

John Glen MP
Economic Secretary to the Treasury,
1 Horse Guards Rd,
London,
SW1A 2HQ

15 June 2020

Dear Minister,

We are writing as a group of cross-party MPs and peers, to highlight urgent concerns about the devastating impact that intimidating debt collection letters could have on people's mental health during the coronavirus outbreak.

In recent months, the Government has taken a number of welcome and considerable steps to help people protect themselves from financial harm at this challenging time. However, despite these substantial efforts, the economic impact of the pandemic means that millions of people now find themselves at risk of falling into debt as a result of rising unemployment, increased living costs and reduced household incomes.

Research by the Money and Mental Health Policy Institute has shown that financial difficulty can be a significant risk factor for suicide, with people in problem debt three times more likely to have considered taking their own life. While the reasons that lead someone to contemplate suicide are often complex, one trigger that can leave someone feeling like there's no way out is **the intimidating and confusing debt letters they receive from lenders.**

The harm that these letters can cause will become even more acute over the coming weeks and months, as people's finances and mental health come under increasing strain. This is likely to be exacerbated by the fact that by law, lenders will be compelled to send these debt letters to customers even if they have been granted a payment holiday, which will cause unnecessary distress and confusion for thousands of people.

We are joining Money and Mental Health in calling on the government to amend the regulations under the Consumer Credit Act which dictate the content of these letters, to make these letters less threatening and more supportive. This would only require a few, straightforward changes to these regulations — but it could save lives.

We recognise that your Department is facing exceptional pressures at this time. But by taking steps to address this issue now, as part of wider measures to support people through the financial hardship that could lie ahead, the Government can help to prevent further unnecessary harm to thousands of people in debt.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Lisa Cameron MP, Money and Mental Health Advisory Board member
Jeff Smith MP, Money and Mental Health Advisory Board member

The Rt. Hon. Baroness Morgan of Cotes
Stella Creasy MP
Caroline Lucas MP
Sir Charles Walker MP
Munira Wilson MP