

Dealing with debt

Help to clear your debts and get your spending back on track

Money matters



We are Age UK.

***Our network includes Age Cymru,
Age NI, Age Scotland, Age International
and more than 160 local partners.***

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Every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this guide is correct. However, things do change, so it is always a good idea to seek expert advice on your personal situation.

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Introduction

Anyone can get into debt, for a wide range of reasons. The important thing to remember is that you're not alone. Debt is commonly assumed to be more of a problem for younger people than for those in later life. But low interest rates on savings, rising prices and decreasing annuity rates can add to financial pressures for older people. Clearing debts on a fixed income can be hard too.

This guide will help you get organised, deal with debt emergencies, talk to your creditors, work out a plan for paying off your debts and set up a realistic budget for the future. It will also signpost you to trustworthy debt advice agencies. It's never too early or too late to seek help for your money worries. Rest assured that if you seek help from an independent advice agency, it will be confidential and non-judgemental.

Throughout this guide you will find suggestions for organisations that can offer further information and advice about your options. Their contact details can be found in the 'Useful organisations' section (see pages 29–34). Contact details for organisations near you can usually be found in your local phone book. If you have difficulty finding them, your local Age UK should be able to help (see page 29).

As far as possible, the information given in this guide is applicable across the UK.

Key



This symbol indicates where information differs for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.



This symbol indicates who to contact for the next steps you need to take.

Should I be worried about what I owe?

Owing money isn't a problem in itself, but if you don't have enough money to pay for essential items and make minimum repayments on your debts, you may need to seek help. Debt is a problem depending on:

- **your ability to repay it.** A large loan you've budgeted for and are confident you can gradually pay off is less worrying than money you've built up on a credit card and don't know how you'll repay
- **what caused it.** Perhaps you've built up debts because of a reduced income, relationship breakdown, illness, or finding it harder to manage your finances. This may not be a problem if, for instance, you're expecting a lump sum on retirement which will clear your debt. But it may be that you've already retired and are finding it hard to manage on less money
- **the complexity of it.** Owing money to one creditor is easier to deal with than owing money to several creditors, when it can become difficult to keep track of or prioritise repayments
- **how you feel about it.** If you're feeling anxious, just talking over your repayment plans with a debt advisor could help you feel reassured.

You may feel able to tackle your debt problems yourself or you may feel that your debt is out of control. If that's the case, don't panic: no debt problems are unsolvable. Get some help from a debt advisor.

what
next?

Use the confidential online debt test on the Money Advice Service website at www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/tools/debt-test to find out how to tackle your debts.

Do I have to repay these debts?

There may be occasions where you don't have to repay a debt. Seek advice if:

- **you have old debts.** Creditors have a time limit to take court action for debts. If you haven't made any repayments or acknowledged the debt, and the creditor hasn't pursued you through the courts during the last six years (or five years in Scotland), you may not have to repay it. Exceptions to this are mortgage arrears, care home fees, and Council Tax arrears in Scotland, which all have different time limits
- **your spouse or civil partner had debts in their name and has died, or you're divorced.** You won't usually be liable for these but there are some exceptions such as Council Tax, some utility bills and debts in both names
- **you signed an agreement that you didn't want to.** Perhaps you were pressured into signing a loan agreement, or misled by a lender when you were taking out a loan. Or maybe you didn't have the mental capacity to understand it because you have a mental illness, dementia, an addiction or a learning disability (see page 11). This is a complex legal area so seek advice on whether you have to repay the debt.

what next?

Read our free guide *Protecting yourself* if someone has pressurised you into signing a loan agreement against your will. If you have mental health problems that affect your ability to deal with debt, download *Money Saving Expert's Guide to mental health and debt* from www.moneysavingexpert.com/mentalhealth

Priority bills

Not all debts are the same. The creditors who shout the loudest may not be the ones you should prioritise when it comes to repaying your debts.

