplays need to open , the kids at suffering something awful as it is

[REDACTED]

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

 John Lamont MP, 25 High Street, Hawick TD9 9BU
 john.lamont.mp@parliament.uk
 Telephone: 01450 375948

Joe Fitzpatrick MSP
 Minister for Public Health, Sport & Wellbeing
 Scottish Government
 BY EMAIL

16 September 2020
 Our Ref: JL15816 DGF/16/9/20

Dear Joe

[REDACTED]

I have been contacted by my constituents, [REDACTED]

My constituents have joined forces with other Scottish soft play centres, and they have sent the attached letter to the First Minister.

My constituents say, "As you know, we have fought really hard for over 7 years to open our centre, and it has been a huge success since we opened in February. Unfortunately, we only had 6 weeks of trading, but in that time it was clear that we would be a very popular venue in the [REDACTED]. Since opening we have created 5 jobs (plus two of us), all from [REDACTED], and were looking to employ another person as we have been so busy. However, that was put on hold due to the lockdown. As it stands now, with furlough changes and no definite date for reopening we fear we might have no other option but to let all of our staff go, which would be so awful for us and them and their families. But with no income for 6 months and every penny we own invested into business, plus a Bounce Back loan we had to take in order to pay bills, we may not have much choice very soon". Is there anything the Scottish Government can do to support indoor soft play centres at this difficult time?
 Kind regards.

Yours sincerely

John Lamont MP

Berwickshire, Roxburgh & Selkirk

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 Please help out our kid's Soft play centres in Scotland

Dated: Wednesday 16th September 2020

Dear First Minister of Scotland,

The Soft Play Industry lies at the heart of every local community and provides support to local schools and after school's clubs daily. Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them,

Soft Plays allow children the play within a safe and fun environment not to mention the health benefits a parent receives from the rest and relaxation on offer for them.

As a leisure business, we were one of the first businesses that had to close in relation to the coronavirus outbreak back in March and have still not reopened. On Monday 14th September you advise that already 96% of business' have reopened but Indoor play has to remain closed – including soft play, roleplay centres and inflatable parks.

There is currently a provisional reopening date of 5th of October but as of the 18th of September most of these business' have been closed for 6 months. Given that the date has already moved forwards we cannot be confident in this date either. The run-up to lockdown was also particularly hard as once discouraged from visiting crowded places the footfall to these centres dropped significantly.

While Business owners are doing everything that they can to ensure business continuity they are receiving little or no help from the government with many facilities falling out with the guidelines for support. With many premises being over a rateable value of 51k there are no grants available through the Leisure, Retail and hospitality Scheme. Whilst we are aware that there was a grant through the Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund and Hardship funds this scheme was significantly oversubscribed.

Business Interruption insurances haven't paid out to centres and there has been a requirement to take on more debt in anticipation of reopening. The significant reduction in numbers that are being proposed in centres going forward make it highly likely that most of these premises will be uneconomical to re-open.

Scottish Soft Play requires support for their period of closure, support in reopening and support to continue to trade and adhere to the reduced capacities. Some of the support that would be welcomed is as laid out below:-

- A newly established fund to support centres closure period
- Continuation of furlough scheme
- Rental (landlord) support
- A discretionary extension to the RV grants administered
- Staff cost help for reopening
- Play out to Help out Scheme.

Please help to support our sector before it is lost forever.

 Email written on behalf of Neil Findlay MSP

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write to you on behalf of my constituent, [REDACTED], who runs [REDACTED] Soft Play in Midlothian. [REDACTED] has contacted me calling for the reopening of soft plays as soon as possible.

Given that under-12s do not need to socially distance, it seems non-sensical that these business targeted at under-12s are one of the few that have been told to

remain closed. My constituent argues the reopening of soft plays can be done safely in a way that minimises transmission.

As you can imagine, being closed since March 20th has had considerable financial impact on my constituent's business. My constituent informs me this included:

- Pay £177,000 in rent, insurance and other regular outgoings that could not be deferred
- Make 9 staff redundant / 7 on furlough
- Take out £100,000 in loans
- Pay £2000 in advertising and other costs when it appeared we would be reopening on 14 September

Clearly soft play businesses are under threat as a result of this prolonged closure. I would appreciate if you could advise why under-12s are exempt from most restrictions however soft plays cannot reopen. Furthermore, I would call for the reopening of Soft Plays as soon as possible.

Kind regards,

Neil Findlay MSP
Scottish Parliament
Room M1 06
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
Telephone 0131 348 6896
Regional Office 4 Northfield Court
West Calder
West Lothian
EH55 8DS

01506 873242

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 21 September 2020 13:16

To: Hyslop F (Fiona), MSP <Fiona.Hyslop.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Save Scotland's indoor play venues

CAUTION: *This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.*

Dear Fiona,

I own [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] and I am writing to you to ask for your support in helping the Scottish indoor play industry survive our current closure. We are asking the Scottish Government to provide support to prevent the closure of my business and hundreds of similar ones across Scotland.

[REDACTED] has been closed since the 20th March but, in reality, have had no income from as far back as the start of March when customers stopped attending due to government advice to avoid social gatherings. Over that time I have had to:

- Pay c.£21,000 in rent, insurance, taxes and other regular outgoings that could not be deferred
- Put 12 staff on furlough
- Paid £3000 in marketing, advertising and upgrade work when it appeared we would be reopening on 14 September.

I understand these are difficult and uncertain times but whilst the Scottish Government has said under-12s do not need to socially distance, my business, which is for younger children, is not allowed to reopen even though I can demonstrate it can be done safely. Many of the health and safety practices being put in place by other venues were, and still are, general practice within [REDACTED].

Recently a c.£54million fund was announced to support the creative industry as they are within the 4% of Scottish business still closed, however, kids indoor play venues aren't included in this and we feel totally abandoned.

There is also a motion in the Scottish Parliament tabled by Miles Briggs MSP on this issue that I would be grateful if you could sign so you can show your support for our campaign.

Your Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

From:

[FirstMinisterWebsite@gov.scot][[SMTP:FIRSTMINISTERWEBSITE@GOV.SCOT](mailto:FIRSTMINISTERWEBSITE@GOV.SCOT)]

Sent: 24 September 2020 23:15:40

To: First Ministers Website Mailbox

Subject: Soft play areas.

Auto forwarded by a Rule

From: [REDACTED]

Subject: Soft play areas.

Message Body:

Hello First Minister,

I know you are extremely busy and I do not expect a reply. I am a member of the SNP and I am extremely proud of your leadership during these difficult times. I am a nurse with NHS Scotland and I have worked, and continue to work through this current pandemic with professionalism and pride. The reason I message you, is that my wife and daughter work in a soft play/ imaginative play area ([REDACTED]) in [REDACTED]. This is a small, family run business by [REDACTED]. Due to current restrictions, they are unable to open and are now likely to go out of business. My wife and daughter are now looking to become unemployed 3 months before Christmas.

As a business, I know that [REDACTED] have worked tirelessly hard at making all the requirements to make the play area safe, meeting all safety guidelines. I know, as an industry, soft play areas may not make as much to the scottish economy as the food, drink and tourism industry do, but they are an important local employer. They provide jobs in an area of high unemployment, and offer a unique physical and interactive facility for children in Fife.

I am fully aware of the potential risk to all our lives with Covid19. All I ask is you re-assesses the current restrictions in place for soft play areas, or provide financial support to this industry, as they are all primarily small family run businesses.

I am sorry that I have had to send this message, and it may not seem important on the grand scheme of current issues, but I urge you to please look into this as soon as you can.

Regards,
[REDACTED]

--

This e-mail was sent from a contact form on the First Minister of Scotlands website (<https://firstminister.gov.scot>)

My name is [REDACTED] and I run [REDACTED] soft play centre up on the [REDACTED] of [REDACTED]. I have ran the business for over 10 years. We are totally drowning with not being granted one single penny since being forced to shut in March. I have made 24 staff redundant already and will soon have the remainder of my Full timers which totals 16 the same way if things don't drastically change.

COVID-19 UPDATE - PLEASE READ

We have just passed 6 months since we were forced to close our doors.

Our Phase 4 opening date of the 5th October is highly doubtful as stated by Nicola Sturgeon last week due to the rising cases.

I find this incredibly frustrating considering England, Ireland & Wales have ALL allowed the reopening of their Soft Play Centres. Why is the Scottish Government keeping us closed? Why are we so different?

This is not acceptable. We are no different from any other hospitality venue. Cafes are open, pubs are open, swimming pools are open, nurseries are open, trampoline parks, play parks are open, cinemas are open. Why not us? If anything we are able to social distance adults far more than restaurants and pubs. Our buildings are 10/20 times bigger. Huge industrial units, I just don't understand..... UNDER 12'S DO NOT HAVE TO SOCIALLY DISTANCE!!! We cater for under 12s!!!

I was extremely upset today to receive this video of an INDOOR trampoline park in Glasgow..... now you tell me what the difference is with this indoor trampoline park and an indoor soft play?? Why are they allowed to open and we are not?

Families grow here, learn here, make friends and relax here. We want to be here for them. The Scottish Government is making this increasingly difficult.

No grants, no Funding and the Job Retention Scheme stops next month. If we are being forced to still closed by the Scottish Government why are they not supporting us like they are supporting Night Clubs and Theatres?

Any advice or support would be appreciated

Thanks
[REDACTED]

#saveoursoftplays

From: [REDACTED] On Behalf Of Briggs M (Miles), MSP
Sent: 24 September 2020 14:32
To: Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture
<CabSecEFWC@gov.scot>
Cc: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Subject: Soft play sector

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Further to my supplementary question today at First Minister’s Questions on the soft play sector, I would be grateful if you could meet with representatives of the sector to hear their very urgent concerns.

I can provide contact details for some of the stakeholders I have met with recently but I imagine you will have these already.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Miles Briggs MSP

Good Evening First Minister

First of all I would like to thank you for the endless hours of work you are putting into the fight against covid19 and trying to keep the country safe. I cannot begin to imagine the pressure you feel everyday trying to balance the decisions you make.

The reason for my email surrounds covid19 and toddlers. I am pleading with you as we come into the winter months and with restrictions on visiting families indoors

likely to continue to consider reopening settings for children to play and interact that doesn't involve standing outside in a Scottish winter.

Please can we have play areas reopened such as soft plays to allow for children to develop in their interactions with each other but also have a safe environment for the long winter months. If these areas are not opened and with restrictions on house hold visits we are faced with a situation of toddlers being stuck in the house for weeks on end if we have a rough winter.

All parents understand the situation as a country we are in however with strict rules around adults wearing masks at all times in play area settings and socially distancing in a controlled environment there should be no reason why these areas cannot be opened safely.

Thank you again for your hard work and dedication and I hope to hear some positive news in relation to this area.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

Sent from my Huawei phone

Hello

We are a soft play area and cannot understand why, when Schools are all back and kids can play with each other, that we cannot open our doors. We have totally geared up for it with a new super sanitising machine, hand sanitizers everywhere, track and trace in place, one way system, socially distanced tables etc.

Can you please also confirm to us that Lazer Quest venues are able to open as we have Lazer quest that we could be doing. We have notice that the Glasgow, Dundee and Cumbernauld Lazer places are open.

Also a bit of extra Grants would be nice as we got one but we are still closed!! Where companies got the same grant as us but managed to open 2/3 months later. We are 9 months down the line.

Hoping to hear from you soon.

[REDACTED]

Sent from Mail for Windows 10

[REDACTED]

The Scottish Parliament

Unit 3 Govanhill Workspace 13th Sept 2020 69 Dixon Road Glasgow G42 8AT

Dear Ms Sturgeon,

I'm writing to you to highlight the impact your decisions are having on one particular small business and the effects on the lives of those connected with it. I'm also looking for answers; answers that local councillors, local MSPs and my solicitors have been unable to provide.

My wife and I are the proud owners of a small, family run soft play and cafe in [REDACTED]. It took us 18 months of jumping through the various hoops of the Council's planning department, fighting with the regulators, re-mortgaging our home and investing roughly £200,000 to finally open our doors to the public in February 2016. We have devoted our time since then working tirelessly to build a sustainable little business which operates in the most deprived area in [REDACTED], or as [REDACTED] Council itself describes it as, 'one of our target areas'.

We have been closed since the 20th March but in reality, have had no income from as far back as the start of March, when customers stopped attending due to government advice to avoid social gatherings. At the time of our closure we employed fifteen members of staff; eight full time and seven part time, all from the local area. We had to let all seven part time staff, aged between 15 and 18, go immediately. We continued to pay 100% of the remaining eight full-time staff's wages, despite only seven qualifying for furlough as one of our staff only registered for PAYE in March and therefore wasn't eligible.

