

19 July 2020

**Open Letter**

Dear Sir

Covid-19 has put additional stress on the relationship between customer and business, and it goes beyond the isolated cases identified by the Home Office in their response to the call for evidence on violence and abuse towards shop staff. Our research reveals more than half of customer-facing employees (not just those in shops) have experienced increased hostility from customers during the coronavirus crisis.

The Institute for Customer Service and the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Customer Service see an urgent need for a new, stand-alone offence that appropriately addresses those that abuse staff in customer service roles. The hostility faced on a daily basis from a minority of the public is far more than a sharp worded complaint, it is psychologically and occasionally physically scarring. We believe a specific, recognisable offence is required to improve attitudes towards the seriousness of this behaviour.

We are calling on Government, employers and customers to back these essential workers and commit to service with respect. As we ask our frontline workers to take on new responsibilities to rebuild our economy safely, we as a society must adopt a zero tolerance approach to abuse and employers must ensure staff are fully equipped with the skills required to build a stronger service nation.

Yours faithfully,

Jo Causon, Chief Executive  
**Institute of Customer Service**

Philip Davies MP, Co-Chair  
**APPG for Customer Service**

Chris Evans MP, Co-Chair  
**APPG for Customer Service**