‘Priority bills’ are more important than others, as non-payment could lead to serious trouble. For example, if you don’t pay your mortgage or secured loan, your home could be repossessed. Or if you don’t pay your electricity or gas bills, your energy supply could be cut off. If you’re behind on any of these bills, don’t panic. Act quickly to either pay off the debt or arrange to pay it off in affordable instalments, and you should be able to stop these things happening.

Priority bills include:

- mortgage
- second mortgage or secured loan
- rent
- Council Tax
- gas or electricity
- TV licence
- unpaid fines
- hire purchase
- telephone (if you rely on it)

Non-priority bills include water, catalogue debts, credit card debts, personal loans and money borrowed from friends and family.

**what
next?**

See our free factsheet *Debt advice* to find out more.

First steps to getting organised

It's never too late to tackle debt, no matter how long it's been mounting up or how many organisations you owe money to. Taking the first steps is a positive way to regain control and find your way back to a debt-free life.

- Open all letters about your debts. This will give you a clearer picture of how much you owe in total and help you start to prioritise your debts (see page 5).
- Decide whether you can deal with your creditors yourself, or whether you need a debt adviser to help you (see page 7 to find one).
- Write a 'holding letter' to your creditors, asking them to suspend any repayments and interest while you take advice. (See the template for this in our factsheet *Debt advice* and on our website.) Most creditors will be reasonable if you explain the situation and show that you're taking steps to deal with it.
- Make sure you're claiming all the benefits you're entitled to. Contact your local Age UK for a free benefits check or use our online benefits calculator at www.ageuk.org.uk/benefitscheck. In Scotland, call Silver Line Scotland for advice (see page 29).



There are rules about how creditors can act when collecting debts. If you feel a creditor is treating you unfairly – for example, by harassing you, contacting you at unreasonable times or asking you to call them on premium rate numbers – you can make a complaint. Our free factsheet *Debt advice* has more information on how to do this.

Finding a debt adviser

Don't be tempted to pay a debt management company. There's a lot of free, confidential, independent help out there, whether you speak to an advisor or need some free resources.

Whoever you speak to, you're likely to need:

- bank statements for the last three months
- proof of your income, including any benefit award letters
- a list of everyone you owe money to, including friends and family, and the amounts you owe
- all correspondence about your debts
- an expenditure diary, showing how much you spend on things.

This will help a debt adviser complete a financial statement for you, showing your income and expenditure, that you can then take to creditors to try to set up a repayment agreement.

Contact details for these organisations are listed on pages 29–34.

- **Age UK** – your local Age UK may offer debt advice, or be able to direct you to somewhere nearby that can.
- **Business Debtline** – offers advice by telephone to self-employed people in England, Wales and Scotland.
- **Citizens Advice** – Citizens Advice Bureaus (CABs) offer help face-to-face, via home visits, telephone or email.

- **Citizens Advice Consumer Service** – provides information and advice on consumer issues by telephone and online. In Northern Ireland, contact the Consumer Council.
- **Debt Action NI** – offers advice face-to-face, by telephone, email, or online chat to people in Northern Ireland.
- **National Debtline** – provides advice over the telephone and by email for people living in England, Wales and Scotland. They can send you a free self-help information pack. Visit their My Money Steps website at www.mymoneysteps.org to get a personalised action plan.
- **Payplan** – provides advice over the telephone and can help you set up a debt management plan.
- **Shelter (or Shelter Cymru in Wales)** – provides advice around housing and homelessness, including managing debt, paying off rent or mortgage arrears, and dealing with possible eviction or repossession.
- **Stepchange** – provides advice over the telephone and has an online Debt Remedy tool you can use to work out the extent of your debt and get a personal action plan.

Don't be tempted to pay a debt management company. There's a lot of free, confidential, independent help out there.



How shall I repay my debts?

Once you've started to get organised and have a clearer picture about what you owe, it's time to look at your options. Talk to a debt adviser about what's best for you.