At the end of July, after four months of forced closure, we had to let another two staff members go. Thankfully one has since found another job, but I wanted to highlight the impact this has had on the other member of staff. She is a young girl in her early twenties and has lost her previously secure job because the Scottish Government won't let her employer operate. She received her last pay from us on the 28th July, yet won't receive an unemployment payment of any kind until 23rd September. That's more than eight weeks without

any source of income. How is this young girl supposed to survive? She sat in my office on Friday in floods of tears because she can't pay her bills, I've had to give her money out my own pocket. Don't you think the Scottish Government needs to do more, to support the unfortunate people that are losing their jobs?

Since our forced closure in March, and up to the end of August, we have paid out £177,966. Suppliers, rent, insurances, electricity, water, wages, tax, monthly subscriptions, professional fees, building maintenance etc all still need paying. Over the same period, we have received £48,915 from the UK Government in furlough payments. It doesn't take an accountant to work out the financial position this leaves our small business in. We have had ZERO financial assistance from the Scottish Government and have only survived by taking a £100,000 loan. We've gone from being a business with only a small finance agreement on the company van, to being saddled with £100,000 of debt. Once again, if you do the maths, even with the £100K loan, our business' financial position is at a critical stage. Where is the Scottish Government's assistance?

For six weeks, the Scottish Government has told the soft play industry that we would be opening on the 14th September. During that six-week period, we have been preparing for our re-opening. Staff have been taken off furlough, we have spent £1000 advertising, we spent roughly £1000 on stock for our café and many advanced bookings have been taken. The young girl previously mentioned was told she would be back to work. Then with just **three days' notice**, everything has changed. All this money and hard work goes out the window. Money we cannot afford to waste. Is the Scottish Government going to compensate us for reneging on our opening date at such short notice?

The Scottish Government's reasoning for delaying the soft play industry re-opening has been a rise in Covid 19 cases. Surely a rise in Covid 19 cases was to be expected six weeks ago? Surely a rise in Covid 19 cases was expected three weeks ago? I'm not the most intelligent person in the world but let me tell you something, I knew three weeks ago and indeed, six weeks ago, that cases of Covid 19 were going to rise, simply based on the fact this has happened in every country around the world as lock down measures have been eased. Surely with all the intelligent people advising the Scottish Government, a rise in Covid 19 cases is factored into the decision-making process?

The Scottish Government is showing a complete lack of trust in soft play operators like ourselves, something that I find highly insulting and absolutely infuriating! We have put countless measures in place to ensure the safety of our staff and customers. We have stopped customers simply turning up, all must book in advance, with details obtained for government track and trace. Despite our soft play area being fit for 120 kids, we are limiting those numbers to 30 kids, which is less than the number of kids in some classrooms up and down the country. Our café area normally seats up to 150, and that has been reduced to below half. We have removed our ball pits. We have spent £550 on a fogging machine using a solution (Zoono) that kills all viruses and bacteria. We are closing for 15 minutes between each session so customers aren't passing each other on entering and exiting the building while additionally giving staff time for extra cleaning. All this is over and above the normal high standards operated within our facility. You only need to look at our reviews on Google to see the many compliments customers give us for the cleanliness of our facility, and this was well before

Covid 19 came along. If this isn't enough, can the Scottish Government tell us, what more needs done before we can be given the same chance as other industries have had to survive?

At [REDACTED], we have regular visits from the local environmental health officer, so she knows our business well and knows what a tight ship we run. We would welcome an inspection from her or any of your advisors, and you are more than welcome to come along and see the efforts we are making to keep our staff and customers safe. Come and engage with us, consult with us. This **discrimination** towards the soft play industry must end, before the soft play industry itself ends. Soft plays are open in all other countries in the UK. Why is it different in Scotland? What different information do your advisors possess, to that of their counterparts in other areas of the UK?

We have consulted with countless customers, many of whom had booked in advance to bring their kids back to soft play, they all tell us how important soft play is for their child's development and how much their children have missed soft play. It isn't just the soft play operators that want to see us back open, it's also our customers too. If our customers, who know us best, can put their trust in us, why can't the Scottish Government?

Finally, the most important question of all...

If children under the age of twelve do not have to socially distance, and our soft play centre is for children under the age of ten, and hospitality venues are allowed to be open...

WHY CAN WE NOT OPEN OUR SOFT PLAY?

Yours Sincerely

[REDACTED]

Infuriated Soft Play Owner

Gordon Lindhurst, Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian

M3.11, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

gordon.lindhurst.msp@parliament.scot

Nicola Sturgeon MSP
First Minister
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

30th September 2020

Dear Nicola,

The Reopening of Soft Play and Other Indoor Centres

I hope you continue to keep well under the current circumstances.

It has been brought to my attention that indoor soft play centres continue to be shut under Scottish Government guidance. This appears inconsistent and unfair considering a range of factors, including what appears to be the low prevalence and

transmission of COVID-19 amongst young children, in addition to the permitted reopening of other venues in which interaction between people is permitted, including pubs and restaurants.

You may have noted the Soft Play protest which took place outwith the Scottish Parliament last week, at which I spoke to a number of small business owners who face the significant and often crippling financial implications of the ongoing closure of such venues.

To that effect, I have attached correspondence from one such business owner sent originally to your office on 13th September and would request a response to the matters raised within.

Would you also please advise when a decision on this matter is expected to be made?

Yours sincerely,

Gordon



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

24 September 2020

Joe FitzPatrick MSP
Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing
The Scottish Parliament
Holyrood
Edinburgh
Scotland
EH99 1SP

Dear Joe

Children's indoor "soft play" services and facilities

I am writing regarding indoor play services and facilities that cater for children and as such come under the definition of children's soft play centres. In particular, a number of different organisations in my constituency that meet this definition have been in touch to express their dismay at the delayed indicative re-opening date, announced at the 10 September Briefing.

My constituents believe that they have identified and met every health and safety issue and put appropriate precautions in place. One is a registered children's charity. Each would contend that children's wellbeing is, and always will be, their primary concern.

As the post-Lockdown easing of measures decelerates, understandably given the recent statistics, I am writing to ask if children's soft play centres can be considered for reopening as soon as it is safely possible.

Yours sincerely

Ivan McKee MSP

Member of The Scottish Parliament for Glasgow Provan

Address: 12 Hillfoot Street, Dennistoun, Glasgow, G31 2LF

Constituency Office Tel: 0141 556 4441 | **Parliament Office Tel:** 0131 348 6950

E-Mail: ivan.mckee.msp@parliament.scot

Web: Ivanmckee.scot | **Facebook:** Ivan McKee MSP | **Twitter:** @Ivan_Mckee

Dear Maree

I am getting in touch on behalf of a constituent who is concerned that soft play settings have yet to be allowed to reopen under the Covid-19 regulations.

My constituent has pointed out that they would be pose a similar risk of transmission to schools. Please could you advise the Government's plans for reopening these businesses following the recent reimposition of certain restrictions.

Yours sincerely,
Christine Jardine MP

Your Reference:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Hi, whilst I understand the need for tighter restrictions at the moment I don't understand the decision to not open indoor play for children. How can pubs and restaurants remain open but soft plays cannot? The weather will be turning and soon my little girl will either have to brace the freezing cold all day to play or be stuck in the house without any playmates. Is there a scientific explanation for this decision? Thanks

From: Angela Constance MSP <Angela.Constance.msp@parliament.scot>

Sent: 24 September 2020 13:19

To: Minister for Children and Young People <MinisterCYP@gov.scot>

Cc: Maree.Todd.msp@parliament.scot

Subject: (Case Ref: AC1866) - Request for a meeting with Angela Constance MSP

Sent on behalf of Angela Constance MSP

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you today to request a 20 minute telephone call or video meeting with Angela.

Angela has been contacted by a constituent, [REDACTED] who runs a indoor inflatable activity centre in the Almond Valley constituency called [REDACTED]

This business has been classed as a soft play centre, and given the recent announcements from the First Minister, they now face their lease being terminated, which will cause a lot of job losses.

Angela would therefore appreciate a quick 20 minute call to discuss this organisation and possible support and next steps for this company and this industry as whole.

I would be grateful if you could confirm your availability on the following dates:

Friday 2nd of October - 11:30am
Thursday 8th October - 9am or 10am

If none of these dates are suitable, if you could provide me with some alternatives, I will consult Angela's diary.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

Senior caseworker to Angela Constance MSP

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 20 September 2020 07:05
Subject: Save Indoor Play Centres

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Sir or Madam,

I would like to add my support to the current campaign to save indoor play centres. Indoor play centres (soft play, trampoline parks, crazy golf, skate parks, ice rinks), are within the last 4% of businesses that have had to stay closed during the COVID19 crisis but have received no additional financial help despite the longevity of the enforced closure. They have however already invested significantly in preparation for re-opening on September 14th which was delayed at very short notice. Any of these businesses with less than 3 years trading history will not have qualified for CBILS, they have been given the same grant funding than those businesses that could re-open again in July and the Bounce Back loan was capped at 25% turnover when they have been closed for 50% of the year. These businesses are no less deserving to survive than the other sectors which have received extensive financial help beyond the core loans. They are as capable of adapting to online booking, Track and Protect compliance, adult social distancing, and extra hygiene measures as any other business. They are no less contributing to the economy and are much loved places of play and socialisation for not just children and teens but for their parents too. In fact, some are venues for parent support groups such as Breastfeeding groups, have strong community links with nurseries, play groups and special needs groups and others are intricately linked with fitness facilities for kids and adults. I hope you will agree that these establishments are a significantly more valuable economic and community assets than they have been given credit for and deserve an equal opportunity at surviving this crisis.

I hope these points can be raised further and thank you for time.
Yours Sincerely,
[REDACTED]

Good morning,

Please see the correspondence below from my constituent who owns [REDACTED] which operates across Scotland and [REDACTED] in my constituency which includes a soft play area.

I promised [REDACTED] that I would draw his circumstances and concerns to the attention of the Scottish Government and would be grateful if his views be considered and taken into account when considering future policy.

Thank you for your attention.

With best wishes,
Richard.

Richard Lochhead MSP for Moray
80 South Street | Elgin | Moray | IV30 1JG

t: 01343 545077 | e: richard.lochhead.msp@parliament.scot
Twitter: @RichardLochhead | [facebook.com/RichardLochheadMSP](https://www.facebook.com/RichardLochheadMSP)

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 September 2020 09:45
To: Angela Constance MSP ; richard.lochhead.msp@parliament.scot; Kevin Stewart MSP ; Mark.McDonald.msp@parliament.scot; Lewis.Macdonald.msp@parliament.scot; Tom.Mason.msp@parliament.scot; Maureen.Watt.msp@parliament.scot
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: SAVE SOFT PLAY CENTRES IN SCOTLAND

Wednesday 23 September, 12pm-2pm
Scottish Parliament

I run [REDACTED] - Aberdeen, Livingston & Cumbernauld & also [REDACTED] Soft play, Elgin and will be attending the rally above to support the campaign to allow soft play centres in Scotland to reopen or for the Scottish Government to provide support to prevent the closure of my own business and hundreds of similar ones across Scotland.

We have been closed since the 20th March but, in reality, have had no income from as far back as the start of March when customers stopped attending due to

government advice to avoid social gatherings.

Over that time I have had to (delete / complete as appropriate)

- Pay £332.K in rent, insurance and other regular outgoings that could not be deferred
- Make 120 staff redundant / on furlough
- Take out £400k in loans
- Pay £10,000 in advertising and other costs when it appeared we would be reopening on 14 September.

* Lost 2.75million in revenue across the group company.

I understand these are difficult and uncertain times but whilst the Scottish Government has said under-12s do not need to socially distance, my business, which is for younger children is not allowed to reopen even though I can demonstrate it can be done safely.

I would ask that you come to speak to me outside the Scottish Parliament so I can explain in more detail the impact this is having on my business and how it is essential we are allowed to reopen or require some kind of government support.

There is also a motion in the Scottish Parliament tabled by Miles Briggs MSP on this issue that I would be grateful if you could sign so you can show your support for our campaign."

Thank you and I look forward to seeing you on Wednesday"

Regards,
[REDACTED]

From: Private - Rennie W (Willie), MSP

Sent: 30 September 2020 16:13

To: First Minister

Subject: Indoor Soft Play Centres Ref: A11407/2020/CK

Nicola Sturgeon MSP

Office of the First Minister

St. Andrew's House, Regent Road

Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

Sent by Email

30 September 2020 Ref: A11407/2020/CK- Please quote this reference on all correspondence

Dear First Minister

Re: Indoor Soft Play Centres

I have been contacted by an owner of a soft play centre in Scotland highlighting their concerns regarding the threat to the survival of their business due to the impact of the Coronavirus crisis.

