MONEY AND MENTAL HEALTH POLICY INSTITUTE

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A tale of two crises: the cost of living and mental health

Summary

- The rapid rise in the cost of living is putting pressure on millions of families in the UK. In response, nearly three-quarters (73%) of us have had to change how we live in recent months, for instance cutting back on energy use or other essential spending.
- Trouble in making ends meet is having a damaging psychological impact too. Over half (54%) of UK adults say they have felt anxious as a result of higher prices of late, while one in five (21%) have felt unable to cope.
- While these difficulties have been widely experienced, people who were already struggling with their mental health and finances have been among those hardest hit. People with mental health problems are more likely to say that the rocketing cost of living has had a negative effect on their mental health, and they are also more likely to have borrowed money or cut back on spending in response. Approaching half (46%) of Research Community respondents who have been affected by the rise in the cost of living told us that they had reduced the number of meals they ate per day.
- With the toxic cycle of mental health problems and money worries in full flow, immediate action is needed from the government, regulators and firms to stop the cost of living crisis becoming a mental health crisis.

The UK government should:

- Commit additional funding to income maximisation, to ensure more people can access existing support
- Make it easier for Universal Credit claimants to get help from a friend or family member in managing their claim, and ensure those being switched over from 'legacy' benefits are well-supported
- Put an understanding of the harmful impact of financial difficulty at the heart of its new suicide prevention strategy.

Regulators in key markets like banking, energy and telecoms should:

- Underline to firms their duties to treat vulnerable customers fairly, and harshly penalise companies failing to do so
- Carefully monitor how firms communicate with customers who have missed payments, and make clear what good and bad practice looks like
- Push the government to grant them additional powers and resources if their current capacities mean they can't protect consumers effectively.

Firms should:

- Actively promote social tariffs and other options available to customers, making sure such help is easy to request through multiple channels
- Make disclosing a mental health problem a straightforward process, with clear information on how to do so and what will happen after disclosure
- Limit the distress caused by letters, emails and phone calls to people who have fallen behind, considering whether the tone, information and signposting are as helpful and supportive as possible.

The link between higher prices, financial difficulty and mental health problems

The spike in the cost of living in recent months has been impossible to ignore. The price of essentials like energy, food and petrol are all significantly higher than at the start of the year. Incomes, however, have not grown at the same pace, with increases in typical wages and benefits failing to keep up.

Less discussed, however, have been the psychological consequences. Stress and anxiety can often go hand-in-hand with financial difficulty. For those of us with pre-existing mental health problems, the challenges can be even more stark. The typical annual income of a person with mental health problems is thousands of pounds lower than the rest of the population.[1] Members of our Research Community – a group of over 4,000 people with lived experience of mental health problems – have told us how common symptoms of their conditions can also make life more expensive. Increased impulsivity can lead to higher spending. Difficulty processing information can make it harder to find a good deal. Anxiety can make it impossible to ask for help when it is most needed.[2] Together, this means that even before the current jump in costs, keeping up with bills and debts was already a problem for many.[3]

There is no immediate light at the end of the tunnel when it comes to price rises. In the year to April, the headline rate of inflation stood at 9%[4] with the Bank of England projecting that it will reach 10% in the final three months of this year.[5] The goods and services that the poorest households spend more of their income on are already rising faster than that predicted peak, at 10.9%.[6]

The government did take action in late May, announcing a package of support that went beyond the limited offer introduced at the Spring Statement. Routing that support through the benefits system and – in contrast to the approach during the pandemic – including people receiving 'legacy' benefits such as Employment and Support Allowance will mean those with the lowest incomes will receive the most help.

The Chancellor noted, however, that those welcome steps have not "solved the entire problem for everyone."[7] It seems unlikely that further direct support to living standards will be provided by the government in the coming months, with a number of the latest measures stretching into the autumn. But with lots of families having entered the current crisis in a difficult financial or psychological position, the needs of many remain acute. To understand the effect of record-breaking inflation on our finances and our mental health, and to consider what more needs to be done, this note explores:

- the early impacts, through analysis of a Research Community online survey carried out in January with 298 respondents, with an emphasis on the energy sector
- two angles on how things stood as of May:
    - a nationally-representative online poll of 2,149 people, one-third (32%) of whom had experienced a mental health problem within the past two years
    - an online survey of 366 members of the Research Community including carers, covering a broad range of experiences and markets.

