

Economic Secretary visits Solihull to highlight support for people facing problem debt and mental health crisis

- Economic Secretary John Glen visited Rethink in Solihull today (9th May) to support Mental Health Awareness Week.
- Visit comes one year since the launch of the Breathing Space scheme, which has protected nearly 60,000 vulnerable individuals from creditor action while they seek debt advice.
- John Glen urges those in crisis who need help to seek advice from mental health professionals and debt advice providers, such as Rethink Mental Illness.

One year on from the launch of Breathing Space, nearly 60,000 people have benefited from the government's scheme. This has provided individuals in problem debt with legal protection from creditor action while they seek debt advice – including through measures such as freezing interest payments and creditor enforcement for up to 60 days.

More than 900 of those taking this support entered “Mental Health Crisis Breathing Spaces”, which extends the protections while they receive mental health crisis treatment.

Economic Secretary to the Treasury, John Glen said:

Mental health is a challenge for us all – but these concerns can be exacerbated for people who are experiencing a mental health crisis and are in problem debt.

That's why I launched the Breathing Space scheme one year ago and will shortly be consulting on proposals for a Statutory Debt Repayment Plan – to give people the confidence, support and clarity they need to tackle problem debts.

The work Rethink Mental Illness are doing to support their clients is transforming lives. So I would urge anyone struggling with their mental health and in need of financial advice, to reach out to their nearest debt advice provider for support.

Mr Glen welcomed the work Rethink are doing to support their clients and raise awareness of the Mental Health Crisis Breathing Space. He urged others in problem debt to seek advice from a mental health professional, debt advice provider, or using the tools offered by the Money and Pensions Service.

The minister also thanked staff at Rethink for providing dedicated support to members of the local community suffering with mental health issues and problem debt. He discussed ways the government is tackling problem debt,

including investing more than £90 million to support debt advice charities, providing £3.8 million to pilot the No-interest Loans Scheme, and accelerating the release of dormant assets funding. The latter of which has made £96 million immediately available to Fair4All Finance to support their work on financial inclusion.

The government will shortly be consulting on proposals for a Statutory Debt Repayment Plan, which will enable someone in problem debt to repay most debts over a manageable timetable. Individuals entering a repayment plan under the scheme will benefit from a range of protections. This includes being shielded from enforcement action by creditors, creditors being unable to contact a debtor, and halting fees, additional interest on debts, and other charges, while any outstanding arrears are managed.

Further information

- Rethink are an organisation dedicated to helping people with mental illness. They provide support to individuals in problem debt with mental health issues including through the Mental Health Crisis Breathing Space scheme, which is part of the Breathing Space scheme.
- The Mental Health Crisis Breathing Space ensures that people with mental health issues in problem debt can access mental health support first, creating time and space for a person to get the treatment they need, without having to worry about their debts growing or their creditors contacting them during their treatment.
- The government is providing £22 billion of support this financial year to help individuals tackle the cost of living. This includes providing an additional £500 million for the Household Support Fund, lowering the Universal Credit taper rate to help people keep more of the money they earn, and providing households with up to £350 each to help tackle rising energy bills.
- The latest Breathing Space data is published by the Insolvency Service and is available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk). Between the launch of the Breathing Space scheme on 4 May 2021, and 31 March 2022, there were 58,463 registrations, comprised of 57,555 Standard breathing space registrations and 908 Mental Health breathing space registration.
- Healthcare professionals can access further information and resources about referring patients to MHCBS [here](#).
- If you are experiencing problem debt, or know a family member, friend or carer of someone who is, further details are available [here](#).
- We are investing at least £2.3 billion per year for mental health services by 2024 to support an additional two million people in England, and last year invested £79 million in children's mental health services, providing around 22,500 more children and young people with access to community health services and boosting support teams in schools and colleges.
- We provided an additional £500 million last year to accelerate our NHS mental health expansion plans and to target people most affected by the pandemic, and we are asking members of the public – including those with experience of mental ill health – for their views to inform a new 10-year mental health plan.

- On 12 April we launched a [public call for evidence](#) to support the development of a new cross government ten-year plan for mental health. This is a key part of our commitment to level up and improve unequal outcomes and life chances across the country. This call for evidence will be open for 12 weeks, closing on 5 July.
- We are fully committed to attracting, training and recruiting the mental health workforce of the future. Our aim is for there to be an additional 27,000 mental health professionals in the workforce by 2023/24 to deliver the transformation of mental health services in England. We are training a new dedicated mental health workforce for schools and colleges with mental health support teams to cover an estimated 3 million children and young people by 2023.