The owner has explained that they are concerned about the lack of financial support and information surrounding possible dates for reopening. They tell me that as business owners it is impossible to plan ahead for re-opening without this information.

They tell me that they originally received the £10k grant to cover them through the first few months but they are concerned that seven months later they are still forced to be closed. They have explained that their staff are still on furlough, however at the end of October they will lose both this support and their staff as they will not qualify for the new job retention scheme as they have not been allowed to open.

They have also explained that they can socially distance their seating and implement all the new COVID controls they have in place and are concerned as to why centres in Scotland are not yet open when they are open everywhere else across the UK.

I would be very grateful if you could provide a response to the issues raised.

Kind regards

Willie

Willie Rennie MSP (North East Fife)

Leader, Scottish Liberal Democrats

The Scottish Parliament

Edinburgh

EH99 1SP

Tel: 0131 348 5804

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 20 September 2020 07:20

To: Swinney J (John), MSP

Subject: Covid-19 Indoor Play Centres

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Sir

I would like to add my support to the current campaign to save indoor play centres.

Indoor play centres (soft play, trampoline parks, crazy golf, skate parks, ice rinks), are within the last 4% of businesses that have had to stay closed during the COVID19 crisis but have received no additional financial help despite the longevity of the enforced closure. They have however already invested significantly in preparation for re-opening on September 14th which was delayed at very short notice. Any of these businesses with less than 3 years trading history will not have qualified for CBILS, they have been given the same grant funding than those businesses that could re-open again in July and the Bounce Back loan was capped at 25% turnover when they have been closed for 50% of the year.

These businesses are no less deserving to survive than the other sectors which have received extensive financial help beyond the core loans. They are as capable as adapting to online booking, Track and Protect compliance, adult social distancing, and extra hygiene measures as any other business. They are no less contributing to the economy and are much loved places of play and socialisation for not just children and teens but for their parents too. In fact, some are venues for parent support groups such as Breastfeeding groups, have strong community links with nurseries, play groups and special needs groups and others are intricately linked with fitness facilities for kids and adults.

I hope you will agree that these establishments are a significantly more valuable economic and community assets than they have been given credit for and deserve an equal opportunity at surviving this crisis.

I hope these points can be raised further and thank you for time.

Yours Sincerely,

[REDACTED]



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



Michelle Ballantyne MSP
Member for South Scotland

The Rt. Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP
First Minister of Scotland
The Scottish Government
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

29th September 2020

Dear First Minister,

RE: Soft Play and Indoor Centres in Scotland.

I am writing with regard to the reopening of Soft Play and Indoor centres in Scotland. As I am sure you are aware, there are around 145 centres across Scotland, these are predominantly family businesses that are now at significant risk of permanent closure.

No doubt like me, you have been contacted by a number of struggling soft play owners. Their businesses have been closed since lockdown began in March and they desperately need to be able to resume trading. The reality of why is explained by the financials of one previously successful soft play centre in my region. Since the lockdown began the business has benefitted from the UK Government furlough scheme for its staff but has also been required to pay over £61,000.00 for their insurance, associated outgoings that could not be deferred and their mortgage. They were then faced with a £4,500.00 cost for advertising, restocking and other costs when it appeared their business would be reopening on the 14th September only to then be advised that your Government had changed its mind. The strain of continued outgoings with no income and no indication of when they can reopen is devastating with many owners not only facing the loss of their business and the knock on effect of thousands of job losses; many also have financial guarantees that may see them lose their homes.

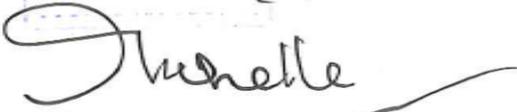
Many of us met representatives from the soft play industry outside Parliament to hear first-hand of their struggles. There is no doubt that they feel abandoned by the Scottish Government especially given the financial support that has been promised to nightclubs and theatres. Soft play centres have worked hard to follow guidelines to create safe environments and have spent thousands of pounds installing safeguards against Covid-19, to minimise the spread of transmission, and allow them to open their doors again. These businesses were then told, at short notice, that they were no longer able to reopen, and many now face a real risk of permanent closure.

As young children are allowed to play together, and parents can visit cafes as long as they don't share a table with any more than one other household, it is easy to see why the rest of the UK has allowed Soft Play Centres to reopen whilst Scotland remains out of step without offering any financial support in compensation.

I hope you will reconsider this position and not preside over the demise of these businesses for reasons that we are all struggling to understand.

The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP
0131 348 5661 michelle.ballantyne.msp@parliament.scot
 @MichelleBallantyneMSTL
  @MBallantyneMSP

Yours sincerely,



Michelle Ballantyne MSP,
Member of the Scottish Parliament for the South Scotland Region.

Your Reference:

[REDACTED],

[REDACTED]

Your reference: 202000080562

Good evening Ms Hyslop,

I have attached the letter received from your office and have copied in the other interested parties so that they can see how you responded. I appreciate you have had [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] speak to me, but it seems clear that nothing is possible without a conversation with yourself. I would again appeal to you, to allow me the opportunity to discuss matters with you; as you are now aware our sector and my business continue to remain in lock down. Mr Sarwar and Mr Ross have shown a keen interest in our case, especially since our business trades in a large part of Scotland and as such I think it's important that they are aware as to how you are responding to my humble request for a phone call.

It is troubling and baffling me, that whilst we are one of the last few industries to remain closed, not only are you not willing to at the very least discuss with us what financial support would benefit us, you have chosen to deal with us exactly as those that have reopened. It concerns me that those that have been allowed to open, you have introduced a specific flexible furlough, reduced VAT, eat out help out scheme and most importantly the ability to make revenue.

Instead for those that the Scottish government continue to close, your reducing and removing furlough and not providing any business support grants. How can this be fair and acceptable?

I would appreciate a meeting as soon as possible.

[REDACTED]

From: Derek Mackay MSP

Sent: 17 September 2020 12:56

To: Scottish Ministers

Subject: DEREK MACKAY MSP: DM7672 BUSINESS SUPPORT FOR

CHILDREN'S INDOOR PLAY CENTRES – [REDACTED] [REDACTED] (Case Ref: DM7672)

Please quote Ref: DM7672 on all correspondence to Mr Mackay MSP. Thank you.

FAO: KATE FORBES, CABINET SECRETARY FOR FINANCE

Dear Ministers

Derek Mackay MSP has been contacted by constituents who run an indoor play centre in [REDACTED]. The owners are extremely anxious that they have not yet been allowed to re-open and are not optimistic that the Scottish Government will allow them to re-open as per the new provisional date of 5 October 2020. They advise that all of the other UK nations have allowed soft play centres to open. This business sector closed first and will be last to re-open. They advise the sector also requires support and funding or businesses will close. They have specifically highlighted that as their premises have a rateable value of 51k there are no grants available through the Leisure, Retail and Hospitality Scheme, and although funding may have been available via the Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund and Hardship funds schemes, these schemes were significantly oversubscribed.

They have highlighted a range of support that would be welcomed by the Scottish Soft Play sector:-

- A newly established fund to support centres closure period
- Continuation of furlough scheme
- Rental (landlord) support
- A discretionary extension to the RV grants administered
- Staff cost help for reopening
- Play out to Help out Scheme

Please find attached letter from the sector addressed to the First Minister which provides full details of the support and measures they would like from the Scottish Government.

Mr Mackay MSP recognises the furlough scheme is matter for UK Government, and the Scottish Government has called for this to be extended, however there are areas of possible devolved support.

Mr Mackay MSP thanks you for your assistance with this matter and looks forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

*Senior Caseworker for Derek Mackay MSP
Renfrewshire North & West*

Constituency Office, 37 Hairst Street, Renfrew, PA4 8QU. Tel No: 0141-885-2076

Please help out our kid's Soft play centres in Scotland

Dated: Wednesday 16th September 2020

Dear First Minister of Scotland,

The Soft Play Industry lies at the heart of every local community and provides support to local schools and after school's clubs daily. Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them, Soft Plays allow children the play within a safe and fun environment not to mention the health benefits a parent receives from the rest and relaxation on offer for them.

As a leisure business, we were one of the first businesses that had to close in relation to the coronavirus outbreak back in March and have still not reopened. On Monday 14th September you advise that already 96% of business' have reopened but Indoor play has to remain closed – including soft play, roleplay centres and inflatable parks.

There is currently a provisional reopening date of 5th of October but as of the 18th of September most of these business' have been closed for 6 months. Given that the date has already moved forwards we cannot be confident in this date either. The run-up to lockdown was also particularly hard as once discouraged from visiting crowded places the footfall to these centres dropped significantly.

While Business owners are doing everything that they can to ensure business continuity they are receiving little or no help from the government with many facilities falling out with the guidelines for support. With many premises being over a rateable value of 51k there are no grants available through the Leisure, Retail and hospitality Scheme. Whilst we are aware that there was a grant through the Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund and Hardship funds this scheme was significantly oversubscribed.

Business Interruption insurances haven't paid out to centres and there has been a requirement to take on more debt in anticipation of reopening. The significant reduction in numbers that are being proposed in centres going forward make it highly likely that most of these premises will be uneconomical to re-open.

Scottish Soft Play requires support for their period of closure, support in reopening and support to continue to trade and adhere to the reduced capacities. Some of the support that would be welcomed is as laid out below:-

- A newly established fund to support centres closure period
- Continuation of furlough scheme
- Rental (landlord) support
- A discretionary extension to the RV grants administered
- Staff cost help for reopening
- Play out to Help out Scheme.

Please help to support our sector before it is lost forever.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 11 September 2020 12:49
To: Hyslop F (Fiona), MSP <Fiona.Hyslop.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]: Support needed to save Childrens Indoor Soft-plays in Scotland

CAUTION: *This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.*

Hi Fiona,

I am writing to you regarding the future of Soft-plays as both a business owner and constituent in [REDACTED]. I own [REDACTED] indoor soft-play in [REDACTED] having purchased the business in 2018. This is a great asset for the community along with all the social and health benefits it brings for parents, carers and grandparents who bring their children to play, have fun and get valuable exercise.

Following yesterdays briefing Children's Indoor Soft-plays have been left in Limbo with no further financial support many businesses and jobs will be lost throughout Scotland. I'm a relatively small soft-play with around 20 staff and have done my best to get through this period of lockdown.

Following the enforced closure and lockdown in March my business was left with no income. Whilst the £25k grant has helped, and I have managed this very tightly, this has run out and I already owe £5,400 in rent arrears having paid only half rent for 4 months of the closure period. I tried to do the right thing by all my team and paid my permanent team members full pay for the first 4 months to top of the Furlough scheme contributions. September and October see me need to contribute 10% and 20% on top which will need to be borrowed to cover. There is only so far you can go with borrowing as the inevitable debt that builds up will become difficult to pay back on top of already high costs to run a business.

I suspect I have been more fortunate so far in managing the ongoing costs to keep my business viable, but many across Scotland especially the larger sites will already have borrowed significant sums to covers costs. Rent & Business Rates in the future on top of debt and interest repayments will impact on how many will reopen and survive into next year. This will have a huge impact on jobs in Scotland with many sites family owned and run. It impacts local communities and will have a detrimental effect on childrens health and well being, especially during the winter weather.

I would hope that the Scottish Government can provide additional support to the sector, to protect jobs and businesses for the benefit of many local communities throughout Scotland. I understand the need to protect peoples health during this very difficult time but with Wales and England having allowed soft-play centres to reopen without issue, our enforced closure and future uncertainly needs support to save the sector now.

To put into further context the impact of closing through September and uncertainly means party bookings are lost. The Autumn/Winter period is busier and is key for survival during the better weather as cash reserves normally build up. This prolonged closure period now without support will result in nationwide closures of soft-play centres.

I look forward to hearing from you and happy to meet to discuss further in Linlithgow at any point.

Kind regards,
[REDACTED]

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 15 September 2020 15:27

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: Please Help...

Dear First Minister,

Firstly, let us introduce ourselves. We are [REDACTED] - a family run children's play centre in [REDACTED], Fife, (which happens to have a small soft play area within it) and is aimed at under 9's.

We have 3 primary school children ourselves and grafted hard as well as taking on a huge amount of personal debt to create and set up our family business. We've been thriving successfully for 3 and a half years, support jobs for 15 other people and provide a valuable and much needed play facility for families living in Fife.

