



URGENT/IMPORTANT

Mr Jim Harra
Chief Executive and First Permanent Secretary
HM Revenue & Customs
100 Parliament Street
London SW1A 2BQ

18 May 2020

Dear Mr Harra

OPEN LETTER REGARDING THE POSITION OF THE LCAG HELPLINE IN THE CONTEXT OF:

- **COVID-19 IMPACT ON LOAN CHARGE VICTIMS**
- **SETTLEMENT COMMUNICATIONS FROM HMRC**
- **INCREASED SUICIDE RISK DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO BOTH**

We, the Volunteers of the Loan Charge Action Group (LCAG) HelpLine are calling on HM Revenue & Customs to show some mercy and **SUSPEND ALL HMRC COMMUNICATIONS RELATING TO THE LOAN CHARGE AND SETTLEMENT ACTIVITIES WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT.**

The LCAG HelpLine has experienced a **HUGE SURGE** in the number of people reaching out for Wellbeing Support. This surge is directly linked to people having received communications from HMRC relating to settlement for huge sums of money – often six figures - and we are desperately fearful that if this continues we risk an increase in the number of loan charge-related suicides, potentially significantly and soon.

You will not need reminding that, due to the Covid-19 Crisis, we are living in unprecedented times. Indeed we note that recent communications from HMRC to people impacted by the Loan Charge legislation now includes a separate hand-out acknowledging that you are sending out these letters 'at a time that's difficult for many people'. This is an understatement.

The majority of our membership are comprised of locums, freelancers and small business owners – the sectors hit hardest by this global pandemic with many frontline key workers, and others unable to work or unable to claim any government benefits.

You quote in your correspondence that the letters are being sent to people in order to meet deadlines and to check whether people still wish to engage with HMRC.

We ask you to please put yourself in the position of any one of our many thousands of members who are in this position and receive such a communication from HMRC. Imagine that, in addition to having to cope with the stress and anxiety resultant from the pandemic, you are faced with a demand for a huge sum of money that you just **DO NOT HAVE** but are being told to pay within **MONTHS**. The offer to 'engage' with HMRC to arrange time to pay becomes a moot point and compounds their on-going uncertainty in these times.

These letters are being sent to **INDIVIDUALS**. People with family and dependents. All of whom are human. None of whom are aggressive tax avoiders. None of whom deserve this level of financial and emotional torture.

The Wellbeing impacts of this pandemic are widely acknowledged – and form one of the key focuses of this Mental Health Awareness Week. With this in mind, and as CEO of HMRC, we **BEG** of you to take heed of the recommendations made in Sir Amyas Morse's Loan Charge Report (specifically Chapter 7 – Personal Impact) and address HMRC's approach in dealing with Loan Charge Victims.

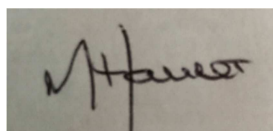
PLEASE STOP ALL LOAN CHARGE AND SETTLEMENT ACTIVITIES WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT. If there are legal deadlines, **SUSPEND THEM**. In doing nothing you are still doing something, the consequences of which are far reaching.

These are unprecedented times. Please do something unprecedented and throw the victims of the Loan Charge a lifeline.

Yours sincerely

LCAG HelpLine & Triage team Volunteers

c.c. Loan Charge APPG
Rishi Sunak, Chancellor



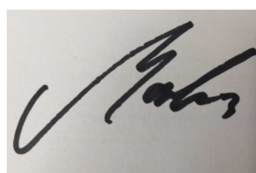
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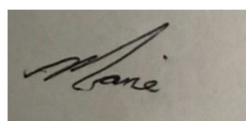
Helen



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