- **Use your savings.** The interest paid on savings is usually far less than the interest charged on borrowing. Put your savings towards your debts and you could save hundreds of pounds a year in interest charges. Try to keep enough as an emergency fund to avoid having to borrow money in future.
- **Get a personal loan.** If you owe money on a credit card or overdraft with a high interest rate, consider a personal loan to pay them off. These often charge a lower interest rate, give you certainty about monthly repayments and the length of the loan, and mean you owe money to just one creditor. You may not be able to get a personal loan if you have defaulted on payments to other creditors.
- **Switch credit card debts to a 0% balance transfer credit card.** This would mean you wouldn't have to pay any interest on the balance for a fixed period. There might be a transfer fee so take this into account when calculating potential savings. Remember that the interest rate will go up after a fixed time, so check whether the final rate is competitive or put a date in your diary to switch again when the 0% deal ends.

- **Make an offer of repayment to your creditors.** If you're expecting a lump sum or an increase to your income in the near future, ask your creditors to suspend payments on your account for a set period. This is known as a 'moratorium'. Get confirmation in writing from them about what you agree. If they refuse or you have a low income, you could offer to make token payments. This means making small payments – for example, £1 a month – for a set period, showing that you're making an effort to pay something towards your debts and haven't forgotten them. If your situation hasn't improved after the set period, ask if your creditor will consider writing off the debt altogether. The Citizens Advice website has sample letters for creditors you can download (see page 30).
- **Get your debts written off if you signed up to a financial commitment you didn't understand.** This is rare, but if you didn't have the mental capacity to understand the contract you were signing, you may be able to get it cancelled. This may be because you have a mental illness, dementia or a learning disability. Get help from an advice agency or Mind (see page 32).
- **Equity release.** If you own your home, equity release is a way to release cash from your home without having to move. You need to give equity release careful thought and seek specialist advice. See our free leaflet *Equity release* for more information.

What if I can't repay my debts?

If you find you don't have the money to repay your debts, don't panic – there are still options open to you. For instance, you may be able to freeze your repayments, arrange a 'payment holiday' until you're back on your feet, or reschedule your deadlines for repayment.

i You may need to consider more formal ways to deal with your debt, such as a Debt Relief Order, Administration Order or Individual Voluntary Arrangement in England (in Scotland, you may need to consider a Protected Trust Deed) or bankruptcy. They will all appear on your credit file and may make it harder for you to open a bank account, get a loan or buy on credit in future. However, if you have no real way of paying off your debts, these options could help you make a fresh start.

Don't make any decisions on your own. Talk to a debt adviser to find out more about your options. Don't rush into anything until you're sure it's right for you.

**what
next?**

Read our free factsheet *Debt advice* to find out about more formal ways to deal with debt, including bankruptcy.

Should I consolidate my debts?

If you have lots of different debts, you may be considering taking out a loan to pay them all off. It's a way to merge them into one loan and lower your monthly repayments. Consolidating your debts is only a good idea if you end up paying less interest than you were paying before, the overall amount you repay doesn't increase and you can afford the repayments. You have two options: a secured loan or a personal loan from the bank.

A secured loan is rarely the best option. They often charge a high interest rate, spread your repayments over a long time, and secure the loan against your home. You need to consider the downside of putting your home at risk.

A personal loan from the bank is another way to consolidate your debts. They are unsecured, so your home won't be at risk. Calculate exactly what you owe to your lenders and borrow this amount. If you borrow more than you need, you'll just end up adding to your debt. If you don't have a good credit rating and your bank won't give you a good rate, find your nearest credit union instead to see if they can help (see page 29).

what next?

Take advice from a debt adviser if you're struggling to manage multiple debts. There may be other ways to negotiate your debts (see page 10).

‘Once we’re back on our feet, we’re going to open a savings account for a rainy day too.’