Our imaginative play town has won several awards including a national one that we picked up in London as it was the first play facility of it's type in Scotland.

Although we do have a small soft play frame the focus is on imaginative play and we have created a whole mini town with all the usual businesses; such a fire station, hospital, police station, etc all in mini size to inspire the imaginations of little people.

Role play is not only fun, but vital for children's development - encouraging imagination and creativity, whilst helping to develop their understanding of the world around them. We're aligned to the Scottish Curriculum and host many nursery and school trips, often free of charge for charities and schools in areas of deprivation.

We've had no income for 6 months now, apart from a grant that has long run out paying rent, insurances, water rates, internet, payment processing and booking system charges which all still need to be paid as we're on contracts, as well as servicing the debt from our initial set up costs.

If nothing changes we are now on the brink of closure First Minister....

Do you want to take this type of resource away from children in Scotland? Similar business have been allowed to open in all other U.K. countries since the start of August....despite this the latest data shows the number of positive COVID tests in the 0-9 age group (our customers) remains very low and static.

You talk about sacrifices having to be made to control the virus....but grown adults can continue to frequent the pub, get drunk and not follow social distancing rules and some were also still allowed to attend football matches recently?

The numerous inconsistencies in your rules are undermining your government and are starting to infuriate people.

You're not only destroying our family business, but also the lives of our 3 children. If our business closes we will lose our family home...our workers that we have been continuing to support throughout the pandemic until now will lose their jobs.

Why should our sector make all the sacrifices?

Where is your evidence to prove that our sector opening will have any more of an impact on the spread of the virus than any other sector which you have allowed to open?

We feel you must be making these decisions based on an outdated stereotypical vision of a traditional dirty, crammed soft play centre, with the assumption it would be a breeding ground for the virus.

Not all indoor play facilities are equal and those who have worked hard to put everything in place that you have requested to control the virus deserve a chance to survive by being able to trade in some capacity.

Please come and visit our play centre.

We've been running timed and pre booked sessions since we opened 3.5 years ago, so we already gather all the information you require for contact tracing. We do not and never have crammed as many people in as possible, we have a low (self imposed) maximum number of children in each play session to prevent it becoming too busy.

We close for an hour...yes an HOUR between each play session specifically to clean and reset...we've always done this even before COVID.

Young children are already mixing in nurseries, day care and schools and are not required to social distance. Having 3 of our own we know they're also mixing in other various after school activities such as football, gymnastics and athletics....these establishments are not under the same scrutiny as our business would be to ensure that they comply with the regulations that we have been preparing to adhere to. They can also attend trampolining parks, bowling complexes, fun fairs, amusements, swimming pools, crazy golf and the cinema.

We're lowering the number of children attending each play session to only 30 in a building at least 20 times the size of most classrooms? This also ensures that all adults have plenty of space to social distance....much more than they would in any pub, cafe or restaurant.

Through our booking system we can easily limit the number of households in each group and for the time being we will not be running any birthday parties.

On this basis why would our large, clean, well organised and COVID secure play centre pose more of a risk to the spread of the virus than a pub or restaurant?

We're not a family who just doesn't understand because we haven't been affected by the virus. My Mum passed away at only 61 two weeks into lockdown. We were only allowed 6 people at her funeral. Sadly she had cancer, but perhaps she could have been with us a bit longer if we had not been so terrified to access treatment for the fear that she might have been admitted to hospital and we would not been with her in her final days.

My Gran (her Mum) passed away just 4 months later. I believe she simply gave up due to no visitors being allowed into her care home to visit her for 4 months when she was used to having people in most days...speaking though a window often in the pouring rain is not the same. Covid isn't just killing people who contract it.

Believe me when I say we have been affected....our family have been devastated by this virus and the last thing we now need is to lose our business and livelihood needlessly.

With further reduced numbers we're not going to make huge profits...but it might allow us to pay our bills and survive until the threat of this virus passes. Indoor play is being allowed to survive in the rest of the UK....if you don't do something soon it will disappear for Scottish children.

If you are determined that we do pose increased risk and will not allow us to open then why have we not been given further financial help? Night clubs and theatres have...why are we being treated differently?

Coronavirus numbers in Fife are very low, why can't you use local lockdowns to control the virus? We were more than aware and prepared for the fact that we might open and have to close again over the winter.

If you're going to destroy a whole sector by continuing with this unjustified blanket ban on indoor play....then I think it is only fair that you present us with some specific evidence to justify it.

Please help us....

Treat us fairly and inline with other similar UK businesses and allow us to open...or at the very least provide further financial assistance in the form of a grant....we simply cannot afford to take on any more repayable debt in order to survive.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 15 September 2020 13:41

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Cc: Martin G (Gillian), MSP <gillian.martin.msp@parliament.scot>;
Maree.Todd.msp@parliament.scot

Subject: Charity soft play

Can i query the first minister on what principles she sees that soft play cant open when trampoline parks, gymnastics etc can open.

Local trampoline parks are operating at a capacity of 40. And have disco lights and music on ?????

This soft play is not a typical soft play we are a charity and Scotland's FIRST.

I have fully trusted the first ministers decisions right through and she has done well but now its gone pete tong!

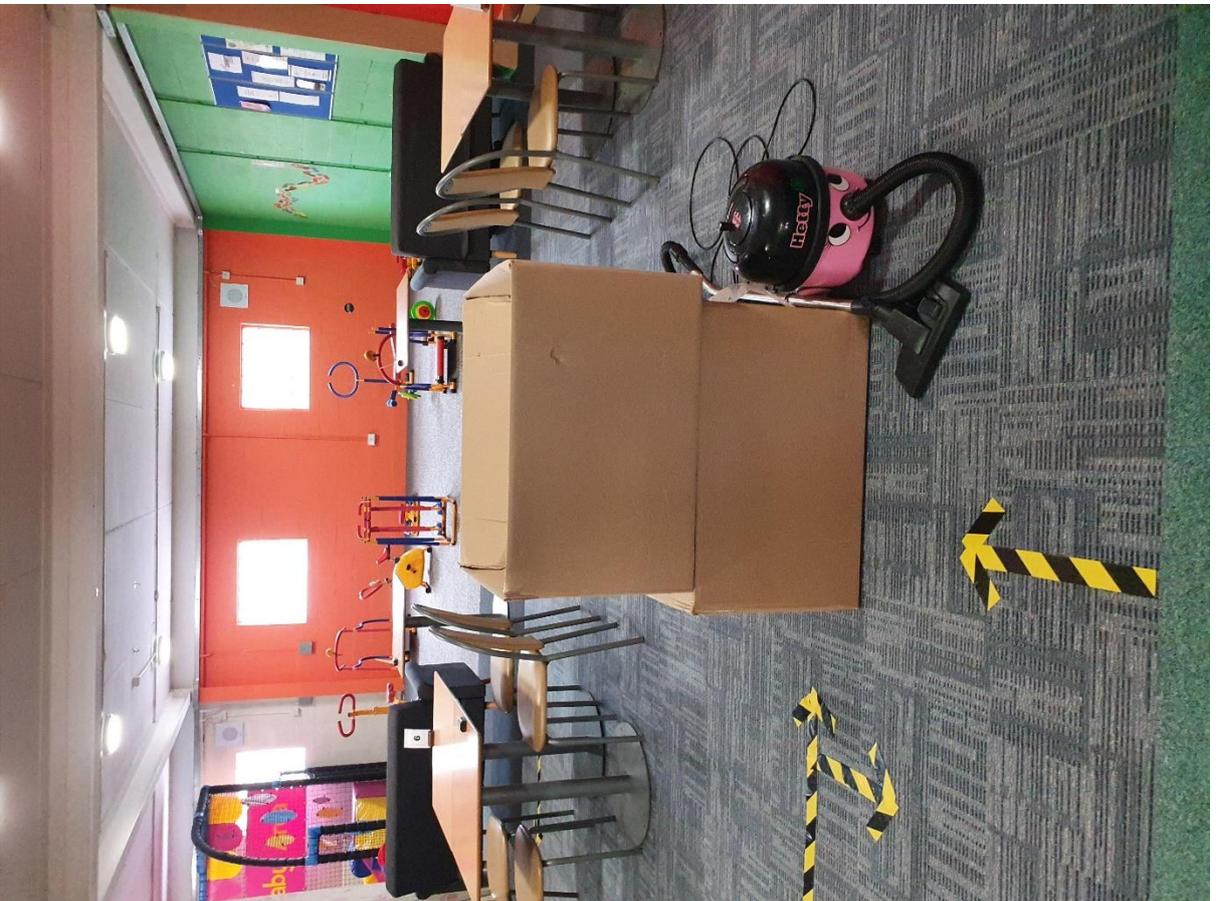
Children and families are disregarded and are suffering!

What does the first minister have in place to support ASN families?

Why is it we can go to trampoline parks, bowling, arcades but we cant support our most vulnerable at such a difficult time.

What plans does the first minister have in place to support charities/soft play centres who have forked out £30,000 since March with no income and support.





From:[REDACTED]
Sent: 14 September 2020 12:38
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Cc: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP <Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Indoor Play Centres

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Dear Mr Swinney

I'm contacting you on behalf of the Scottish Indoor Play sector as my sister, [REDACTED] has spoken highly of your passion for the well-being and development of young people.

Indoor play in Scotland is vital to both the children and parents. We suffer from many cold, rainy days and this is often the only opportunity children will have to exercise. One of the greatest ways to encourage your child's development is through soft play. It gives children the opportunity to experiment with movement and social interaction in a safe and comfortable environment. The areas are designed to support children during the development of key motor skills, including walking, climbing, navigating around obstacles and crawling. These motor skills are necessary for later life so it's important that children have the opportunity to practice them from a young age with the support of their peers.

When a child enjoys soft play, they certainly won't be the only child enjoying the area. This is a great opportunity to encourage them to interact with others and to make friends, as it's a relaxed environment where children can play together.

This also offer vital respite for parents to be able to have a coffee while the children play. The feedback from customers has been equal in its benefits to both physical and mental health of both children and parents.

Following the First Minister's announcement on Thursday, we remain one of only three sectors to remain closed and the only one without any funding. We have always failed to understand why we have been in the same bracket as nightclubs and given the extreme restrictions that have been placed in our guidelines, we would probably be one of the safest indoor venues to visit at the moment.

- Venue capacity capped at 40% of play frame capacity
- Play frames treated with anti-virus/anti-bacterial solution
- Fogging performed daily to kill all microorganisms
- Removal of ball pits

- 2m social distancing between parents

This appears to many owners, who are mainly private family run venues, as extremely inconsistent with opening of bars, gyms, outdoor play areas (with no cleaning), swimming pools, trampoline parks.

We all appreciate the difficult balance of opening the economy while trying to contain the virus. Soft play owners are already used to having very strict safety and cleaning procedures and appreciate the public perception may be that these are 'breeding grounds' for germs at the best of times. We would strongly refute that stance but are also aware of the difficulty in re-opening anything that has been classed in Phase 4, while placing other restrictions on the General Public.

However, we are now at breaking point. Most centres have not received any Government grants due to their rateable value. We have been paying large rents for 7 months along with all other utilities and now need to contribute to the staff's Furlough. Many have already closed their doors and those who have been hanging by a thread, on the hope of opening on 14th September, are now no longer able to continue. The 20% Furlough contribution next month will be the final straw and we are looking at over 90% of all indoor soft play and role play centres being closed by the end of September. This will result in over 5000 job losses and 100's of centres being lost to our children. The owners have already lost everything they earned last year, while covering costs, and now have no prospect of earning a salary this year. These are not multi-nationals with deep pockets They regular people who have invested a lifetime of work and earn a salary. We all stand to lose everything at the moment, and we appear to be the only industry that has been left without any support.

I urge you, as Deputy First Minister, to consider the loss this will have on communities and children for years to come. We desperately need some funding for the sector that can be accessed quickly to avoid the loss of an entire industry to a generation.

Best regards[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
 Sent: 14 September 2020 15:39
 To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
 Subject:[REDACTED]

Email written on behalf of Neil Findlay MSP

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write to you on behalf of my constituent, [REDACTED], who owns [REDACTED]. My constituent has gotten in touch to raise concerns about the lack of support offered to soft plays during the pandemic.

Having prepared eagerly for the reopening of their soft play, my constituent was bitterly disappointed at the push back of reopening to the 5th of October. By the 5th of October 3 months will have passed since most other businesses have been allowed to reopen.

