

Case studies

Smart Display Ltd, Brighouse, Yorkshire

Smart Display designs and builds exhibition stands for UK businesses who exhibit all over the UK and Europe. The business had a 'pre-COVID' turnover of £1m+, which has fallen by around 90% as most of the exhibitions it supplies stands for have been cancelled since March 2020.

The company made an application to its local authority, Labour-controlled Calderdale Council for £2,000 in monthly ARG payments soon after the scheme was announced but has yet to receive an acknowledgement or response despite regular chasing.

Smart Display's Managing Director, Chris Stewart said: *"While we are very appreciative of the measures that have been put in place by the government, such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the deferral of VAT payments, a source of constant frustration is the running battle we have to endure with our local council to receive the additional support that we are due. We are hugely frustrated that this money simply is not getting through to the companies who need it the most and that support that is being targeted for us is simply being held onto by the local council."*

Exhib Ltd, Wembley, Greater London

Exhib build & install exhibits all over the world for the leading design houses. At the start of 2020, they recorded a record numbers of advance orders for trade exhibition work and gallery fittings internationally, including a new exhibition stand for the Qatari Tourism Authority in Berlin.

COVID-19 caused Exhib to cease trading from late March 2020 until June, with further restrictions throughout the year halting plans to bring more of its 22 staff back from furlough. The company made an application for the ARG on 19 November and have yet to receive any payments.

Exhib Ltd's Managing Director, John Mulhall said: *"The pandemic has had a significant adverse effect on Exhib. That's why the lack of local authority support and the slow responses to our queries have been so disappointing. The only reason that we have managed to survive during this period is through the strength of our relationships with our suppliers and landlord, and by being up front and honest to those we owed money."*

Exhibition and Event Carpeting, Birmingham

Exhibition and Event Carpeting are a supplier of floor coverings to exhibition and event contractors and organisers of exhibitions, film premieres, tv shows, and product launches within the UK and overseas. The cancellation of all events has had a catastrophic effect its business with a total loss of all orders and income almost overnight. The company had to make 10 staff redundant in July 2020 and now has only four employees remaining. The company is located in Birmingham, and the City Council has been difficult to deal with and very slow in their responses, with the company still waiting on decisions for ARG grants it applied for over two months ago.

Darrell Pugh, Director of Exhibition and Event Carpeting said: *"Grants which are specifically targeted at companies like ours and meant to be available readily are not being released by Birmingham City Council. Without further support, we are not sure how much longer we can keep the business in operation."*

Expo Floors Ltd, Walsall, West Midlands

Expo Floors is a family run exhibitions and events contractor providing raised flooring and coverings, that has been operating for 30 years. Prior the pandemic it employed 35 permanent members of staff and many part time and agency staff from within the Birmingham and Black Country area. As a result of COVID-19 restrictions on national events and exhibitions it has made over a third of its employees redundant and has been forced to take loans and sell the company's commercial property to survive. Within the last 10 months it has only received one £2,700 grant from its local authority, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, only after lobbying on its behalf by its local MP Valerie Vaz. Despite continued efforts by the company and its local MP Walsall council is failing to recognise that it is able to make payments to companies such as Expo floors under the ARG grant scheme.

Indalo International Ltd, Exeter

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic Indalo International was an extremely busy and successful and international exhibitions services company, servicing clients and events on a global basis.

The business was founded in 1996 and prior to the pandemic it employed 20 people, which has fallen to 11 people due to the financial pressures it has faced from the cancellation or postponement of events and exhibitions. The company applied to its local authority, East Devon District Council for an ARG grant, but was ruled ineligible as it was asked to prove that its revenue has decreased in the month preceding its application, whereas it had faced a significant revenue decrease in March 2020 when all UK and international exhibitions were effectively halted by the pandemic.