Patrick, 67, found managing his money harder than expected when he retired.

‘When I retired, we knew money would be a bit tight but presumed we’d make ends meet – we always have done.

‘Things seemed to be going well for the first few months, but then I opened a letter from the bank saying we were overdrawn and that there’d be a fine. I couldn’t believe it, we’ve never been overdrawn before. I don’t always open every bank letter I get, so it turned out we’d been overdrawn for a while.

‘I checked our balance and saw that our last gas bill had been much higher than previous bills, probably because I’m spending more time at home, and it had pushed us into the red. Our fine was getting higher each day and I panicked as there’s no way we could afford it.

‘There are lots of payday loan shops on our high street, but we’d heard they charge a lot of interest.

‘There was an ad on telly for a debt helpline so I gave them a call, and they were brilliant. I was so embarrassed about the mess we were in but they’d heard it all before. A helpful woman advised me to write to the bank about the charges, and thankfully they agreed to waive part of the fine so we could afford to pay it off.

‘She also helped us draw up a proper budget so now we know how much is coming in and going out of our account. And we open every official letter we get now, we’ve learned our lesson. Once we’re back on our feet, we’re going to open a savings account for a rainy day too.’



Dealing with bailiffs and sheriff officers

Bailiffs take away possessions belonging to people who owe money. These possessions are then sold and the money used to pay back the debt.

You don't usually have to let bailiffs in and they're not allowed to force their way in. However, if you don't agree to pay them, they can charge you more fees or take things from outside your home, such as your car. If you let them in, they can take luxury items such as a TV or games console to sell but not essential items such as your clothes or fridge or someone else's belongings. They will charge you for visits but you can make a complaint if you think they're charging too much.

Before you pay a bailiff or let them in, ask for ID and a breakdown of their charges. Get a receipt for anything they take.

-  Scotland doesn't have bailiffs. Instead, they have sheriff officers who enforce court orders. They can enter your home if they have authority from the court – ask them for ID and documentation. They can use reasonable force to get in if you refuse entry, for example by forcing a door or breaking a window.

If you receive a letter from a bailiff or sheriff officer, or you have one on your doorstep, get advice or contact your creditor immediately. You may be able to prevent further action by negotiating or making a payment. Don't let bailiffs or sheriff officers in. Ask them to leave a card and say you will write to them.

Dealing with court action

If you have unpaid debts or have fallen behind on rent or mortgage repayments, the people you owe money to may eventually take you to court. Your creditor must send you a warning letter first. Contact them straight away to see if you can come to an affordable agreement to repay what you owe. Get help from a debt advice agency (see page 7) or Shelter (see page 34). Remember that your creditor will generally want to avoid going to court as much as you do, as this can be costly for them. You may be able to come to a repayment agreement, even at a late stage.

- i** If you do have to attend a court hearing, make sure you turn up and put your case to the judge (or sheriff in Scotland), especially if your home is at risk. Even at this stage, you may be able to keep your home.

Some lenders send letters that look like court papers but aren't, in an attempt to scare you. If you're not sure about a letter, take it to a debt advice agency.

Don't let bailiffs or sheriff officers in. Ask them to leave a card and say you will write to them.



Dealing with energy supply disconnection

If you don't pay your gas or electricity bill within 28 days of receiving it, you risk getting disconnected. Your energy company has to send you a disconnection notice first. Call the Citizens Advice Consumer Service (see page 31) if this happens.

Some customers have extra protection from being disconnected. This includes households where all the members are of pensionable age, who should not have their energy supply cut off between 1 October and 31 March.

If you're having difficulty paying your energy bills, tell your energy supplier as soon as possible. It won't cut off your supply if you agree and stick to a realistic payment plan or get a pre-payment meter installed. A meter allows you to pay for your energy on a pay-as-you-go basis, but is often expensive. Our free guide *Save energy, pay less* and free factsheet *Help with heating costs* have more information about this and how to reduce your energy bills.