[REDACTED] informs me necessary measures have been put in place to reduce the risk of transmission and would argue soft plays to be safer and cleaner than other establishments such as pubs and supermarkets. Furthermore, my constituent highlights the lack of constituency of policy as under 7s are exempt from socially distancing, wearing masks and can attend in groups to school, however soft plays must remain shut.

My constituent argues extra funding should be offered to soft plays as they have been unable to begin trading unlike other businesses. This is having a huge financial impact on the sector – can you advise what the Scottish Government is doing to support soft plays as jobs and businesses are at stake.

Kind regards,

Neil Findlay MSP
Scottish Parliament
Room M1 06
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Telephone 0131 348 6896

Regional Office 4 Northfield Court
West Calder
West Lothian
EH55 8DS

01506 873242

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Thursday, September 10, 2020 8:49:43 PM

To: Hyslop F (Fiona), MSP <Fiona.Hyslop.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: [REDACTED]

Dear Ms Hyslop,

I am saddened to hear that after the first ministers review today we are unable to reopen for business. Especially after soft plays in all other parts of the U.K. have been allowed to reopen over a month ago with no major concerns reported. I cannot see how this announcement today can be justified we have went out of our way to make our premises safe and secure so that youngsters could enjoy themselves.

I really can't tell you the financial pressure this puts on our establishment we have

spent a lot of money on cleaning and safety equipment that we could not afford at this time, Our cash flow is zero and our funds are now at zero also.
Is there any hardship grants being given out to our sector as we are not guaranteed to reopen on the next review either.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, September 12, 2020 4:57:35 PM
To: Hyslop F (Fiona), MSP <Fiona.Hyslop.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]: [REDACTED]

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Dear Ms Hyslop,

I am really disappointed to find that all the trampoline and inflatable venues throughout Scotland are all allowed to open while they have to remain closed. This does not make much sense to me as they are basically doing the same function as a soft play they cater for the same age group under twelves. The financial strain is now become too much to bear and it looks like we will have to close for good. Making redundant twenty full and part time staff this is a sad state of affairs especially since soft play centres in the rest of U.K. have been opened since beginning of August.

Your Sincerely

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 05 September 2020 14:45
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: Re-opening of Children's indoor play centres

Dear Ms Todd

Further to my Enquiry in July via my local MSP John Todd and your subsequent reply regarding the above, I am wondering if the provisional re-opening date of 14th

September is likely to go ahead? If so, is there any guidance that establishments will require to follow produced as yet ?

As I stated in my previous email, my husband and I run a Very popular Softplay Centre in [REDACTED]. If if we do not get to re-open when scheduled and with the furlough scheme now requiring contributions from Employers to be made, unfortunately we will have to look at redundancies within our business which would be very unfortunate for the Staff concerned and for the local area.

As you can imagine, even although our business is closed, we still have standing charges and costs that we have to pay for with no income coming into the business. I heard that cultural establishments were receiving a further grant, is this applicable to our sector of business?

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely
[REDACTED]
Sent from my iPhone

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For more information please visit <http://www.symanteccloud.com>

From: [REDACTED]
Date: 26 August 2020 at 19:12:58 BST
To: "McKelvie C (Christina), MSP" <Christina.McKelvie.msp@parliament.scot>, "Todd M (Maree), MSP" <Maree.Todd.msp@parliament.scot>, "Hyslop F (Fiona), MSP" <Fiona.Hyslop.msp@parliament.scot>, "Hepburn J (Jamie), MSP" <Jamie.Hepburn.msp@parliament.scot>
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Request for guidance in response to Covid-19 impact

Dear Ministers

I'm getting in touch as a means of reaching out for some support in light of the impact of the current pandemic on my Children's Play Centre and Activities Business in Hamilton. I have literally exhausted all other options and now contact you as a final resort to see if there is any chance of help before I make the difficult decision to cease trading. We have been in operation for 16 years now and have worked with thousands of children around Lanarkshire and beyond, including support services to schools, nurseries, special needs establishments and other children's groups and organisations. We offer a range of services including youth clubs, sports & creative arts classes, holiday camps, after school clubs, parties & events, childcare staff training, and sessions in fun fitness, music & movement, wellbeing, sensory play and leadership. The company began as a portable service but expanded in 2015 as we took over a local soft play centre as our base. Despite some difficult times, we have

managed to develop our services and were in a strong position in February this year, but due to the pandemic, our business has literally been decimated. As well as the Soft Play Centre staying shut for 6 months, we were severely hampered financially due to the fact that we had to pay thousands of pounds back in party deposits and pre-paid holiday camp fees, and now find ourselves in a precarious position as the restrictions in place regarding social distancing and singing classes have cut our prospective income streams. We have also had to suspend our after school club, due to the double whammy of parents cancelling due to working from home and job losses, and the expected losses that would be sustained when opening our building only for the after school but with no recourse to make up those losses as the rest of the Centre and services remain closed. On top of all this, we've now missed the peak periods of the Easter and Summer Holidays and the end of School term events, and have no financial base to make the necessary changes now required to offer a compliant service.

While some companies may have been able to ride the storm of the past few months a little easier, this period has actually broken me considerably. I am the only shareholder in a small business and do not have the resources that some national chains might have, and to make matters worse, my decision to forego wages in the past year to keep the business going has now had the significant impact of penalising my furlough pay, and has resulted in me having to sign up for Universal Credit. I am so passionate about my job and have striven to improve the lives, health, confidence and wellbeing of all the children I have worked with, but now find myself, after 27 years in the industry, making the decision to close my business and possibly leave the sector altogether. I have sought other employment in this period but so far have not been able to get an interview for any of the related jobs I have gone for. Having coached and worked with so many children, some of whom went on to represent their country in their sport, I still feel I have the knowledge and experience to continue creating opportunities for all our young people, but fear that this current situation and the fact that I have excluded myself from the usual coaching pathways due to my business commitments, will take me out an industry I still have so much to offer to.

While I genuinely appreciate all the efforts shown by those in power and the associated authorities, I am really frustrated that the industry I am in has been almost forgotten amongst everything else. I totally understand that specific help could not be directed to individual sectors, but I have had to sit back and watch while other companies in the hospitality sector, who received the same grant award as us, returned to trading months before we could, and received help with schemes directly aimed at stimulating customer numbers at low-peak times. While we have had to survive on limited finances and not even be near to opening, we have seen some companies in Aberdeen open up again, then be forced to close, but then receive further grants to assist them, and then re-open before confirmation of opening has even been made for our sector. While I fully understand that our sector is considered high risk, and I'm sure that the decision to delay opening has been influenced by a desire to see how the return to school goes, I'm a bit disappointed that no further support or guidance has been given to companies still unable to start back. Despite being a small business, the overheads of running a Soft Play Centre are considerable due to the size of the premises, and due to the extended lockdown for us, I have had to re-negotiate all our monthly outgoings and take payment

holidays where possible. This has allowed us to get this far but we now have an extra £30,000 to find to make up for the period of shutdown. This amount will put us under huge financial strain while we try to recover and deal with expected drops in revenue in the short-term. Unfortunately, I was not able to attain a loan from the bank and have seen my own personal funds disappear as I try to keep things going. Without any further support, the business is facing liquidation and the prospect of bankruptcy for myself is very real now.

To add to all of the frustration at this stage, we also find it galling that there is no support whatsoever to help childcare facilities recover the non-payment of fees, leading to so many services like ours having to write off thousands of pounds worth of outstanding payments every year. This is not through choice, but because the systems in place do not have any jurisdiction to manage, what is essentially, a crime. Whilst being owed over £10,000.00 in fees, we have used different debt collection agencies to attain these. So far, we have paid out over £2,500.00 but have received only £200.00 due to the lack of any real power to collect these. Some of it could even be considered fraudulent, with parents claiming working tax credits or financial assistance for childcare from colleges but not passing this on to us, yet, when we try to recover it, we keep having to pay more and more at each stage to even get in touch with these people. While this may seem that I have gone off on a tangent, these funds could've made a massive difference to our current situation and I'm in disbelief that there are no laws in place to support the services. If someone walked out of a shop with £500 worth of products and didn't pay, this would be dealt with as a criminal act and the subsequent actions would not require the victim to continue to pay to take it further.

While i apologise for bringing up this issue in the previous paragraph, it all forms part of my general frustration at the moment. I am truly passionate about working with children and have seen the importance of having accessible services such as ours at the heart of the community. In all the chatter at the moment, I truly believe that there should still be a voice for all the children that rely on services such as ours and I know that I represent a large number of local parents who benefit greatly from what we offer to them and their families.

Can I just finish by saying that I am not using this email to point fingers or blame anyone, I'm just wanting to reach out to the people that do make the decisions and can offer the right level of guidance. I'm genuinely concerned that I may have to accept my fate and face the fact that our industry just hasn't been one of the lucky ones during this pandemic, but I do want to use my last breath to find out if there is anything that you can do or suggest to offer some kind of hope.

Thank you for your time in reading this and thank you for all you have done for the country during this difficult time.

Regards

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 19 August 2020 22:36
To: Public Engagement Unit <CorrespondenceUnit@gov.scot>
Subject: Re: Your recent correspondence with Scottish Government and partner agencies – [REDACTED]

Dear sir,

Many thanks for the below response, but in light of the current continued closure of my business and the potential mass redundancies, I again ask that I may have some time with Fiona Hyslop. Please advise as a matter of urgency.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 25 August 2020 16:25
To: Hyslop F (Fiona), MSP <Fiona.Hyslop.msp@parliament.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture <CabSecEFWC@gov.scot>
Subject: [REDACTED] - 300 redundancies

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

I am writing to you with an urgent request.

I am led to believe that [REDACTED], the largest softplay group in the UK, has been in contact with your office. They have told me that they have asked on several occasions for an opportunity to speak, but this has not happened.

They have been in touch to tell me that due to the inconsistent changes across the UK they are able to reopen in England, but not in Scotland. With no clear re-opening date in sight, they are in the terrible situation that if there is no progress in the next week they say they will be forced to make 300 redundancies in Scotland.

Can I please request that the Minister makes contact with them as a matter of urgency before any redundancies are announced. The lead contact is [REDACTED] and his number is [REDACTED]

I am happy to discuss this further.

Kind regards,
Anas

Anas Sarwar MSP
Member of the Scottish Parliament for Glasgow (Labour)
Tel: 0131 348 5831

www.anassarwar.co.uk
www.twitter.com/AnasSarwar
www.facebook.com/AnasSarwar

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 06 August 2020 10:22
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Subject: Opening of soft plays/trampoline park

Good Morning,

Hope your all safe and well, I will just ask for a update on when trampoline parks can reopen as in ur update all you said was the 14th of September for a date we can work towards to for the opening of our soft plays dose trampoline parks also fall in to that date also?

Thank you.

[REDACTED]

From: Dave Doogan MP <Dave.doogan.mp@parliament.uk>
Sent: 05 August 2020 10:48
To: Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture
<CabSecEFWC@gov.scot>
Subject: (Case Ref: DD1309)

FAO Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture

Dear Ms Hyslop,

I am contacting you today to seek advice on behalf of a constituent who owns an indoor play centre in [REDACTED].

Our constituent was able to obtain the Small Business Grant at the beginning of the Covid-19 Crisis and has asked whether there is a possibility of a further Grant being supplied to businesses who are still unable to reopen at this time.

Our constituent has stated;

"[our] bills (including the accumulated costs during the period of non payment) are now back and for example we have paid out around £1.9k alone this month just on monthly bills. Then we have our £2k rent on top of this. On top of this we will also start contributing to our staff Furlough costs from August. So it is very safe to say the £10k grant has been exhausted.

I also appreciate we got a provisional opening date from todays press briefing of Monday 14th Sept. But this will be 1 week shy of 6 full months of no income for our

business.

Businesses such as ourselves who have been forced to stay closed for such a period of time require further government funding in order to protect us from Jun - Sept..."

Our constituent believes that they have exhausted all current avenues of support. Can you advise if there are any plans from the Scottish Government to provide additional financial support, and if there is any possibility of a second Small Business Grant to be supplied to those still unable to reopen at this time.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

on behalf of Dave Doogan MP

For details of Dave Doogan MP's privacy policy and how your data will be used please see here: <https://davedoogan.scot/privacy-policy/>

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From: Sarwar A (Anas), MSP <Anas.Sarwar.msp@parliament.scot>

Sent: 01 September 2020 15:52

To: Hyslop F (Fiona), MSP <Fiona.Hyslop.msp@parliament.scot>; Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture <CabSecEFWC@gov.scot>

Subject: FW: Your recent correspondence with Scottish Government and partner agencies – [REDACTED]

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Many thanks for this written response and for asking your officials to make contact with [REDACTED] from [REDACTED]. It is much appreciated.