"For us, this really could be the straw that breaks the camel's back" - the Research Community in January

When we surveyed our Research Community in late January, we wanted to hear how developments in the energy market – rising prices and suppliers going out of business – were affecting people. While this first stage of the research was carried out before the jump in the energy price cap from April, three in four respondents (74%) had nonetheless faced a rise in their energy prices in the previous six months.[8] The majority told us they had been forced to make at least some change to their way of living in response. The most common adjustment was to cut back on energy use, with 81% saying they had done so, with over half (53%) having reduced their spending on other essentials like food.[9]

"For us, this really could be the straw that breaks the camel's back. Never before in my life have I had to choose between having warmth and being able to put food on the table. Now that is very much a reality… Finances have always been tough, but nothing like they are now." Expert by experience, January 2022

A number discussed how being cold much of the time took a toll on their mental health. For others, the need to constantly monitor their spending or stop buying any treats or luxuries had a negative impact.

"More depressed. Don't eat as much. Panic when food shopping in case I spend too much. Don't wash clothes as much. I applied for warm home discount [WHD] but my supplier won't tell me if I've got it until after winter (end of March). This makes me feel worse, like I'm insignificant, worthless and a scrounger. I dare not heat my home over winter in case I don't get the WHD." Expert by experience, January 2022

"I have removed any little luxuries that I used to enjoy and will now only have the heating on for 3 hours in the morning and 3 hours in the evening, despite being at home nearly all day, everyday. When I get cold, I go to bed and stay there. This does nothing for my mental health except make me feel even more depressed and suicidal." Expert by experience, January 2022

At the time we conducted the research, energy suppliers were collapsing with worrying regularity. Against that backdrop, we asked our members how effectively energy firms were communicating, whether they were folding, receiving new customers or reassuring existing customers. Despite 74% of respondents having faced a rise in energy costs, just 34% had received any communication from their provider about the rising cost of energy and how they could help.[10]

Among the minority who had been contacted by their supplier, the purpose and effectiveness of the communication varied. Many respondents described it as run of the mill, informing them of a price increase or the end of a fixed-tariff period. While some reported that the information was useful and supportive, for others the offer of help was harder to take up due to their mental health needs.

"Really helpful support. [My supplier] know I struggle with my mental health and they've been very communicative with clear explanations as to why prices are increasing." Expert by experience, January 2022

"Straightforward and supportive email. However, due to anxiety I'm fearful of telephoning supplier as advised." Expert by experience, January 2022

Overall, the view from mid-winter showed most people were feeling the pinch from higher energy bills, and taking difficult steps in response to reduce their expenditure. Only a minority (20%) had had to borrow to keep up with bills[11] but fears for how they would manage when their current coping strategies had been exhausted were common. When it came to messaging from firms, it seemed as if an opportunity to reassure and help had been missed.

"I lie awake worrying if I'll be able to afford my next bill" - the view from May

