

Fairer debt, fairer society

The Lowell Manifesto:
our three asks for the
new Government



Introduction

Fairer debt, fairer society

The scars of the cost-of-living crisis still run deep across the finances of UK households. We believe pragmatic reforms to the financial sector could both help ease the pressures on families dealing with debt and lay the groundwork for a better financial future for people throughout the country.

Being in debt can come as a shock. Our customers often tell us that unforeseen personal misfortune sparked their financial difficulties. Because life doesn't always go to plan. They lose their job. Split up from a partner. Suffer an injury. Succumb to chronic illness. The everyday events that can happen to any of us, at any time.

For many people, this can be enough to tip them into problem debt overnight.

We know that the key to tackling problem debt is dismantling the barriers that stop customers from engaging with their debt problem. We need to remove the stigma of debt and the fear of debt companies so we can help customers earlier before they fall into the long-term debt trap.

At Lowell, we're ready to help the new Government fully understand the challenges facing millions of people in debt, and to reshape the credit system so it works in everyone's interests.

For businesses like ours, it's difficult to work in the way customers want when we're hampered by outdated legislation dictating how we must communicate with them and a lack of standardisation across debt collection impacts many outcomes for customers.

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ASK
1

Fairer Local Authority debt collection

ASK
2

Statutory bailiff regulation

ASK
3

Modernisation of the Consumer Credit Act

ASK 1

We want to see fairer Local Authority debt collection

Local Authorities rely on aggressive, inflexible debt collection practices to try and recover debts like unpaid rent, council tax, and housing benefit overpayments.

This heavy-handed treatment doesn't work for debtors, and it doesn't work for councils. Many can't afford to pay their bills and uncompromising debt collectors banging at the door doesn't change that.

It's plain that the current system is failing everyone involved.

We want to see the highest standards from the private sector and Government applied to Local Authority debt collection. We believe that this will help reduce the stigma around debt, drive up engagement across the industry and improve outcomes for people in the UK who are struggling with problem debt.



Local authorities should all be signatories to the UK Government's Debt Fairness Charter, ensuring higher standards across the board.

ASK 2

We want to see statutory bailiff regulation

More than a million people find themselves dealing with bailiffs every year. With rising numbers of people in arrears or in debt, getting bailiff regulation right is more important now than ever before.

Bailiffs often deal with the most vulnerable people in society. People who are mentally fragile and financially exposed. When bailiffs do not meet high standards they can have a huge impact on those people, worsening existing mental health problems or driving them further away from engaging with their debts. People are less likely to engage with the debt recovery process if they're feeling threatened.

We want to ensure that where bailiffs are used, they consistently meet the highest standards. This means all bailiffs across the country treating people with the care and respect they deserve. We want to raise standards across the industry by putting the new Enforcement Conduct Board, overseeing standards in the industry, on a statutory footing.

Better regulation can make a dramatic difference to people's lives, doing away with a world of intimidation and threat.



We need the Government to step up and make sure that all bailiff firms are subject to independent regulation through a statutory regulatory body.

ASK 3

We want to see modernisation of the Consumer Credit Act

We want to help make life easier for people in debt by prioritising reform of the Consumer Credit Act in the next Government.

The Consumer Credit Act passed into law in July 1974. At 50 years old, it's understandably out of kilter with the modern digital world. Outdated and cumbersome, it's confusing for consumers and adds unnecessary costs to businesses.

The current approach insists that creditors send long, jargon-filled, letters to customers that intimidate them and make it harder for people to get the help they need. We'd like to see simplified language that better supports customer understanding, together with permission to adapt communication methods based on what the customer wants or needs.

In short, we want to see the CCA reimagined to fit the demands of consumers as we move deeper into the 21st century.

The Government must prioritise completing the ongoing CCA reform and not let the industry and customers go back to square one.



Get in touch

To find out more about the way we work and our innovative customers-in-vulnerable-situations strategy, visit:



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About us

Lowell is one of the largest credit management services companies in the UK and Europe. We are at the forefront of consumer credit and credit collections in the UK, with our fair and ethical collection practices of no interest, fees, or charges extending across our 9million UK Customer accounts.

Part of Lowell's mission to "make credit work better for all" focuses on how to improve the credit system to improve outcomes for customers. We believe that the private sector, along with policymakers, the third sector, and others, can deliver small changes that yield outsized impacts for UK consumers in the short, medium, and long term, improving the nation's financial health.