Types of credit that can lead to debt

It's now easier to use credit or borrow money than it used to be, but that can lead to problems.

Catalogue debts

Many mail order catalogues allow you to 'buy now, pay later' but if you miss a payment, it usually invalidates any special 0% interest deal, so the amount you owe starts to rise. While these creditors may be very persistent, these are not priority debts.

Alternative: If you have an interest-free period for repayment, aim to repay the debts in full in this time to avoid fees. Think about paying into a credit union (see page 29) to save for Christmas and birthdays.

Loan sharks and other illegal money lenders

Loan sharks often charge very high interest rates, offer little paperwork, and won't tell you how much you still owe or let you settle your debt. If you've borrowed money from one, you can report them anonymously to the Illegal Money Lending Team (see page 32). If they threaten you or act violently, call the police. If they don't have a licence, you haven't broken the law: they have. Check whether a money lender is licensed by checking the Consumer Credit Register on the OFT website at www2.crw.gov.uk

Alternative: Consider credit unions or getting help from your local council (see page 25). Get a benefits check to make sure you're claiming everything you're entitled to.

Pay day loans

These are short-term loans of small amounts of money. They can be very expensive to repay. The average payday lender charges £25 interest for every £100 borrowed, if you pay it back within 28 days. If you can't pay it back on time, fees and interest rapidly mount up.

Alternative: Follow the advice for alternatives to loan sharks.

Overdraft charges

Overdrafts can give you a handy financial buffer in case you spend more than you have in your account. Authorised overdrafts are arranged in advance with a specified limit. Unauthorised overdrafts happen when you spend more money than is in your account without agreeing it with the bank first, or go over your overdraft limit. They are very expensive, as you'll pay extra charges which can quickly mount up.

Alternative: Ask your bank about arranging an authorised overdraft and any fees involved. You may automatically have one with your current account. If you think you're going to go over your limit, ask if you can extend it. There may be a charge, but you could save a lot of money. If you accidentally overspend and end up with a fee, ask the bank if they'll waive it. If you find you're constantly overdrawn, consider a personal loan instead.

Credit cards

A credit card can help you meet an unexpected expense, and give you extra protection if you have problems with the goods or services you've bought. However, if you don't repay at least the minimum monthly amount, you'll be charged a fee and if you don't repay in full, you'll be charged interest on the remaining balance. This rate of interest can be very high.

Alternative: Aim to repay your bill in full each month. If you can't, consider switching to a 0% balance transfer credit card (see page 10) or taking out a personal loan to pay off your debt.

If you're considering any of these types of credit, get budgeting advice first from Citizens Advice or the Money Advice Service (see pages 30 and 33). This may help you raise enough money so that you don't need to borrow any.

what
next?

Talk to a debt advice agency if you're struggling to repay any of these types of debt.

***Get a benefits check to
make sure you're claiming
everything you're entitled to.***

*Don't let anyone pressure you:
don't be afraid to say no or
seek advice.*



Difficult situations that can lead to debt

Sometimes you can find yourself in a tricky situation where it can feel difficult or even impossible to avoid giving someone money. Don't let yourself be conned or manipulated.

Scam letters and emails

There are many different postal and email scams designed to part you from your money. For instance, you may be told you've won a lottery and asked to pay an administration fee before you can collect it. Never reply to these letters or emails. Read more in our free guide *Avoiding scams*.

Lending money to someone

A friend or relative may ask to borrow money from you. While it's understandable to want to help someone you care about, make sure you don't get into difficulties yourself. Think carefully about whether you have money to spare.

Don't let anyone pressure you: don't be afraid to say no or seek advice. Remember it's your money to spend, and you're not obliged to lend it.

Acting as a guarantor

You may be asked to act as a guarantor for someone's rent payments or other credit repayments. Be cautious – this means you'll have to cover any missed payments (or even the whole agreement) if they can't, and may even be taken to court. Could you pay off their debt if they couldn't? Don't agree to guarantee loans over the phone or online without getting advice first.

what next?