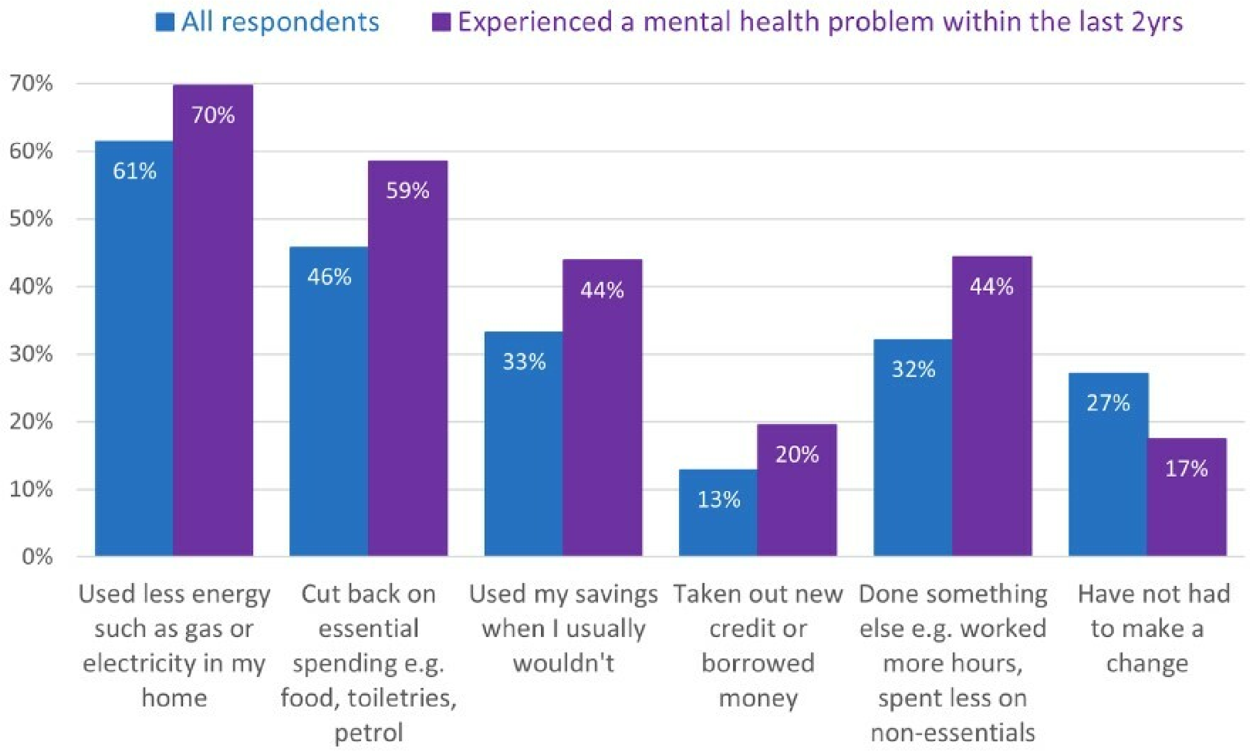
The insights shared by our Research Community respondents in January painted a worrying picture. But come May, with inflation only picking up pace, we sought a nationally-representative picture of the money and mental health effects of the cost of living crisis. To do this, we commissioned YouGov to carry out an online poll of 2,149 UK adults over 5-6 May. Among the respondents, one in three (32%) reported having personally experienced a mental health problem in the previous two years, allowing us to compare them with those with no (or less recent) experience of a mental health problem.

The findings confirmed that the hit to people's finances and wellbeing has been widely felt. Nearly three in four (73%) respondents had been forced to make a change to how they live in response to the rising cost of living in the previous two to three months.[12] The most common steps people had taken were, as with the Research Community, to cut back on energy use at home (61%) and to reduce spending on essentials like food (46%). We also found that 33% had had to draw on savings while 13% had borrowed, either from friends and family or from a bank or another lender, as shown in Figure 1.

Among respondents who had experienced a mental health problem in the past two years, an even higher proportion had had to make adjustments. Five out of six (83%) respondents with a mental health problem had made a change in response to the rising cost of living, with a majority having used less energy (70%) or cut back on essentials (59%).

Figure 1: People have been forced to change how they live due to rising prices

Thinking about the last 2-3 months, have you had to make any of the following changes in response to the rise in the cost of living?



Source: Money and Mental Health analysis of YouGov online polling of 2,149 UK adults, 665 of whom had experienced a mental health problem within the last two years. Respondents could list multiple adjustments they had made.

We asked a similar question of Research Community respondents in our May survey, providing more specific options on what actions people had taken. While reducing energy use and spending on essentials remained the most common steps, 46% of those who answered the survey told us that they had reduced the number of meals they ate per day. One in five (20%) had missed a payment for a bill, which can often lead to costs increasing further.

As our Research Community members noted in January, making these trade-offs can actively make it harder to stay well mentally. But in May, some respondents told us of a more direct impact of the rising cost of living on their health. Nearly one in five (19%) Research Community respondents had missed an appointment related to their mental health care, with some respondents explaining how they simply couldn't afford to travel for treatment, whether for their mental or physical health.