I have spoken to [REDACTED] today and I'm sorry to report that despite what your officials have briefed you, he told me that he had told your officials that unless adequate assurances or financial support was given they would have no choice but to make redundancies. As such, yesterday they made 50% of their staff redundant.

Can I please urge an urgent dialogue with them so we can protect the remaining jobs.

Many thanks again for all of your assistance.

Kind regards,
Anas

Anas Sarwar MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Glasgow (Labour)

Tel: 0131 348 5831

www.anassarwar.co.uk

www.twitter.com/AnasSarwar

www.facebook.com/AnasSarwar



Scottish Indoor Play
Centres Information

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 11 September 2020 22:11

To: Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture

<CabSecEFWC@gov.scot>; <CabSecCTEA@gov.scot>; Sarwar A (Anas), MSP

<Anas.Sarwar.msp@parliament.scot>; Hyslop F (Fiona), MSP

<Fiona.Hyslop.msp@parliament.scot>;

[REDACTED] <Douglas.Ross.MSP@parliament.scot>; <douglas.ross.mp@parliament.uk>

Subject: [EXTERNAL]: Fwd: Your recent correspondence with Scottish Government and partner agencies – [REDACTED]

CAUTION: *This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.*

Your reference: [REDACTED]

Good evening Ms Hyslop,

I have attached the letter received from your office and have copied in the other interested parties so that they can see how you responded. I appreciate you have had [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] speak to me, but it seems clear that nothing is possible without a conversation with yourself. I would again appeal to you, to allow me the opportunity to discuss matters with you; as you are now aware our sector and my business continue to remain in lock down. Mr Sarwar and Mr Ross have shown a keen interest in our case, especially since our business trades in a large part of Scotland and as such I think it's important that they are aware as to how you are responding to my humble request for a phone call.

It is troubling and baffling me, that whilst we are one of the last few industries to remain closed, not only are you not willing to at the very least discuss with us what financial support would benefit us, you have chosen to deal with us exactly as those that have reopened. It concerns me that those that have been allowed to open, you

have introduced a specific flexible furlough, reduced VAT, eat out help out scheme and most importantly the ability to make revenue. Instead for those that the Scottish government continue to close, your reducing and removing furlough and not providing any business support grants. How can this be fair and acceptable?

I would appreciate a meeting as soon as possible.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 04 September 2020 09:26
To: Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture
<CabSecEFWC@gov.scot>
Subject: Fwd: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, September 4, 2020 8:50:12 AM
To: Fiona.hyslop.msp@parliament.scot <Fiona.hyslop.msp@parliament.scot>;
Douglas.Ross.MSP@parliament.scot <Douglas.Ross.MSP@parliament.scot>;
douglas.ross.mp@parliament.uk <douglas.ross.mp@parliament.uk>;
Anas.sarwar.msp@parliament.scot <Anas.sarwar.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Fwd: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr Sarwar/Ms Hyslop,

Please see below communication between myself and representatives of the Scottish government. You can see mine and my groups willingness to continually engage but I have to admit I'm concerned about the intentions from the Scottish Government.

In addition I have copied in Douglas Ross who has shown an interest in our challenges. Douglas, we are extremely grateful for the assistance and very much impressed that even at 9.30pm last night, you personally took the time to call me. It has been 5 months in this pandemic, and I have still to hear directly from a single cabinet member of the SG; we provide significant employment and taxes to the economy and not a single MSP from the SNP government has taken 5 mins to call myself or anyone in our management team. (Aside from the standard cut and paste Scottish government letters).

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, September 4, 2020 7:41 am
To: [REDACTED][REDACTED]
Subject: Re: [REDACTED] group

Hi Maria,

Thank you for reverting back to [REDACTED].

As you may know cabinet secretary Fiona Hyslop has been in dialogue with us through [REDACTED] and has written to Anas Sarwar replying to his queries. In her communication she highlights that The [REDACTED] group as well as others are helping to develop guidance for this sector; I think from your email below, the cabinet secretary is either being misled or in fact is misleading others. We have had no input in any guidance, other than potentially we will be asked to comment on a prepared draft I presume just before it is released.

This is unfortunate and very concerning especially since you have the resource, the facilities and experience of probably UK's largest indoor play providers at your disposal.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, September 3, 2020 1:09:51 PM
To: [REDACTED]**Cc:** [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [REDACTED]

Hi [REDACTED]

I hope you are well.

I am sorry for not being in touch earlier but we are still working on the draft guidance and we are hoping to be in a position to share this with you next week for comments,
Best wishes

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 26 August 2020 18:55
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: [REDACTED] group

Hi [REDACTED]

Thank you for getting in touch.

I would be delighted to get involved and support in any way possible. We have family entertainment centre operations located right across the Central Belt and are currently trading in London with measures successfully functioning as we navigate the new normal for the industry.

My mobile number if helpful is [REDACTED].

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, August 25, 2020 5:23 pm
To: [\[REDACTED\]](#)
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: [REDACTED] group

Hi [REDACTED],

I have copied in my managing director [REDACTED], who will take this forward and assist you.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, August 25, 2020 4:49 pm
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [REDACTED] group

Hi [REDACTED]

Many thanks for your email. Yes, we are currently developing the guidance for the softplay sector and we are very keen to engage with the industry in developing this. We have had initial discussions with the Scottish Chamber of Commerce and they are setting up a small group of industry representatives, would you or your Directors be interested in joining this group?

Many thanks

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 25 August 2020 09:28
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: [REDACTED]group

Hi [REDACTED],

I hope I find you well.

I own and am the chairman of Scotland's largest children's leisure facilities operating throughout Scotland.

I believe you are in the midst of putting together some guideline in relation to reopening of the industry. I wonder if it would be beneficial to have my managing director and our operations director support you in this respect.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch.

[REDACTED]

This email has been scanned by the Symantec Email Security.cloud service.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 20 September 2020 17:10
To: FitzPatrick J (Joe), MSP
Subject: HELP SCOTTISH INDOOR SOFT PLAYS

CAUTION: *This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.*

Please help out our kid's Soft play centres in Scotland

Dated: Sunday 20th September 2020

Dear Mr Fitzpatrick,

The Soft Play Industry lies at the heart of every local community and provides support to local schools and after school's clubs daily. Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them, Soft Plays allow children the play within a safe and fun environment not to mention the health benefits a parent receives from the rest and relaxation on offer for them.

As a leisure business, we were one of the first businesses that had to close in relation to the coronavirus outbreak back in March and have still not reopened. On Monday 14th September you advise that already 96% of business' have reopened but Indoor play has to remain closed – including soft play, roleplay centres and inflatable parks.

There is currently a provisional reopening date of 5th of October but as of the 18th of September most of these business' have been closed for 6 months. Given that the date has already moved forwards we cannot be confident in this date either. The run-up to lockdown was also particularly hard as once discouraged from visiting crowded places the footfall to these centres dropped significantly.

While Business owners are doing everything that they can to ensure business continuity they are receiving little or no help from the government with many facilities falling out with the guidelines for support. With many premises being over a rateable value of 51k there are no grants available through the Leisure, Retail and hospitality Scheme. Whilst we are aware that there was a grant through the Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund and Hardship funds this scheme was significantly oversubscribed.

Business Interruption insurances haven't paid out to centres and there has been a requirement to take on more debt in anticipation of reopening. The significant reduction in numbers that are being proposed in centres going forward make it highly likely that most of these premises will be uneconomical to re-open.

Scottish Soft Play requires support for their period of closure, support in reopening and support to continue to trade and adhere to the reduced capacities. Some of the support that would be welcomed is as laid out below:-

- A newly established fund to support centres closure period
- Continuation of furlough scheme
- Rental (landlord) support
- A discretionary extension to the RV grants administered
- Staff cost help for reopening
- Play out to Help out Scheme.

Please help to support our sector before it is lost forever.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 21 September 2020 21:02

To: Balfour J (Jeremy), MSP <Jeremy.Balfour.msp@parliament.scot>; Boyack S (Sarah), MSP <Sarah.Boyack.MSP@Parliament.scot>; Briggs M (Miles), MSP <Miles.Briggs.msp@parliament.scot>; Findlay N (Neil), MSP <Neil.Findlay.msp@parliament.scot>; Johnstone A (Alison), MSP <Alison.Johnstone.msp@parliament.scot>; Lindhurst G (Gordon), MSP

<Gordon.Lindhurst.msp@parliament.scot>; Wightman A (Andy), MSP
 <Andy.Wightman.msp@parliament.scot>; Davidson R (Ruth), MSP
 <Ruth.Davidson.msp@parliament.scot>; Denham A (Ash), MSP
 <Ash.Denham.msp@parliament.scot>; Macpherson B (Ben), MSP
 <Ben.Macpherson.msp@parliament.scot>; MacDonald G (Gordon), MSP
 <Gordon.MacDonald.msp@parliament.scot>; Johnson D (Daniel), MSP
 <Daniel.Johnson.msp@parliament.scot>; Cole-Hamilton A (Alex), MSP <Alex.Cole-Hamilton.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: SAVE INDOOR PLAY CENTRES - Rally on 23 September at Scottish Parliament

CAUTION: *This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.*

SAVE INDOOR PLAY CENTRES IN EDINBURGH

Wednesday 23 September, 12pm-2pm

Scottish Parliament

I run [REDACTED] Play Centre in the [REDACTED] area of Edinburgh and will be attending the rally above to support the campaign to Save Indoor Play Centres in Scotland. Make no mistake, with all Play Centres in Scotland still being forced to remain closed there is a very real danger that this entire sector will be decimated. The rally aims to raise the profile of the Indoor Play sector and vital role that they play in the communities we serve and the health and wellbeing of young children. Yet it seems that Play Centres have been singled out by the Scottish Parliament (since they are now open in every other part of the UK) for particularly punitive treatment – being the only sector that is still forced to remain closed without ANY additional financial support. This has happened despite the fact that the Scottish Government has said that under-12s do not need to socially distance and are excluded from the current rules regarding permitted group sizes.

I have carried out our risk assessments and have spent thousands of pounds to put in place all of the measures to ensure that my business can open safely. However, I think it unlikely that the Scottish Government will proceed with the current “plan” of reopening play centres on 5th October – given that the current daily case rate is greater than it was when our previously scheduled opening date of 14 September was cancelled at 4-days’ notice. However, we cannot allow our industry to be forgotten so we urgently need the Scottish Government to recognise us as a special case (since by forcing us to remain closed that is how we have been treated) and provide the financial support that we will need to stay in business.

We are therefore asking for the Scottish Government to provide support to prevent the closure of my own business and hundreds of similar ones across Scotland.

I would ask that you come to speak to me outside the Scottish Parliament so I can explain in more detail the impact this is having on my business, on our 25 staff and on the thousands of families, playgroups, Special Needs Groups and schools who regularly visit us, and how it is essential that we receive some kind of government financial support.

Please Note: There is also a motion in the Scottish Parliament tabled by Miles Briggs MSP on this issue that I would be grateful if you could sign so you can show your support for our campaign.

Thank you and I look forward to seeing you on Wednesday
 Best regards,
 [REDACTED]

Good morning [REDACTED]

Can you please put the following message in front of Fiona Hyslop and Jamie Hepburn.

Hi Both

Further to my meeting with Mr Hepburn, it was discussed that one of the potential possibilities of assistance would be a further extension of furlough. I appreciate that this is out with your control, but it is important that you are aware the situation has now worsened for those businesses that remain closed. The new scheme does not assist us.

I think you will now agree that the business in its current form is not sustainable without direct assistance from the Scottish government.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 20 September 2020 17:12
To: Forbes K (Kate), MSP
Subject: HELP SCOTTISH INDOOR SOFT PLAYS

Please help out our kid's Soft play centres in Scotland

Dated: Sunday 20th September 2020

Dear Mrs Forbes,

The Soft Play Industry lies at the heart of every local community and provides support to local schools and after school's clubs daily. Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them, Soft Plays allow children the play within a safe and fun environment not to mention the health benefits a parent receives from the rest and relaxation on offer for them.

As a leisure business, we were one of the first businesses that had to close in relation to the coronavirus outbreak back in March and have still not reopened. On Monday 14th September you advise that already 96% of business' have reopened

but Indoor play has to remain closed – including soft play, roleplay centres and inflatable parks.