Read our free guide *Protecting yourself if you feel you're being pressurised into lending money*. Seek help from a debt advice agency (see page 7), who will be sympathetic and non-judgemental.

Getting back on track

Good money management can keep your spending on track. It's easy to end up in debt again if you don't address the reasons why it happened. A money adviser (see pages 7–8 for a list of money organisations) can help you draw up a budget, or follow our tips to get started.

- Work out a realistic budget and stick to it. Start by listing your income (from things like your wages, State Pension or benefits) and outgoings (such as your rent or mortgage, Council Tax and bills, making the best estimate you can for irregular payments such as home repairs and car services). If you're spending more each month than you have coming in, look closely at where you can cut back. A spending diary, where you note down everything you spend money on in a month, can help with this.
- Use an online budget planner such as the one on the Money Advice Service website (see page 33), set up a budget using a spreadsheet on your computer, or simply write one down.
- Get a benefits check to see if there's money you should be claiming. Ask your local Age UK if they can give you a free benefits check or use our online calculator at www.ageuk.org.uk/benefitscheck
- Keep your receipts and check them against your bank statements.
- Keep a close eye on your bank balance to avoid overdraft fees. You can check it by visiting the bank, over the telephone, online, or at a cash machine.

- Check you're paying the right tax. If you've overpaid Income Tax, you can reclaim it for up to six years. Use our online tax calculator at www.ageuk.org.uk/taxcalculator
- Check you're claiming all the travel concessions you're eligible for – ask your local council for details. Consider buying a Senior Railcard or Senior Coachcard too, as the savings you make may outweigh the cost of the cards in only one or two trips.
- If you have an unexpected cost, see if you're eligible for help. If you're receiving certain benefits, you may be eligible for a Funeral Payment, Budgeting Loan or Short Term Advance. Ask your local Jobcentre Plus office. If you've faced an emergency or disaster such as a fire or flood, or have other essential expenses, ask your local council if you're eligible for assistance.
- You may be eligible for a grant if you have an unexpected bill. Grants offered by charities cover many things, from white goods to emergency care costs. Charity Search and Turn2Us can help you search and apply for grants (see page 30 and 34).
- Look at all your insurance policies, fuel companies, and telephone and broadband providers. Compare quotes from different companies to check you're getting the best deal. See our free factsheet *Switching energy supplier* too.

Making positive long-term changes

Your credit history

- Review your credit files to find out what information is held about you and ensure it's correct. Lenders may check them to see if you can afford any credit offered, and judge the risk of you not repaying it. Request a credit report from each of the three main credit agencies: Callcredit, Equifax and Experian (see pages 30–31). There is usually a small fee.

Banking

- Consider a basic bank account which allows you to pay in and withdraw money, and set up direct debits to pay bills. They don't usually have overdraft facilities. This may be suitable if you have a bad credit rating or want a very simple account. Check what accounts are available from different banks.
- Open a savings account. If you find you have money left over at the end of the month, pay it in and keep it as an emergency fund.
- Join a credit union (see page 29). They offer low-interest savings accounts and loans to members.
- Paying your bills by direct debit often means you'll get a discount. Only opt for this if you can manage it without going overdrawn and if it suits the way you budget.
- Buy savings stamps from the Post Office or join a payment card scheme. These allow you to put small, regular amounts towards your bills. Contact your telephone, gas and electricity suppliers for more details.

Spending

- If you have credit cards, call the providers and ask them to lower your limits. Remember it's not generally a good idea to use credit cards while you're managing debt.
- Consider all your direct debits, standing orders, television package, and memberships of organisations. Discounts for older people may mean you no longer need all your membership cards. You may qualify for money off tickets to events or exhibitions, so always ask about this.
- It can be easy to lose track of former pension schemes. Contact the Pension Tracing Service (see page 33) who can trace your pension for free. See our free factsheet *Tracing lost money* for help with other lost money or assets such as old bank or building society accounts and premium bonds.