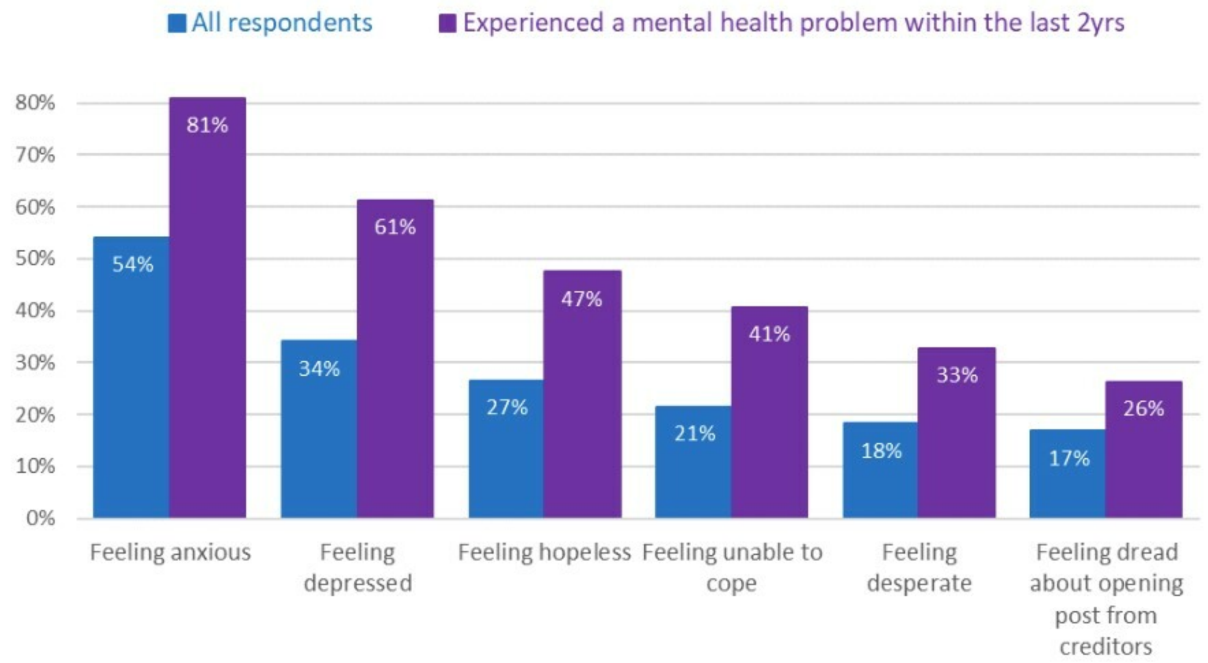
"I have had to miss mental health care appointments, renege on CBT and counselling appointments and worst of all hospital appointments for physical health. I was booked in for physiotherapy but simply can not afford to get there." Expert by experience, May 2022

"I've had to cancel a lot of hospital and GP appointments because I can't afford the travel costs. I need scans. Hospital transport have changed their criteria so they won't take me to my appointments. I'm now housebound because I have no money to go anywhere." Expert by experience, May 2022

Our Research Community members were far from alone when it came to being affected psychologically. Our polling found that, across the population as a whole, 59% said that rising prices had had a negative impact on their mental health. Over half (54%) had felt anxious in the preceding months due to the rise in the cost of living, with one in three (34%) having felt depressed, as shown in Figure 2. We also found a smaller but still significant group who described a more acute impact, with 21% having felt unable to cope and 18% feeling desperate.

Figure 2: Over half of people have felt anxious as a result of the rising cost of living

Have you experienced any of the following in the last 2-3mths as a result of the rise in the cost of living?



Source: Money and Mental Health analysis of YouGov online polling of 2,149 UK adults, 665 of whom had experienced a mental health problem within the last two years

As with lifestyle adjustments, these figures were all higher for those with recent experience of mental health problems. For example, people with mental health problems were about twice as likely to say they had felt unable to cope (41%).

