Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: The abuse of customer-facing workers

The combined impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit and widespread stock and labour shortages have placed an intolerable strain on the relationship between customers and businesses.

Customer facing employees across all industry sectors – not just retail, but train guards, those in hospitality roles or engineers and call centre staff, are dealing with an increasingly frustrated and disenfranchised public, leading to unacceptable levels of hostility and abuse. Our research reveals over 60% have faced hostility in the last 12 months – ranging from shouting and swearing to racial abuse, death threats, spitting and physical attacks.

As we approach the busy festive period – a combination of frustrations over stock shortages and late deliveries, combined with the pressures of the rising cost of living, could cause abuse and hostility to rise still further.

This behaviour is not only morally unacceptable, but damaging to our efforts to rebuild our nation’s economy. Far more than an occasional curse word – our research reveals damaging long term psychological impacts of this behaviour are leading to rising levels of sick days, resignations and a growing refusal to do vital work that directly serves the public.

The Institute of Customer Service, with the support of over 200 organisations and parliamentary champions from across the political spectrum, is calling for a new offence to address those that abuse staff in customer-facing roles. This will provide the deterrent needed to stop the worst offenders and give victims the confidence that their voice will be heard, and action will be taken.

We also urge businesses to provide adequate training to ensure employees are prepared for the increasingly demanding requirements of their role and for all customers to moderate their own behaviour.

Customer-facing workers not only played a vital role in keeping our nation running in recent times, but will also be the backbone of our economic progress. They deserve our respect – and this starts with providing a working environment free from hostility and abuse.

Yours faithfully,
Jo Causon, CEO, Institute of Customer Service

List of signatories overleaf
Adrian Furness, CEO, Covea Insurance
Andy Wood, CEO, Adnams Brewery
Angela Lockwood, CEO, North Star
Ant Middle, CEO, Ageas
Chris Pitt, CEO, first direct
David Done, CEO, RHP
David Wood, CEO, Wickes
Giles Hawke, CEO, Cosmos Tours
Graham Edwards, CEO, Wales and West Utilities
Heidi Mottram, CEO, Northumbrian Water
Jac Starr, CEO, Rail Delivery Group
Joanna Swash, CEO, Moneypenny
Joe Garner, CEO, Nationwide
Lindsey Rix, CEO, Canada Life
Liz Garfield, CEO, Severn Trent
Mike Lewis, CEO, Eon
Neil Jones, CEO, Bobst
Nick Read, CEO, Post Office
Paul Hudson, CEO, Cirencester Friendly
Paul Philpott, CEO, Kia
Rosemary Du Rose, CEO, Beyond Housing
Sarah Bentley, CEO, Thames Water
Sian Fisher, CEO, Chartered Insurance Institute
Simon Roberts, CEO, Sainsbursys
Steve Rowe, CEO, Marks and Spencer
Tony Buss, CEO, Arag
Giles Hurley, CEO (UK & Ireland), Aldi
Aimee Chapell, CEO Customer Management, Capita
And Whatmough, MD, S&G Response
David Roberts, MD, NuHeat
Eric Leenders, MD, UK Finance
Jo Upward, MD, Platform Group
Joanne Casey, MD, MacTaggart & Mickel Homes
Paul Harris, MD, Curo
Steve Holiday, Chairman, CityFibre
Fintan Connolly, Chief Business Officer, Bidvest
Noonan
Richard Pash, Chief Customer Officer, Zurich

Peter Markey, CMO, Boots UK
David MacLeod OBE, Co-Founder, EFS
Colin Jones, COO, Sky
Guy Jefferson, COO, Scottish Power Energy Networks
Jane Porter, COO, Optivo
Jonathan Cowie, COO, Vivid Housing
Matt Gore, COO, Pension Insurance Corporation
Oke Eleazu, COO, Bought By Many
Carla Thomas, Customer Experience Director, Openreach
Jamie McDonald, Customer Experience Director, VIVO Defence Services
Karen Coleman, Customer Experience Director, Wesleyan
Kathryn O'Brien, Customer Experience Director, TransPennine Express
Martyn Oakley, Customer Experience Director, Laithwaites Wine
Louise Beardmore, Customer Service Director, United Utilities
Nigel Purveur, Director, NJP Management
Peter Carter, Director, Independent Healthcare Consultant
Fran Rea, Director Customer of Service, NewDay
Mark Gait, Director Customer of Service, Virgin Media 02
Kate Webb, Director of Customer and Product Experience, Parcelhub (Part of the Whistl Group)
Ian Fielder, Director of Operations, Vanquis Bank
Traafford Wilson, Executive Director of Customer Service, The Guinness Partnership
Andy Pymer, Executive Director, Finance & Regulation, Wessex Water
Ben Fletcher, Group CFO, The Very Group
Jessie Burrows, MD - Customer Sales, Service and Claims, Direct Line Group
Tara Mullen, UK Retail Director, Octopus
Joe Gordon, VP of Customer Care, Ovo Energy

Alison Thewliss MP, SNP
Baroness Bennett, Green (Peer)
Carolyn Harris MP, Labour
Charlotte Nichols MP, Labour
Chris Evans MP, Labour
Esther McVey MP, Conservative
Martyn Day MP, SNP
Philip Davies MP, Conservative
Steven Bonnar MP, SNP
Wera Hobhouse MP, Lib Dem
Grahame Morris MP, Labour