There is currently a provisional reopening date of 5th of October but as of the 18th of September most of these business' have been closed for 6 months. Given that the date has already moved forwards we cannot be confident in this date either. The run-up to lockdown was also particularly hard as once discouraged from visiting crowded places the footfall to these centres dropped significantly.

While Business owners are doing everything that they can to ensure business continuity they are receiving little or no help from the government with many facilities falling out with the guidelines for support. With many premises being over a rateable value of 51k there are no grants available through the Leisure, Retail and hospitality Scheme. Whilst we are aware that there was a grant through the Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund and Hardship funds this scheme was significantly oversubscribed.

Business Interruption insurances haven't paid out to centres and there has been a requirement to take on more debt in anticipation of reopening. The significant reduction in numbers that are being proposed in centres going forward make it highly likely that most of these premises will be uneconomical to re-open.

Scottish Soft Play requires support for their period of closure, support in reopening and support to continue to trade and adhere to the reduced capacities. Some of the support that would be welcomed is as laid out below:-

- A newly established fund to support centres closure period
- Continuation of furlough scheme
- Rental (landlord) support
- A discretionary extension to the RV grants administered
- Staff cost help for reopening
- Play out to Help out Scheme.

Please help to support our sector before it is lost forever

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 16 September 2020 18:35
To: Forbes K (Kate), MSP
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: We Need Your Support

CAUTION: *This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.*

Dear Kate Forbes,

The Soft Play Industry lies at the heart of every local community and provides support to local schools and after school's clubs daily. Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them, Soft Plays allow children the play within a safe and fun environment not to mention the health benefits a parent receives from the rest and relaxation on offer for them.

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- Staff cost help for reopening
- Play out to Help out Scheme.

Please help to support our sector before it is lost forever.

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 16 September 2020 14:59

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>; Forbes K (Kate), MSP <Kate.Forbes.msp@parliament.scot>; Hyslop F (Fiona), MSP <Fiona.Hyslop.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: SOS - Save our Soft Play Scotland

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Wednesday 16th September 2020

Dear First Minister of Scotland,

The Soft Play Industry lies at the heart of every local community and provides support to local schools and after school's clubs daily. Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them, Soft Plays allow children the play within a safe and fun environment not to mention the health benefits a parent receives from the rest and relaxation on offer for them.

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- Play out to Help out Scheme.

Please help to support our sector before it is lost forever.

Regards,
[REDACTED]

Fulton MacGregor MSP
Member of the Scottish Parliament for Coatbridge & Chryston
Coatbridge Business Centre, 204 Main Street, Coatbridge, ML5 3RB
Tel: 01236 897540, 0131 348 5797 Email: Fulton.MacGregor.MSP@parliament.scot
www.facebook.com/fultonmacgregorsnp www.twitter.com/fultonsnp
Kate Forbes MSP Cabinet Secretary for Finance Scottish Government St. Andrews
House Regent Road Edinburgh EH1 3DG
14 September 2020

Re: Additional Funding for Soft Play Providers

Dear Cabinet Secretary,
I am writing on behalf of a number of soft play providers which operate within my constituency in regards to additional funding.

The First Minister's recent announcement regarding revised Covid-19 restrictions in Lanarkshire will no doubt push back plans for these businesses to reopen. Of course I would like to stress that I fully agree with the Scottish Government's decision, as do the business owners, however their concerns lay with continued financial support while they remain closed.

Therefore, I would ask if the Scottish Government has any plans to extend financial support to help soft play providers bridge the gap until they can safely reopen.

I look forward to your response.
Yours sincerely
Fulton MacGregor MSP

Please help out our kid's Soft play centres in Scotland – We received 92 campaign letters

Dated: Wednesday 16th September 2020

Dear First Minister of Scotland,
The Soft Play Industry lies at the heart of every local community and provides support to local schools and after school's clubs daily. Play

allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them, Soft Plays allow children the play within a safe and fun environment not to mention the health benefits a parent receives from the rest and relaxation on offer for them.

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- Staff cost help for reopening
- Play out to Help out Scheme.

Please help to support our sector before it is lost forever.

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 16 September 2020 10:01

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Softplay Closure

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Hello,

My name is [REDACTED] and I run a small softplay in [REDACTED], Glasgow. Please find attached a letter from the softplay operators in Scotland with regards to our current closure.

We are crying out for help. We have now been closed for 6 months and we need to be able to reopen our be given further financial support or its an industry you will lose in Scotland. There are 100's of jobs at risk – please help us

Kind Regards
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 16 September 2020 10:01
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: HELP SCOTTISH SOFT PLAYS

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards
[REDACTED]

Today we have forwarded this letter to our first minister in anticipation of First Ministers questions on Thursday, when the media will be putting our case forward to Nicola.

If you value your soft play centres , consider copy & pasting the following into an email and send to firstminister@gov.scot & john.swinney.msp@parliament.scot

Thank you for all your support!

Please help out our kid's Soft play centres in Scotland

Dated: Wednesday 16th September 2020

Dear First Minister of Scotland,

The Soft Play Industry lies at the heart of every local community and provides support to local schools and after school's clubs daily. Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them, Soft Plays allow children the play within a safe and fun environment not to mention the health benefits a parent receives from the rest and relaxation on offer for them.

As a leisure business, we were one of the first businesses that had to close in relation to the coronavirus outbreak back in March and have still not reopened. On Monday 14th September you advise that already 96% of business' have reopened but Indoor play has to remain closed—including soft play, roleplay centres and inflatable parks. There is currently a provisional reopening date of 5th of October but as of the 18th of September most of these business' have been closed for 6 months. Given that the date has already moved forwards we cannot be confident in this date either. The run-up to lockdown was also particularly hard as once discouraged from visiting crowded places the footfall to these centres dropped significantly.

While Business owners are doing everything that they can to ensure business continuity they are receiving little or no help from the government with many facilities falling out with the guidelines for support. With many premises being over a rateable value of 51k there are no grants available through the Leisure, Retail and Hospitality Scheme. Whilst we are aware that there was a grant through the Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund and Hardship funds this scheme was significantly oversubscribed.

Business Interruption insurances haven't paid out to centres and there has been a requirement to take on more debt in anticipation of reopening. The significant reduction in numbers that are being proposed in centres going forward make it highly likely that most of these premises will be uneconomical to re-open. Scottish Soft Play requires support for their period of closure, support in reopening and support to continue to trade and adhere to the reduced capacities. Some of the support that would be welcomed is as laid out below:-

- A newly established fund to support centres closure period
- Continuation of furlough scheme
- Rental (landlord) support
- A discretionary extension to the RV grants administered
- Staff cost help for reopening
- Play out to Help out Scheme.

Please help to support our sector before it is lost forever.

[REDACTED]

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Dear First Minister,

The Indoor Play industry lies at the heart of every local community and is an invaluable resource, especially with Scotland's erratic weather. It provides support to many in the community, schools, clubs, social work, to name but a few. Play allows

children to use their creativity while developing their imagination and physical, cognitive and emotional strength. The health benefits are well documented and include emotional wellbeing as well as social opportunities which in turn contribute to a healthy mind for both parents and children. Indoor play also allows children to have fun within a safe and stimulating environment.

As a leisure business we were one of the first to close in relation to the Covid 19 outbreak back in March. The run-up to lockdown was also particularly hard as once discouraged from visiting crowded places the footfall to these centres dropped significantly. In your most recent announcement you advised that already 96% of business' have reopened however indoor play, Role play and inflatable parks are not included in this. Many of the business' still closed along with us have received additional funding which we have not been considered for. We currently have a provisional reopening date of [5th October](#) with no guarantee that this will happen. As of [the 18th September](#) we will have been closed for 6 Months and are now at the stage where we cannot survive if we don't open on the 5th. If we are being forced to remain closed we need additional funding or we will not survive. We have already had to make 10 staff redundant and will lose a further 10 jobs in an already deprived area of the country and many others are in the same position.

Business Interruption insurances haven't paid out to centres and there has been a requirement to take on more debt in anticipation of reopening. The significant reduction in numbers that are being proposed in centres going forward make it highly likely that most of these premises will be potentially uneconomical to re-open.

Scottish Soft Play requires support for their period of closure, support in reopening and support to continue to trade and adhere to the reduced capacities. Some of the support that would be welcomed is as laid out below:-

- A newly established fund to support centres prolonged closure period
- Continuation of furlough scheme
- Rental (landlord) support
- A discretionary extension to the RV grants administered
- Staff cost help for reopening
- Play out to Help out Scheme.

Please help to support our sector before it is lost forever.

Kind Regards

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

Dear First Minister of Scotland,

The Soft Play Industry lies at the heart of every local community and provides support to local schools and after school's clubs daily. Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them, Soft Plays allow children the play within a safe and fun environment not to mention the health benefits a parent receives from the rest and relaxation on offer for them. As a leisure business, we were one of the first businesses that had to close in relation to the coronavirus outbreak back in March and have still not reopened. On

Monday 14th September you advise that already 96% of business' have reopened but Indoor play has to remain closed – including soft play, roleplay centres and inflatable parks.

There is currently a provisional reopening date of 5th of October but as of the 18th of September most of these business' have been closed for 6 months. Given that the date has already moved forwards we cannot be confident in this date either. The run-up to lockdown was also particularly hard as once discouraged from visiting crowded places the footfall to these centres dropped significantly.

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- Staff cost help for reopening
- Play out to Help out Scheme.

Please help to support our sector before it is lost forever.

I am personally inviting you to discuss the situation with my Committee and myself, the Chair of the Association of Play Centres. We represent play centres across the UK and we are working closely with the DCMS to enable us to save this sector. I am available at any point to discuss – [REDACTED]

Kind regards
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dear Nicola,

I don't expect you to read this but whichever staff member handles your inbox - even if they don't read this - please read the following sentence.

When you plan to allow soft plays in Scotland to open, please give us notice, we rely on online bookings now so need time to generate enough bookings to survive!

I fear this is an email you will have received from many others but as a soft play owner it is one I must write. I took over my small soft play in February, with a planned opening date of April. Sadly that never happened. But neither did the

revised opening date of 14 September which, as it was cancelled with just four days' notice, was very difficult to take. Since taking over the business we haven't actually been open to the public yet.

96% of all businesses have been allowed to reopen. When the initial grants were given, these were to allow businesses to survive a few weeks/ months until they were allowed to open. We, like most other businesses received a grant (ours was £10,000) and this was gratefully received. It allowed the bills to be paid for what we thought would be a few weeks. We sat with patience and frustration as we watched other industries open up; beauty, leisure, entertainment etc etc yet soft plays seemed to be the 'problem industry'. Businesses from hairdressers to pubs were allowed to open and start generating income, all while we were forced to stay closed. **Even trampoline parks are allowed open but we aren't!? Where is the logic in that?**

The bills don't stop though. The coffee machine still needs paid, the 4 different types of insurance required for soft plays to operate still needs paid, sewage and water rates still needs paid, I could go on but you get the point. We must be thankful that our landlords are incredibly generous people who haven't asked for any of their £1800 p/m rent or else we would have gone out of business and/ or had to sell our family home to pay the rent. There is no doubt about this. Our 2 year old son would have lost his family home had it not been for our landlords generosity and understanding.

Unfortunately the Government doesn't seem willing to offer a similar level of understanding to our plight, or the plight of this industry. All of these businesses which you have allowed to open have been able to generate income to pay the bills, to pay wages, to allow owners to make a profit for some time now. Yet we remain closed, and without the slightest hint of assistance. I've contacted 4 MSP's and the responses have been fairly non-existent, other than from one, who has promised to look into this for us.

When you announced that the 14 September opening date for soft plays would be scrapped there was a part of me that knew this would happen - after all on the 18 August Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP asked in Parliament "when appropriate COVID-19 guidance regarding children's soft play centres will be published." To which, on 1 September Marie Todd MSP answered The Scottish Government will aim to publish guidance for the soft play industry in advance of the indicative date for reopening of 14 September. We will involve the soft play industry and relevant stakeholders in developing this guidance.

This guidance hasn't been published, so there was no desire to allow us to open on the 14th.

Many soft plays are family businesses, we don't have shareholders who can bail us out, we don't have investors who can throw another chunk of cash at us to keep us afloat a few more months. I won't bore you with the level of our investment in this business, but it's tens of thousands of pounds. Staff rely on us, class instructors rely on hiring our room for their own income. Families rely on centres like ours to

stimulate their children, to let them mix and play with others and to learn key skills such as socialising, sharing with others etc.