"I can't sleep at night for worrying, I keep crying and wonder how I'll manage to keep going. I'm staying in bed a lot more, even though I'm not sleeping, as I'm scared to go out and spend money, and scared to heat the flat when it's cold." Expert by experience, May 2022

As our January survey discussing disruption in the energy market showed, firms providing essential services can play a major role – for better or for worse – in a customer's financial and mental health. To explore this in our polling, we asked how people had felt when receiving letters from these organisations. In total, 17% – equivalent to almost 9 million people – said they had felt dread about opening post from creditors like banks and energy companies in recent months. This rose to 26% of those who had recently experienced a mental health problem.[13] Members of the Research Community shone a light on how it feels to receive these communications.

"You worry every time that the post comes in case it's to change your direct debit for more." Expert by experience, May 2022

"I have not paid my energy bill and my mental health is suffering greatly. I am constantly worried but do not want to contact the provider. I can't send an email and don't want to talk to people over the phone." Expert by experience, May 2022

The need to do more

For Research Community members, the need for additional support was clear. Their responses highlighted the role that a range of organisations could play in delivering that help but the government was seen as the key actor. For those out of work, this often centred on the social security system and the need to keep pace with the rise in the cost of living. But a number of respondents also focused on how the practical challenges involved in the benefits system could mean it becomes more a hindrance than a help to people with mental health problems.

"[The person I care for] will have to move to Universal Credit this year or next and, although I am certain he will be entitled to UC, the entire procedure and assessment is almost certainly going to cause an episode (schizophrenia)." Carer, May 2022

Firms too were discussed as having an important role to play, both practically and morally. This was often raised in relation to the large profits that firms have announced in recent months.

"Energy companies need to be held to account as to how they are able to have such huge increases in their profits during this crisis." Expert by experience, May 2022

Some respondents contrasted this success with the unsupportive or aggressive behaviour of essential service providers.

"They are hounding me by phone, email and post, they ignore that I have told them I am vulnerable. I see how much money they spend on [advertising], it makes me sick." Expert by experience, May 2022

"My energy company are causing me great anxiety at the moment and definitely making my mental health worse… I don't want to be in court for not paying my bills, or worse still in jail, when I have tried everything to sort it out. I don't know what to do next, how to fix it or who to turn to." Expert by experience, May 2022

While the role of regulators was not specifically mentioned by respondents, poor practices from firms in breach of their licence conditions were raised, with some feeling there is a lack of effective enforcement.

"Companies are already taking advantage of direct debit schemes and massively over charging customers. There is no one to help when you know there is a fault." Expert by experience, May 2022

Preventing the cost of living crisis from becoming a mental health crisis

For some Research Community respondents, the financial hit so far from the rising cost of living is a serious challenge; for others, it is closer to a disaster. The psychological impact is significant too. Whether through being unable to afford the basics like heating or food, or the small things that make life less of a struggle, or through the constant calculations and worries about making ends meet, many people have told us how this crisis is grinding down their mental health. Distressingly, a number of Research Community respondents talked about how their lack of options and the apparent absence of help had left them feeling suicidal.

"Unrelenting stress of worry and having to do without etc. Makes managing mental health impossible as it's a constant barrage of problems and concerns and everything just gets worse by the day. It has led to me having suicidal ideation." Expert by experience, May 2022

Longstanding systemic factors contribute to why some people are at the sharp end of this crisis. Structural change is needed so that in future crises fewer people go through the difficult experiences outlined above. An upcoming Money and Mental Health report will explore what role policy-making at a more local level could play, as well as the compounding effect that long waits for mental health services can have. But in recognition of the urgency of this situation, there are a number of actions that the government, regulators and firms could take today. While these steps would not resolve all the financial difficulties that so many are facing, they would go a long way toward preventing the cost of living crisis from becoming a mental health crisis.

The UK government is best placed to prevent the current levels of harm from escalating. The steps announced in late May – including a £650 payment to households receiving means-tested benefits and a separate £150 payment to people receiving disability benefits – will have a genuinely positive impact for millions of people. But there remains more the government could do to help households raise their incomes and reduce the practical difficulties they face without introducing new funds.

