



## **COVID-19 post-lockdown support plan**

### **Pre visit letter and vulnerability identification phase**

All enforcement visits were suspended by 23 March 2020 at the latest. All other activity, such as issuing of Notices of Enforcement, reminder letters and outbound calls, was reduced. CIVEA members fully accept that to simply restart enforcement visits once the Government eases restrictions would not be acceptable.

Therefore, prior to recommencing any visits to customers, all CIVEA members will implement a pre-visit letter and vulnerability identification phase. This will involve issuing a light touch reconnection letter, which uses a template based on wording provided by CIVEA, plus follow up communication e.g. by text, email, phone where possible.

Firms will use the standard form letter unless their council clients require an alteration. The letter seeks to engage consistently with customers to understand how they have been affected by the COVID-19 crisis and respond as appropriate. Each case will be offered support as appropriate, including signposting to the Money Advice Service and debt advice charities.

## **Enforcement visit suspension**

When enforcement can resume following the lifting of emergency regulations, individuals will be given 30 days' notice of a visit by an enforcement agent, unless the local authority has specific requirements. This is to provide sufficient opportunity for engagement with customers prior to the attendance of an enforcement agent, which could prevent additional fees being added to the outstanding debt.

## **Training**

All enforcement agents will be required to undertake additional, mandatory CIVEA-approved training prior to any recommencement of visits.

The newly-designed training programme will include: the effective use of protective equipment and social distancing requirements, how to protect themselves and those that they encounter in the community. This will be supplemented by refresher training on supporting the vulnerable and recognising mental health issues.

## **Pre-visit assessment**

Where a telephone number has been sourced and if appropriate to do so, CIVEA members will make outbound calls in advance of enforcement visits to identify any vulnerabilities or changes in circumstances.

## **Post-lockdown visits**

Enforcement visits will restart after the Government lockdown restrictions that cover such activity are lifted.

- Agents will receive refresher training on how to identify any vulnerabilities or changes in circumstances

- Visits will be contactless in line with CIVEA safe working practices guidance
- Enforcement agents will not enter premises to take control of goods
- Where appropriate vulnerable people or those who have been severely impacted financially by the pandemic, e.g. loss of job, Statutory Sick Pay, will be referred to debt advice agencies for additional support
- In these circumstances, the case will be placed on hold to be monitored, with contact by welfare staff, as appropriate, prior to proceeding. The fees incurred will remain in place
- Vulnerable people will be referred to their creditor for additional support, where appropriate

## **Data collection and recording**

All CIVEA members will collect and record details of customer vulnerabilities, in line with data protection requirements e.g. customer consent, and develop support plans that reflect CIVEA's guidance on assessing the impact of COVID-19 on households.

## **Provision of protective equipment**

The majority of enforcement payments are made by telephone before an enforcement agent is required to visit or after a letter has been left. When visits are necessary, CIVEA will work with members to source sufficient workwear and hygiene supplies to protect and reassure staff and members of the public.

Enforcement agents will practice social distancing, comply with enhanced hygiene techniques (including disinfecting their kit) and be issued with hand sanitizer. This is in full compliance with the Government and Public Health England advice.