

CATHERINE BROWN ANNOUNCED AS THE FIRST CHAIR OF THE ENFORCEMENT CONDUCT BOARD

- **Former head of Food Standards Agency, Catherine Brown, announced as the first Chair of the Enforcement Conduct Board**
- **The Enforcement Conduct Board has been called for jointly by the civil enforcement sector and debt advice charities**
- **New independent oversight body will act to drive up standards in the sector and protect people struggling with debt**

3 March 2022

Catherine Brown, the former Chief Executive of the Food Standards Agency and current Chair of environmental charity Hubbub, is announced today as the first Chair of the **Enforcement Conduct Board** (**‘the Board’**).

The Board is a new independent oversight body for the civil enforcement sector and will act to drive up standards, improve the effectiveness of enforcement and provide better protection to people struggling with debt. It has been created through a partnership between the civil enforcement sector and leading debt advice charities, such as the Money Advice Trust, Christians Against Poverty and StepChange.

The Board – which will operate independently of both the industry and the Government – will have a clear mandate to ensure fair treatment and appropriate protection for people subject to action by enforcement agents (bailiffs).

Catherine Brown has been appointed for an initial three-year term.

Commenting on her new role as Chair of the Enforcement Conduct Board, **Catherine Brown** said:

“I am delighted to be taking on the role of Chair of the Enforcement Conduct Board at a time when ethical enforcement of debt has never been more important. The effects of the pandemic and the increasing cost of living mean that more and more people are struggling with problem debt, and equally Local Authorities and other creditors need to be able to collect the money that is owed to them more than ever.”

“Working with national and local government, the debt enforcement industry and debt advice charities, the Board can deliver real improvements for those struggling with personal debt and for those who are reliant on effective, ethical enforcement. I look forward to engaging further with interested parties over the coming weeks as the Board begins its work.”

Commenting on Catherine Brown’s appointment and the creation of the Enforcement Conduct Board, **Russell Hamblin-Boone, Chief Executive of CIVEA**, said:

“The appointment of Catherine Brown is a clear indication of the enforcement industry’s support for independent oversight. Establishing the Enforcement Conduct Board is the next stage on a clear path of reform that CIVEA members have been following since current regulations were introduced in 2014. As we emerge from the pandemic restrictions into an uncertain economy, it is critical that there is robust scrutiny for the challenging duties that

enforcement agents perform of enforcing debts on behalf of public bodies, while supporting the most vulnerable people. Catherine's experience of the business, regulatory, charity and government sectors is a perfect mix for leading the new organisation. Our industry is committed to working responsibly in support of Catherine as the Enforcement Conduct Board takes shape."

Also, commenting on Catherine Brown's appointment and the creation of the Enforcement Conduct Board, **Joanna Elson, Chief Executive of the Money Advice Trust**, said:

"Catherine Brown's welcome appointment as Chair is another important step in the establishment of the new Enforcement Conduct Board. As households deal with the twin impacts of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, raising standards in the enforcement industry has never been more urgent. I look forward to working closely with Catherine as the new body delivers its mandate to ensure fair treatment and protection from harm for everyone experiencing enforcement action."

The need to establish the Enforcement Conduct Board has never been more urgent. Research by the Centre for Social Justice has warned of a post-COVID-19 "tidal wave of debt", predicting that the estimated 3.5 million enforcement orders and warrants every year is expected to rise, bringing many more people into contact with debt enforcement.

Local authorities also face significant cost and income pressures exacerbated by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The National Audit Office reports that the likely combined cost and non-tax income pressures may be as high as £9.7bn in the current financial year, increasing the importance of local authorities being able to collect debt effectively.

Further information on the operations of the new Board and the appointment of other Board members will be announced in due course.

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Notes to Editors

The website of the Enforcement Conduct Board is: <http://enforcementconductboard.org/>

The Board will shortly be seeking four Non-executive Directors. This recruitment will be handled by our retained search partner, Starfish Search www.starfishsearch.com with appointments scheduled to be advertised in early March 2022.