One route to that is boosting take-up of benefits. While quantifying the size of the take-up gap is difficult, one estimate placed it at £15 billion in 2021.[14] When so many households face difficulty affording the essentials, it is vital that as many people as possible are receiving everything they are already entitled to. Directing more funding to income maximisation services and welfare advice would make it easier to get help with claiming benefits. People with mental health problems may particularly benefit from making such services easier to access, ensuring they are provided through a range of channels. The Money and Pensions Service has already committed to working with IncomeMax and other organisations offering income maximisation advice to develop guidance and to integrate income maximisation into other services.[15] These efforts should be sped up and expanded.

The government-funded Help to Claim service is crucial in supporting people to navigate the complexities of the UC system and setting them up with the skills and knowledge to maintain the claims. But changes in the new contract with the provider – Citizens Advice – mean that since April, the service is only provided through telephone and digital channels, with people no longer able to access the service face-to-face. This narrowing of delivery channels risks some of those with the most complex needs, including mental health problems, falling through the gaps. Reinstating the face-to-face element would make the service more accessible.[16]

There are also opportunities to better help those in receipt of benefits. Many people with disabilities, including mental health problems, are set to move onto UC this year. This includes those in the process of "managed migration", which will see people who are in receipt of legacy benefits moved onto the newer system. The requirement to actively move over puts some people at risk of falling through the cracks between the two systems, especially given claimants will be expected to move over within three months. The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions has stated that legacy claimants who have not completed the transfer within three months will be given a minimum one-month extension.[17] This is welcome, but there remains concern over the impact that this potential threat will have on people who have not experienced a change in circumstances for a number of years and who are in poor health.

To offset that risk, the government should also set out the steps it will take to safeguard claimants who are unable to respond to migration notices. At the same time, the government should work with stakeholders to understand the needs of people with mental health problems, to ensure that migration notices are supportive in tone and suitably tailored to people's needs to maximise the chances they will be able to respond and act.

Existing UC claimants also need better support. The UC system is administered online and requires claimants to be actively involved, through adding information and responding to requests. Failure to do this can ultimately lead to reductions in the amount of UC received. But when your mental health is poor, staying on top of tasks can be impossible. Claimants can arrange for a third party like a friend or family member to have access to their account, in order to help them complete these steps. This is not well-promoted, however, and the process for doing so is likely to be a confusing and challenging one for someone experiencing poor mental health. With the cost of living having such a widespread and damaging psychological effect, making sure this system works for people when they need it most is vital.

As it stands, there remains the opportunity to use social policy to prevent the cost of living crisis leading to widespread harm to mental health. But for those already suffering, ensuring that the right support is in place in the health system is crucial. While there is rarely a single factor that drives people to take their own life, people in problem debt are three times more likely to have thought about suicide in the past year than the rest of the population.[18] Two in ten (19%) mental health patients who took their own life between 2009-2019 had experienced recent economic adversity.[19]

The Department of Health and Social Care has encouragingly shown an understanding of these deep ties between financial difficulty and poor mental health. The next step is to carry that understanding through into the ongoing revision of the 10-year National Suicide Prevention Strategy, which is due to be published later this year. This is the first revision since 2012, with the role that financial difficulties can play in suicidality only briefly mentioned in that version.[20] Designating people at risk of economic adversity as a high-risk group and working across government to tackle the link between mental health problems and suicidality, including in health and social care services, employment policy and the benefits system could all help to weaken the link between financial difficulty and suicidality.

The UK government should:

- Direct the Money and Pensions Service to speed up and broaden its work to improve the availability and accessibility of income maximisation
- Reinstate funding for face-to-face provision of the Help To Claim service
- Put safeguards are in place for people moving onto UC through managed migration and ensure communication around the move is supportive
- Make it easier for UC claimants to get help from a third party in managing their claim
- Commit to including people at risk of economic adversity as a high-risk group within the National Suicide Prevention Plan
- Develop cross-government initiatives to tackle the link between mental health problems and suicidality.

Beyond directly helping with incomes and the health system, the government also has an important role to play through its regulation of key consumer markets. Energy, overseen by Ofgem, is the most pressing of these given its outsized importance currently.

But the majority of people who find it difficult to pay their energy bills will likely be dealing with other creditors too. This means effective regulation that recognises the potential for severe harm to consumers – as a result of poor practice – is more vital than ever.

