

Escape rooms closing pending government guidance

UPDATE: Since this story was first published the Scottish Government has now issued updated guidelines which will enable Escape to reopen. See the government comment at the end of this article.

Escape rooms in Scotland have closed their doors today amid what the owners describe as confusion.

In England, escape rooms can remain open, including the 22 venues operated by industry leader, Escape. These have been formally categorised as visitor attractions by trade body UKHospitality and the UK Government.

In Scotland while Escape is seeking official clarification from The Scottish Government, they have cancelled all bookings and have closed all six Scottish venues. They have done this even though some of their competitors remain open. The business in Scotland is worth around £4.5 million each year, with 250 jobs in the 38 escape rooms all over the country.

Escape reopened on 1 August 2020 with certification meeting the Covid-19 industry standard, introducing strict cleaning and social distancing. One important rule was that customers had to play privately in their own teams. Now the premises may

be closed until September, unless the government can resolve the issue.



Daniel Hill PHOTO Lenny Warren

Escape founder Daniel Hill said: “We were so excited to re-open to customers after putting so much hard work into making our premises completely safe.

“It’s upsetting that we’ve got to close down once again, leaving our staff in limbo and making the future of this important industry uncertain.

“It isn’t a level playing field when similar visitor attractions have been allowed to re-open.

“Escape rooms clearly should not be classified the same as theatres or concert venues – we’re visitor attractions where participants do not mix with other customers, the rooms are private spaces, there are no actors, and there is only minimal and brief socially-distanced contact with one employee.

“There’s a misunderstanding of our industry, so we’re engaging constructively with the Scottish Government and hope officials will quickly give the go-ahead to allow us to re-open once again.”

This afternoon a Scottish Government spokesperson said: “

SG spokesperson: “We were made aware recently of the need to provide clarity regarding the categorisation of Escape Rooms, which did not fall clearly under the remit of any of our sector guidance.

“Following detailed analysis, we’re happy to confirm that escape rooms can now open in line with other indoor attractions as long as they adhere strictly to all existing precautions and guidance, including hygiene control and household limitations – and we will be communicating this to the sector.”

Escape is an international escape room company, headquartered in Edinburgh, Scotland, with over 200 rooms operating across the world. Its trading name is Team Building and Things To Do Limited.

It was the first escape room operator to open in Scotland, launching in May 2014 at St Colme Street, Edinburgh.