Utilities

- If you have a big home with few occupants, you may save money by installing a water meter. See our free factsheet *Water advice* for more information.
- Improving the energy efficiency of your home with insulation and draught-proofing can lower your energy bills. Schemes such as the Energy Company Obligation scheme and the government's Green Deal scheme (or, in Wales, the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme) may be able to help. Making small changes to your energy use can also help you save money. Read our free guide *Save energy, pay less* to find out more.



Your home

Moving to a smaller property can save you money on your bills and rent or mortgage – but remember to factor in the cost of moving, which can be high. If you live in social housing, claim Housing Benefit and have been told you have more bedrooms than you need, your benefit may have been reduced. This is known informally as the ‘bedroom tax’. It may make financial sense to look for a smaller home. If you live in social housing, the council may even offer you money to downsize. Our free guide *Housing options* can help you think about your options.

what next?

Find out more about benefits and getting help with urgent expenses in our free guide *More money in your pocket: a guide to claiming benefits for people over pension age*.

Paying your bills by direct debit often means you'll get a discount.

Useful organisations

Age UK

We provide advice and information for people in later life through our Age UK Advice line, publications and online.

Age UK Advice: 0800 169 65 65

Lines are open seven days a week from 8am to 7pm.

www.ageuk.org.uk

Call Age UK Advice to find out whether there is a local Age UK near you, and to order free copies of our information guides and factsheets.

In Wales, contact

Age Cymru: 0800 022 3444

www.agecymru.org.uk

In Northern Ireland, contact

Age NI: 0808 808 7575

www.ageni.org

In Scotland, contact **Age Scotland** by calling Silver Line Scotland: 0800 470 8090 (This line is provided jointly by Silver Line Scotland and Age Scotland.)

www.agescotland.org.uk

Association of British Credit Unions (ABCUL)

Trade association for credit unions in England, Scotland and Wales.

Tel: 0161 832 3694

www.abc.ul.org

In Northern Ireland, contact the **Irish Federation of Credit Unions**

Tel: +353 1 614 6700

www.creditunion.ie

Business Debtline

Offers debt advice to self-employed people.

Tel: 0800 197 6026

www.bdl.org.uk

Citizens Advice

National network of advice centres offering free, confidential, independent advice, face to face or by telephone.

Tel: 020 7833 2181 – for details of your local Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

In Wales there is a national phone advice service on 0844 477 2020. It is available in some parts of England on 0844 411 1444.

To find details of your nearest CAB in:

England or Wales: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Northern Ireland: www.citizensadvice.co.uk

Scotland: www.cas.org.uk

Visit www.adviceguide.org.uk for online information

Callcredit

Credit reference agency offering information about your credit history.

Tel: 0845 366 0071

www.callcredit.co.uk

Charity Search

Helps people in financial need to find a charity that could provide them with a grant.

Freepost (BS 6610)

Avonmouth

Bristol BS11 9TW

Tel: 0117 982 4060

www.charitysearch.org.uk

Citizens Advice Consumer Service

Provides information and advice on consumer issues by telephone and online. Offers tips on avoiding scams.

PO Box 833
Moulton Park
Northampton NN3 0AN

Tel: 0845 404 0506
(or 0845 404 0505 for a Welsh-speaking adviser)
www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer_service

In Northern Ireland, contact the **Consumer Council**

Tel: 0300 123 6262
www.consumercouncil.org.uk

Debt Action NI

Offers debt advice to people in Northern Ireland.

Tel: 0800 917 4607
Email: debt@adviceni.org
www.debtaction-ni.net
Text ACTION to 81025

Equifax

Credit reference agency offering information about your credit history.

Tel: 0844 335 0550
www.equifax.co.uk

Experian

Credit reference agency offering information about your credit history.