In markets like energy, financial services, water and telecoms, there is clear guidance on what firms should and shouldn't do. While the monitoring and enforcement powers of regulators vary, a concerted and proactive effort to identify bad practice that breaches regulation or licence conditions is crucial. If bad behaviour from firms is allowed to persist, the cost to individuals who are struggling could be huge.

Effective regulatory systems are always a balance between ensuring competition and innovation can thrive while giving consumers the necessary protections to prevent harm. The potential for harm is high at the moment. With so many people in a precarious position, both financially and psychologically, missteps and missed opportunities from regulators could be ruinous. As such, regulators should be assertive in their use of their existing tools and call for additional powers – which could be temporary as during the pandemic – to ensure they can protect the public. Likewise, the government should be responsive, asking regulators where there is a need to go further, but where restrictions on their powers or budgets mean they cannot. The speed of the response in 2020, with much new guidance and rules introduced to protect consumers in the face of a severe crisis, demonstrates how much can be quickly achieved when government and regulators are aligned.

A specific challenge in the energy sector will be to ensure the £400 reduction in energy bills that the government has promised reaches those on 'traditional' prepayment meters[21], who will not have this amount automatically deducted from their bills. The top-up limit on these prepayment meters is £49, which means that the £400 will need to be distributed through several vouchers. There are practical difficulties involved in this for all customers, but for people with mental health problems these could be even more stark. As noted above, one in four people with mental health problems report feeling dread when it comes to opening letters from companies like energy firms. If the vouchers are delivered by post, this raises the risk that people will not open them. Even for those who do open the letters, a symptom of poor mental health that a number of our Research Community members have discussed is trouble processing information. This can mean that, even when good news is contained in a letter, it may be hard to take in, especially in light of the negative associations that many people have with correspondence from firms at the moment.

There is no simple solution to this problem. It will instead require collaboration between the government, Ofgem and energy suppliers to prevent affected prepayment customers – often those most in need of help – from slipping through the net of support. From Ofgem's perspective, this should include liaising closely with firms in advance of the scheme's launch in October, to ensure firms are devoting sufficient resources to this. It should also continue the positive engagement it has undertaken with consumer groups including debt advice providers to monitor whether prepayment customers are receiving the vouchers. If firms are failing to meet customers' needs – which should be protected under both firms' licence conditions and the Equality Act – then Ofgem and the government should penalise firms until they properly address the issue. The next section discusses in more detail how firms could approach this challenge.

Regulators should:

- Underline to firms their duties to treat vulnerable customers fairly, and harshly penalise companies failing to do so
- Carefully monitor how firms communicate with customers who have missed payments, and make clear what good and bad practice looks like
- Push the government to grant them additional powers and resources if their current capacities mean they can't protect consumers effectively
- Work closely with all stakeholders to ensure that the £400 grant to reduce energy costs reaches 'traditional' prepayment meter customers.

Firms can and should take the lead in supporting vulnerable consumers, without waiting for further action from regulators. The best way to ease the financial burden customers are facing is to direct more of them towards more affordable deals, including social tariffs and payment plans that reduce what they are charged. The provision, criteria and generosity of such schemes varies from sector to sector and firm to firm. Where companies are committed to helping customers who are most exposed to rising prices, they should ensure that schemes are in place and are proactively advertised to customers – particularly those whom data suggests are likely to be most in need. Such help must also be available through multiple channels, for instance online and over the phone. This latter point is crucial as the majority of people with mental health problems face difficulty using at least one mode of communication.[22]

Companies can also take action now to better prepare for a rise in the number of distressed customers getting in touch. Equipping staff with appropriate training on the links between money and mental health problems, and how mental health problems can make it harder to communicate and make decisions, would be beneficial both to customers and staff. For customers who need greater support, staff should be provided with information on signposting and how to make referrals to other organisations better-placed to help people struggling with their mental health.

The need for a multi-channel approach is also true for disclosure. The pressure the cost of living is exerting is likely to mean more people are experiencing poor mental health, perhaps for the first time. Many of these customers may not be aware of their condition. But for those who are in a position to disclose that they have a mental health problem, firms should design systems in a way that makes this as simple and supportive as possible. This includes the information provided before any disclosure, explaining what additional support or reasonable adjustments might be available, right through to how staff respond to a disclosure in the moment, and how it will be recorded and acted upon.