I myself visit my local pub (well bowling club) every Friday to socialise (responsibly and safely) and I know why it was important to open up the economy. I understand why my local club had to be allowed to reopen, and I accept that. My belief is that we can't lock up the economy or we will suffer grave consequences both financially and personally, so I completely understand that, and reject the notion of second lockdowns and second waves, that won't achieve anything. I feel that, if everyone practices proper personal hygiene and go about their lives safely and sensibly then we can return to some sort of normal - we need to or the consequences will be dire. That's why we have invested time and money into making sure our premises are safe, germ free and people can enter having the confidence we are doing all we can to keep them safe. How many supermarkets, cafes, shops etc can say that? If you go shopping these days, lets be honest it's a bit of a mess out there, there's no social distancing in shops, pubs etc. People want to get back to normal and as long as they are keeping themselves and others safe then that's not a problem in my eyes and I think that's why we've seen such confidence from our customers. Our online bookings from 14 September onwards were really positive, which was great to see. Sadly all these people have had to be refunded. The messages we have received have been overwhelmingly positive, which has been great to see.

I've told you what I can understand, let me tell you what I can't understand. I can't understand how you can allow trampoline parks to open, but not us. I can't understand how the children young enough for our soft play - 7 years and younger - are allowed to mix at school/ nursery, visit shops, supermarkets, indoor (non soft play) play areas, swimming pools, cafe's pubs, cinemas (need I go on - but they aren't allowed to visit our soft play. A soft play which has had every single touchable surface painted, every inch of the soft play structure sanitised (and I mean every inch, I have spent many days with cleaning solution and a toothbrush!), the entire area receives a fogging treatment every 21 days (even though it lasts up to 28 days). How many other businesses can genuinely say they've gone to such lengths?

Our staff have received covid training, we have a covid policy document, covid risk assessment, we've enhanced our cleaning assessments; all of which on top of every other document required for us to be open. You will struggle to find a more prepared, cleaner environment than ours. So what I really don't understand, more than anything else I have described is why you felt it necessary to keep soft plays closed. What is the reasoning behind this?

As I said at the start we all need more than a couple of days notice to allow us to open up again. I know you have a difficult job but I feel, and forgive me for airing my views here, but your Government haven't shown the soft play industry much respect so far, so please have the decency and give us notice to prepare for reopening - whenever that is - because if we all don't get this right and have enough time to prepare then there are going to be a lot of soft plays closing, a lot of redundancies, a lot of children losing a vital activity for their development and a lot of small business owners like myself and my wife who will lose their business and their homes.

Best wishes

[REDACTED]

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Dear Nicola

I am writing on behalf of the soft play centres in my constituency

As you know these centres are amongst the types of businesses which to date have not been allowed to re-open owing to the pandemic.

I believe there will be a further review of their status in the next few weeks

I am therefore writing to ask that serious consideration be given to allowing such facilities to re-open provided they meet the social distancing and other rules governing safety from the pandemic

In support of this request I would make the following points:

- These businesses have probably more health and safety measures now in place, ready for re-opening, than many businesses already given the go-ahead to re-open
- As we approach winter many families with young children are dependent on using these centres and their facilities
- They have a vital role to play in essential health strategies such as preventing obesity in children
- If they are not allowed to re-open soon, most of them will be forced into administration, with the consequent loss of jobs and the detrimental impact on children and their parents
- The ending of the furlough scheme will make it financially impossible to keep these businesses sustainable

The proprietors of these businesses are fully appreciative of the challenges presented by covid but believe that the damage done by not allowing them to re-open would now be much greater than the risks associated with keeping them closed.

I hope you will give these points serious consideration in deciding their future.

Yours sincerely

Alex Neil MSP

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, September 23, 2020 8:57:55 PM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
Subject: SAVE OUR INDOOR PLAY CENTRES

CAUTION: *This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.*

Dear Sir or Madam,

I would like to add my support to the current campaign to save indoor play centres.

Indoor play centres (soft play, trampoline parks, crazy golf, skate parks, ice rinks), are within the last 4% of businesses that have had to stay closed during the COVID19 crisis but have received no additional financial help despite the longevity of the enforced closure. They have however already invested significantly in preparation for re-opening on September 14th which was delayed at very short notice. Any of these businesses with less than 3 years trading history will not have qualified for CBILS, they have been given the same grant funding than those businesses that could re-open again in July and the Bounce Back loan was capped at 25% turnover when they have been closed for 50% of the year.

These businesses are no less deserving to survive than the other sectors which have received extensive financial help beyond the core loans. They are as capable as adapting to online booking, Track and Protect compliance, adult social distancing, and extra hygiene measures as any other business. They are no less contributing to the economy and are much loved places of play and socialisation for not just children and teens but for their parents too. In fact, some are venues for parent support groups such as Breastfeeding groups, have strong community links with nurseries, play groups and special needs groups and others are intricately linked with fitness facilities for kids and adults.

I hope you will agree that these establishments are a significantly more valuable economic and community assets than they have been given credit for and deserve an equal opportunity at surviving this crisis.

I hope these points can be raised further and thank you for time.

Yours Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 16 September 2020 10:14
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot
Subject: Please Read We need help

Please Please help us survive! We need help

Wednesday 16th September 2020

Dear First Minister of Scotland,

My wife and I own [REDACTED] in Edinburgh which is a small Indoor play, trampolines and café centre. The location has been trading successfully as a soft play centre for around 20 years with my wife and I taking ownership in November 2018. We have worked very hard all our lives and it took a great deal of courage for us to take the step into running our own business. As a family run business Covid-19 has been a disaster for us with my wife also being a mobile beautician the impact financially has been huge. All we ask is that the Scottish Government financially support us (as it has done for other sectors) to help us find our feet and continue to be a viable business when we are able to open in line with Government guidelines.

I still cannot get my head around why pubs, restaurants, cafes, shops, play parks, children's sports, children's gymnastics, trampoline parks and schools/Nurseries are all OPEN and we are not. WHAT REASON SETS INDOOR PLAY APART WHEN WE CAN FOLLOW GUIDELINES AS WELL AND, IN SOME CASES, BETTER THAN THESE OTHER SECTORS? My 9 year old asked me the other day "Why can I go to a trampoline centre but not go to soft play?" I could not answer him as I can't see any viable reason.

We are at BREAKING POINT now with funds gone and WE NEED HELP NOW. We have 3 staff who rely on us to pay them every month which is heart-breaking as we will not be able to continue to pay with Furlough ending.

The Soft Play Industry lies at the heart of every local community and provides support to local schools and after school's clubs daily. Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them, Soft Plays allow children to play within a safe and fun environment not to mention the mental health benefits that parents receive from the rest and relaxation on offer for them.

As a leisure business, we were one of the first businesses that had to close in relation to the coronavirus outbreak back in March and have still not reopened. On Monday 14th September you advised that already 96% of businesses had reopened but Indoor play is to remain closed – including soft play, roleplay centres and inflatable parks.

There is currently a provisional reopening date of 5th of October but as of the 18th of September most of these businesses have been closed for 6 months. Given that the date has already moved forwards we cannot be confident in this date either. The run-up to lockdown was also particularly hard as once discouraged from visiting crowded places the footfall to these centres dropped significantly.

While Business owners are doing everything that they can to ensure business continuity they are receiving little or no help from the government with many facilities

falling out with the guidelines for support. With many premises being over a rateable value of 51k there are no grants available through the Leisure, Retail and hospitality Scheme. Whilst we are aware that there was a grant through the Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund and Hardship funds this scheme was significantly oversubscribed.

Business Interruption insurances have not paid out to centres and there has been a requirement to take on more debt in anticipation of reopening. The significant reduction in numbers that are being proposed in centres going forward make it highly likely that most of these premises will be uneconomical to re-open.

Scottish Soft Play requires support for their period of closure, support in reopening and support to continue to trade and adhere to the reduced capacities. Some of the support that would be welcomed is as laid out below:-

- A newly established fund to support centres closure period
- Continuation of furlough scheme
- Rental (landlord) support
- A discretionary extension to the RV grants administered
- Staff cost help for reopening
- Play out to Help out Scheme.

Please help to support our sector before it is lost forever.

Yours Faithfully

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 16 September 2020 15:11

To: Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture

<CabSecEFWC@gov.scot>

Subject: Support

Dear First Minister of Scotland,

The Soft Play Industry lies at the heart of every local community and provides support to local schools and after school clubs daily. Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them, Soft Play facilities allow children to play within a safe and fun environment; not to mention the health benefits a parent/carer receives from the rest and relaxation on offer for them along with a chance to socialise with other parents/carers.

As a leisure business, they were one of the first businesses that had to close in relation to the coronavirus outbreak back in March and have still not reopened. On Monday 14th September you advised that already 96% of business' had reopened but Indoor play has to remain closed—including soft play, roleplay centres and inflatable parks. There is currently a provisional reopening date of 5th of October but as of the 18th of September most of these business' have been closed for 6 months. Given that the date has already moved further away we cannot be confident in this date either. The run-up to lockdown was also particularly hard as once the public were discouraged from visiting crowded places the footfall to these centres dropped significantly.

While Business owners are doing everything that they can to ensure business continuity they are receiving little or no help from the government with many facilities falling out with the guidelines for support. As many of the premises used for these facilities are over a rateable value of £51k, there are no grants available through the Leisure, Retail and hospitality Scheme. Whilst we are aware that there was a grant through the Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund and Hardship funds these schemes were significantly oversubscribed.

Business Interruption insurances haven't paid out to centres and there has been a requirement to take on more debt in anticipation of reopening. The significant reduction in numbers that are being proposed in centres going forward make it highly likely that most of these premises will be uneconomical to re-open. Scottish Soft Play requires support for their period of closure, support in reopening and support to continue to trade and adhere to the reduced capacities.

Please help to support this sector before it is sadly lost forever.

Kind regards,
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 20 September 2020 07:05

Subject: Save Indoor Play Centres

Dear Sir or Madam,

I would like to add my support to the current campaign to save indoor play centres. Indoor play centres (soft play, trampoline parks, crazy golf, skate parks, ice rinks), are within the last 4% of businesses that have had to stay closed during the COVID19 crisis but have received no additional financial help despite the longevity of the enforced closure. They have however already invested significantly in preparation for re-opening on September 14th which was delayed at very short notice. Any of these businesses with less than 3 years trading history will not have qualified for CBILS, they have been given the same grant funding than those businesses that could re-open again in July and the Bounce Back loan was capped at 25% turnover when they have been closed for 50% of the year.

These businesses are no less deserving to survive than the other sectors which have received extensive financial help beyond the core loans. They are as capable

as adapting to online booking, Track and Protect compliance, adult social distancing, and extra hygiene measures as any other business. They are no less contributing to the economy and are much loved places of play and socialisation for not just children and teens but for their parents too. In fact, some are venues for parent support groups such as Breastfeeding groups, have strong community links with nurseries, play groups and special needs groups and others are intricately linked with fitness facilities for kids and adults.

I hope you will agree that these establishments are a significantly more valuable economic and community assets than they have been given credit for and deserve an equal opportunity at surviving this crisis.

I hope these points can be raised further and thank you for time.

Yours Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 16 September 2020 09:33

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>; John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot

Cc: Directors Glasgow [REDACTED]

Subject: Support kid's Soft play centres in Scotland

Dear First Minister of Scotland,

The Soft Play Industry lies at the heart of every local community and provides support to local schools and after school's clubs daily. Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important to healthy brain development. It is through play that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them, Soft Plays allow children the play within a safe and fun environment not to mention the health benefits a parent receives from the rest and relaxation on offer for them. As a leisure business, we were one of the first businesses that had to close in relation to the coronavirus outbreak back in March and have still not reopened. On Monday 14th September you advise that already 96% of business' have reopened but Indoor play has to remain closed – including soft play, roleplay centres and inflatable parks. There is currently a provisional reopening date of 5th of October but as of the 18th of September most of these business' have been closed for 6 months. Given that the date has already moved forwards we cannot be confident in this date either. The run-up to lockdown was also particularly hard as once discouraged from visiting crowded places the footfall to these centres dropped significantly. While Business owners are doing everything that they can to ensure business continuity they are receiving little or no help from the government with many facilities falling out with the guidelines for support. With many premises being over a rateable value of 51k there are no grants available through the Leisure, Retail and hospitality Scheme. Whilst we are aware that there was a grant through the Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund and Hardship funds this scheme was significantly oversubscribed. Business Interruption insurances haven't paid out to centres and there has been a requirement to take on more debt in anticipation of reopening. The significant reduction in numbers that are being proposed in centres going forward make it highly likely that most of these premises will be uneconomical to re-open. Scottish Soft Play requires support for their period of closure, support in reopening and support to continue to

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Please help to support our sector before it is lost forever.

[REDACTED]