Tel: 0844 481 8000
www.experian.co.uk

Illegal Money Lending Team

You can report a loan shark to them anonymously.

Tel: 0300 555 2222

Email: reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk

Text LOAN SHARK and the lender's details to 60003

In Wales, contact the **Wales Illegal Money Lending Unit**

Tel: 0300 123 3311

Email: imlu@cardiff.gov.uk

Text LOAN SHARK and the lender's details to 60003

In Scotland, contact the **Illegal Money Lending Team – Scotland**

Tel: 0141 287 6655

Email: loansharks@glasgow.gov.uk

In Northern Ireland, contact **Trading Standards Consumerline**

Tel: 0300 123 6262

www.consumerline.org

Mind

Produces booklets and factsheets on a wide range of mental health issues, and gives details of local support services.

Tel: 0300 123 3393

Email: info@mind.org.uk

www.mind.org.uk

Money Advice Service

Provides information and guidance on money management.

Tel: 0300 500 5000

www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk

National Debtline

National helpline for people with debts, giving self-help advice and support.

Tel: 0808 808 4000

www.nationaldebtline.co.uk

Visit www.mymoneysteps.org to get a personalised action plan to manage your debts.

Payplan

Provides debt advice and can help you set up a debt management plan.

Tel: 0800 280 2816 or 020 7760 8980

www.payplan.com

Pension Tracing Service

Provides help to find a lost pension.

Tel: 0845 600 2537

Textphone: 0845 300 0169

www.gov.uk/find-lost-pension

Shelter

Provides advice around housing and homelessness, including paying off rent or mortgage arrears, and dealing with possible eviction or repossession.

88 Old Street
London EC1V 9HU

Tel: 0808 800 4444
Email: info@shelter.org.uk
<http://england.shelter.org.uk>

In Wales, contact **Shelter Cymru**

Tel: 0845 075 5005
Email: advice@sheltercymru.org.uk
www.sheltercymru.org.uk

In Scotland, contact **Shelter Scotland**

Tel: 0808 800 4444
<http://scotland.shelter.org.uk>

Stepchange

Provides debt advice and can help you set up a debt management plan.

Tel: 0800 138 1111
www.stepchange.org

Turn2us

Helps people to access the money available to them through welfare benefits, grants and other help.

Tel: 0808 802 2000
www.turn2us.org.uk

Can you help Age UK?

Please complete the donation form below with a gift of whatever you can afford and return to: RSXZ-KTTS-KSHT, Age UK, Tavis House, 1-6 Tavistock Square, LONDON WC1H 9NA. Alternatively, you can phone 0800 169 87 87 or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/donate. If you prefer, you can donate directly to one of our national or local partners. Thank you.

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Expiry date	/	Issue no. (Maestro only)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>		

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We will use the information you have supplied to communicate with you according to data protection guidelines. Age UK (registered charity number 1128267) comprises the charity, its group of companies and national partners (Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age NI). If you would prefer not to hear from them or carefully selected third parties, let us know by phoning 0800 107 8977.

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- Lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender
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- Powers of attorney
- Save energy, pay less
- When someone dies
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To order any of our **free** publications, please call Age UK Advice free on:

0800 169 65 65

www.ageuk.org.uk/moneymatters

What should I do now?

For more information on the issues covered in this guide, or to order any of our publications, please call Age UK Advice free on **0800 169 65 65** or visit **www.ageuk.org.uk/moneymatters**

Our publications are also available in large print and audio formats.

The following Age UK information guides may be useful:

- *Avoiding scams*
- *More money in your pocket: a guide to claiming benefits for people of pension age*
- *Save energy, pay less*

The Age UK Group offers a wide range of products and services specially designed for people in later life. For more information, please call **0800 169 18 19**.

If contact details for your local Age UK are not in the box below, call Age UK Advice free on **0800 169 65 65**.