The way providers communicate with customers in arrears is key to suicide prevention. Practice has improved markedly in recent years, but there is still more providers can do. Creditors should consider the tone of such communications, as well as the information and signposting provided. Firms seeking to do more should consult Money and Mental Health's Urgent Guidance.[23] While the information provided in the Guidance is targeted at energy suppliers, many of the principles are transferable to other sectors.

As noted above, there will be a specific responsibility on energy suppliers this October. The £400 grant will be harder to deliver to 'traditional' prepayment customers, but there are steps that energy companies can take to raise the odds that people will benefit from this support. As several Research Community members have shared, firms have failed to make the most of their communications with customers in this difficult moment for many. With such high stakes, it is vital that messaging improves. Firms should begin to let prepayment customers know as soon as possible that these vouchers will be coming in the autumn. This message should be delivered through customers' preferred channels, if this information is held by the suppliers, or by as many channels as possible if not.

Firms should also carefully consider how that message is imparted, thinking about the difficulties many customers face. This could include, for instance, making the message about the £400 immediately prominent, either including it on the outside of the envelope or using a flyer so that customers don't have to open anything. Firms should also carry out data analysis and more direct research with customers on prepayment meters, to understand what difficulties they might face or which barriers need to be cleared. The insights from this work should help to shape their communications strategy and their practical approach to distributing the vouchers.

Essential services firms should:

- Actively promote social tariffs and other options available to customers who are struggling to pay, ensuring such help is easy to request through multiple channels
- Prepare for an increase in distressed customers getting in touch, ensuring appropriate training and information is provided to staff
- Make disclosing a mental health problem as straightforward and helpful as possible, with clear information on how to do so and what will happen after disclosure
- Limit the distress caused by letters, emails and phone calls to people who have fallen behind, considering whether the tone, information and signposting are as helpful and supportive as possible
- Ensure prepayment meter customers receive the £400 reduction in energy bills.

Endnotes

1 Bond, N and D'Arcy C. Mind the income gap. Money and Mental Health. September 2020.

2 See for instance Holkar, M and Lees, C. Convenience at a cost. Money and Mental Health. November 2020..

3 Bond, N and D'Arcy C. The state we're in. Money and Mental Health. November 2021.

4 https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/april2022

5 https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy-report/2022/may-2022

6 https://ifs.org.uk/publications/16058

7 https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/cost-of-living-support

8 Money and Mental Health survey of 298 people with mental health problems. January 2022. Base for this question: 298.

9 Money and Mental Health survey of 298 people with mental health problems. January 2022. Base for this question: Base for these questions: 220.

10 Money and Mental Health survey of 298 people with mental health problems. January 2022. Base for this question: 297.

11 Money and Mental Health survey of 298 people with mental health problems. January 2022. Base for this question: 220.

12 Respondents were asked if they had made any of a range of adjustments in response to the recent rise in the cost of living, with respondents allowed to list multiple adjustments they had taken.

73% of all respondents said yes to making at least one change in response to the cost of living in the past 2-3 months.

[13] Ibid.

[14] https://www.entitledto.co.uk/blog/2021/january/15plus-billion-unclaimed-means-tested-benefits-but-the-sketchy-take-up-data-makes-it-hard-to-say-for-sure/

[15] Money and Pensions Service. Delivery Plan for England. February 2022.

[16] For more see https://www.moneyandmentalhealth.org/universal-credit-help-to-claim-mental-health-problems/

[17] https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/22289/documents/165036/default/

[18] Holkar, M and Bond, N. A silent killer. Money and Mental Health. December 2018.

[19] https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=60521

[20] HM Government. Preventing suicide in England: A cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives. Department of Health. 2012.

[21] Newer 'smart' prepayment meters can have credit automatically applied while older 'traditional' meters cannot. The customers on the latter is the focus of this section.

[22] Bond, N and D'Arcy C. The state we're in. Money and Mental Health. November 2021.

[23] Money and Mental Health. Supporting customers with mental health problems through the energy crisis: A practical guide for energy firms. April 2022.